

SIXTY
SERMONS
ON
VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND

JONATHAN PARSONS, *A. M.*

MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION

IN

NEWBURY-PORT:

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED A

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BY THE REV. MR. SEARL.

NEWBURY-PORT:

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MDCCLXXIX,



His first wife is said to have died by ill usage.— His second was rendered so miserable by neglect and unkindness, that they separated by mutual agreement. His third *companion*, not his wife was the victim of his seduction, while he lived upon the hospitality of her husband. Holding a place in the excise of England, he was dismissed for irregularity; restored, and dismissed again for fraud, without recovery. Unable to get employment where he was known, he came to this country, commenced politician, and pretended to some faith in Christianity. Congress gave him an office, from which, being soon found guilty of a breach of trust, he was expelled with disgrace. The French revolution allured him to France.— Habits of intoxication made him a disagreeable inmate in the house of the American minister, where out of compassion he had been received as a guest. During all this time, his life was a compound of ingratitude and perplexity, of hypocrisy and avarice, of fewness and adultery. In June 1809, the poor creature, died in this country. The lady, in whose house he lived, relates, that 'he was daily drunk, and in his few moments of soberness, was quarreling with her, and disturbing the peace of the family.' At that time 'he was deliberately and disgustingly filthy.' He had an old black woman for his servant, as drunken as her master. He accused her of stealing his rum; she retaliated by accusing him of being an old drunkard. They would lie on the same floor, sprawling, and swearing, and threatening to fight, but too intoxicated to engage in battle. He removed, afterwards, to various families, continuing his habits, and paying for his board, only when compelled. *In his drunken fits, he was accustomed to talk about the immortality of the soul.* Probably much of his book against the inspiration of the scriptures was inspired by his cups. Such was the author of "*the Age of Reason*;" such the apostle of mob-infidelity. Unhappy man! Neither he, nor Rousseau, nor Voltaire, is dead, except in the flesh. Their immortal souls are thinking as actively, at least, as ever. We and they will stand, on the same great day, before the bar of God. How awful, in reference to such despisers and scoffers, in that description; "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." *Bishop Mc Ilvaine's "Evidence of Christianity."* 10/12/33

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FRED LOCKLEY
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PORTLAND, ORE.

*The Character and Reward of a good
and faithful Servant of Jesus Christ.*

A

FUNERAL SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

REV. JONATHAN PARSONS, A. M.
MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CONGREGATION

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NEWBURY-PORT,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE

JULY 19th, 1776.

BY JOHN SEARL, A. M. & V. D. M.

NEWBURY-PORT:

PRINTED BY JOHN MYCALL, 1779.

*The Character and Reward of
a good and faithful Minister
of Christ.*

MAT. XXV. 21.

His Lord said unto him, Well
done, thou good and faithful
Servant-----Enter thou into
the Joy of thy Lord.

WHEN we are called upon in the course
of divine providence to commemorate the
life and death of a good and faithful mi-
nister of Christ, in a funeral discourse,
perhaps, scarce any portion of scripture is better adapted
as a theme for our serious and pious meditations, than the
words now read. It becomes us to bless and adore our
supreme Lord, in his corrective frowns, as well as cheer-
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ing smiles ; for in both he conducts like himself, according to unerring rectitude, with a view to the most excellent ends.

To such a pious submission we are invited by that dispensation which is the mournful occasion of this discourse ; and by the inspired words at the head of it. The gloomy providence of our Lord, and cheering words of our text, conspire together at the same time to solemnize our hearts, and elevate our affections : by the one, our meditations are led to the dreary tomb, where the remains of your late venerable and beloved Pastor are deposited ; by the other, our contemplations are invited to the blissful realms of eternal day, where, you trust, his immortal part is entered into the joy of his Lord.

THE paragraph, from which our text is taken, contains our Lord's parable of the talents, in which are represented the character and final state of the righteous and wicked. In the 16th and 17th verses, we have set before us, the fidelity and industry of the true servants of God. The 19th verse represents, in metaphorical language, the supreme Judge coming to take an account of his servants, to whom he had committed talents to be improved for him ; and, according to unerring rectitude, to dispense rewards or punishments agreeable to the tenor of their behavior in his service.

IN the verse immediately preceding our text, we are informed that *he who had received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto*

the five talents : behold I have gained besides them five talents more. In our text we have expressed the kind reception, the reviving applause, and gracious benediction, which this holy man receives from his glorious Lord and Judge — *His Lord said unto him, well done thou good and faithful servant — Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* These words are applicable to every departed saint, who has made religion the main business of his life ; and eminently so to every gospel minister, who has laboriously spent himself in pious zeal, and distinguishing fidelity, in the cause of his Lord, to serve the interests of his kingdom in the world.

I propose then to consider

I. WHAT it is to be a good and faithful Minister of Christ : or what qualities are requisite to compose that character.

II. THE reward which Christ will grant to every one of this character.

I. WE are to consider what it is to be a good and faithful minister of Christ : or the qualities included in that character.

HERE in general, it may be observed, that he is a man of God : has the divine image impressed on his soul, in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness ; and is a partaker of the divine nature. To suppose an ungodly man, or one under the dominion of principles, which are contrary to God and godliness, is a good and faithful servant
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of God, is a supposition too gross to be received by any one, perhaps, that is not beside himself, or void of common sense. It is indeed readily granted that an ungodly man may make a good external appearance to the view of fallible men; his manners and deportment may be graceful; his natural temper amiable: and his general conduct in life, far from being reprehensible, may be agreeable to the world. But whatever he may be NOMINALLY in the sight of men, while void of a divine principle, he cannot be REALLY and in the sight of God, a good and faithful servant of his son. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; nor will be acknowledged as such by him, whose judgment is necessarily and infallibly according to truth. The good and faithful minister of Christ, who is entitled to the reward mentioned in our text, is renewed in the spirit of his mind; is born of the spirit and is spiritual; is translated out of darkness into marvellous light; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. He has put off the old man, and put on the new, being created in Christ Jesus to good works; is a follower of God, and of the Lamb: he walketh in newness of life, and his conversation is in heaven. He is poor in spirit, pure in heart, meek and humble; he hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and habitually endeavors, from right principles, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men.

BUT perhaps it may be more entertaining, as well as useful, to take a more particular view of the good and faithful

faithful minister of Christ; or survey so lovely an object in various striking attitudes.

FIRST then, the good and faithful minister of Christ lives by that saving and operative faith, which he so clearly describes, and the importance of which, he so pathetically urges upon others. To use the emphatical words of the great Apostle, *He lives; and yet not he, but Christ lives within him; and the life that he lives in the flesh, he lives by faith in the Son of God.* He not only gives the assent of his understanding to the truth of the gospel, on the infallible testimony of God; but he cheerfully yields the consent of his will to its interesting and divine proposals. Once indeed he was a child of wrath even as others; but in a realizing conviction that he was in a state of spiritual death, and under a sentence of condemnation; at the same time, in a joyful view of the glory of christ, the divine excellency of his person, the abundant grace and benevolence of his heart, the beauty and all-sufficiency of the method of salvation by him——he cordially received and embraced the divine Redeemer; his heart clave to him, and sweetly acquiesced in the divine plan of redemption exhibited in the gospel. He continually relies upon his righteousness for acceptance with God; repairs for light and instruction to him, who is the word and wisdom of God; and submits to his government as head and King of the church. Through his mediation he repairs to the Father for the sanctifying and quickening influences of the Holy Spirit.

SECONDLY. The good and faithful minister is a true lover of God and of his dear Son. This, I apprehend,

must be plain at first view; not only as divine love is implied in saving faith; but also as it is implied in fidelity. To style a person a good and faithful servant of God, while destitute of love to him and his Son, is equally an affront to sacred scripture and common sense. "It is confessed indeed that a man void of love to God may have a good doctrinal acquaintance with the system of religion; may compose excellent sermons; orthodox in sentiments; elegant in style; correct in method; abounding with ingenious thoughts, judicious observations, wise instructions, useful directions, and pungent motives: adorned with innumerable beauties of composition, and very affecting to the auditory. All this may be done from mere natural principles and selfish views. But such an one will not have the approbation of Christ hereafter. Inspiration says, *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.* And without that faith which worketh by love, it is impossible to please God. Love is the sum or root of all true obedience to the law of God. The law enjoins love, and that with its genuine fruits is all that it does enjoin. An observance of God's commands, or a conformity to each branch of our duty, as far as done in a holy manner, flows from divine love: and as far as divine love is wanting, obedience is defective. And where there is no love, there is no true obedience at all. All true obedience commences with love; and love is virtually, & in effect, all the obedience which God requires of man. Upon this our divine teacher is very clear and express; Being asked * which was the greatest commandment

* *Mat. 22.*

ment in the law, he answered love, as that on which depends the whole system of religious obedience. † *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* We are plainly taught by the great Apostle of the gentiles, that charity, or divine love, is the very end at which the law-giver aims in giving his commands to the creature; so that if he who is under the law exercises no love, he does nothing that is well pleasing to God; ‡ *The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience.* That love is the whole of the law; or that all its demands are reducible to love, is further confirmed by the same inspired writer, || *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love—*

EVERY christian grace, & every holy action has love in it, as its life and spirit. Divine love is essential to all saving faith; and is as it were the very soul of it; *for faith worketh by love.* And without this vital heavenly flame, faith is but a dead faith. There cannot in the nature of things, be a saving acquiescence in the way of salvation by Christ, without the exercise of love to him and his salvation. That receiving Christ, by virtue of which, believers are stiled the children of God, includes a cordial choice of him as supremely excellent, which implies love. *To all that believe Christ is precious;* but he is precious to them as the object of their love; or as altogether lovely.

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† *Mat. 22. 37--40.* ‡ *I. Tim. 1. 5.* || *Gal. 5. 14.*

NEITHER can there be any true evangelical repentance without love. It is impossible we should have any genuine sorrow for sin, as committed against God, unless we love God against whom it is committed. We cannot in a holy manner grieve that we have dishonored his name, despised his authority, wronged and injured his interests; unless his name, his authority, his cause and interests are dear to us: in other words, unless we have the exercise of divine love.

HENCE therefore it is a most evident point, that true love to God and his son, is not only absolutely essential to a good and faithful minister of Jesus Christ; but also that it enters very deep into his true character.

THIRDLY. The good and faithful minister of Christ is also a lover of MANKIND. So far as he is conformed to the image, the example and command of Christ, he loves even his enemies; blesses them that curse him, does good to them that hate him, and prays for them who despitefully use him and persecute him. His love of BENEVOLENCE extends to all mankind without exception, even to the unthankful and evil: while those of a pious and amiable character share his love of COMPLACENCE. His goodness especially extends to those excellent of the earth, in whom is all his delight. ¶

LOVE to the brethren animates, warms, and exhilarates the heart of every true christian: and is no small ingredient in his character. This will appear with undeniable evidence

evidence, if we search the new testament: and at the same time it will clearly illustrate, and undeniably confirm the truth before us. Christ calls the law of love eminently and emphatically his commandment.* *A new commandment (saith he) I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* And this great christian grace, our infallible teacher represents as that bright mark of distinction, by which his true disciples may be known from all others. † *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* The beloved disciple, who so much abounded in this heavenly temper, repeatedly insisteth on it in his epistles, as a distinguishing mark of true holiness. In his rules of trial he dwells especially on a spirit of Christian love, and correspondent practice. (a.) *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* (b) *We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* (c) *This is his commandment that we should love one another: And he that keepeth his commandment dwelleth in him, and he in him: And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.*

OF such importance is divine love, as that it is absolutely impossible in the very nature of things, there should be

* John 13. 34. † v. 35. (a) 1 John 2. 9. 10.
(b) Ch. 3. 14. (c) v. 18. 19. and 23. 24.

be any true faithfulness without it. Without divine love there can be no friendly regard to the glory of God, the interests of his kingdom, or the good of mankind, nor any thing done to serve these interests, only as private interest is concerned or connected with them. Though a minister could speak with the eloquence even of angels, if destitute of charity or divine love, he is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Though he could look into futurity with a prophetic eye, and with strict exactness declare every event thro' all succeeding ages of time : though he could comprehend the whole circle of the liberal arts and sciences in his capacious mind ; and could look into the innermost recesses of nature, with a penetration far beyond the rest of his fellow men. Yea tho' his speculative knowledge of divinity was such, as that he had a clear insight into its profoundest mysteries. Yea furthermore, though he had the faith of miracles, and could remove the largest mountains from their basis ; or even the Earth from her orbit, yet if he have not love, he is nothing. Moreover, though he should expend all his earthly substance in alms to support the poor ; and as a martyr give his body to be burned in the fire of persecution ; and yet have no divine love, all these things could profit him nothing ; according to the sense of 1. Cor. 13. 1, 2, 3.

IT is plain then, that without true love to the brethren, however amiable a minister might appear in his external deportment in the visible discharge of the duties of his office, yet he cannot be approved and acknowledged

ed as a good and faithful servant of his Lord. This is evident by what was observed before. Faithfulness implies obedience; and there can be no true obedience without love to God and man, as the life and spirit of it.

FOURTHLY. The good and faithful minister of Christ is a LOVER of his DUTY. It hath been observed already, that divine love with the genuine fruits of it, is the sum of all that God hath enjoined upon us as our duty; but then it must be observed that the fruits of divine love are innumerable. True love to God and man must not be considered as a barren principle, but most active and vigorous: nor merely as an immanent act, but most practical and fruitful. Nothing in all nature tends more to a life of christian practice, or good works than this heavenly principle. This divine fountain in the soul, if it rise to a proper height, flows forth into numberless channels. Love unites the subject of it to the object beloved. Hence the interests of the beloved object, whether God or man, are necessarily dear to the pious and benevolent lover. The christian minister who ardently loves his Lord, will cheerfully manifest it in the course of his life, in honoring his name, espousing his cause, and advancing his interests. Agreeably inspiration tells us, *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous.* The rich man whose heart expands with true benevolence, will gladly relieve the poor; and, as he has opportunity, pour the oil of gladness into the distressed heart; and make the tongue of the needy, disconsolate widow, sing for joy. The truly pi-
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ous and friendly soul places much of his own happiness in that of others : he therefore sincerely delights to sacrifice his own private interest, as far as his ability extends and duty calls, to advance the public good. The pious and faithful servant of Christ, as far as piety prevails, in imitation of his Lord, esteems it his meat and drink to do his heavenly Father's will : and in obedience to his call, willingly goes through evil report, as well as good report ; through many hardships and trials, where the path of duty leads. The good steward of Christ loves his Lord and^m those of his household, and takes a particular care of them with whom he is more especially connected ; and hence he loves the duties of the first and second tables of the law, and is disposed to discharge them with cheerfulness and vigor. Nor could he ever acquit himself to so good advantage in the several offices of his station, even externally, without love, which is the life and spirit of all acceptable service. This will be the more easily admitted among all, except the unthinking and inconsiderate, as the duties of the ministerial office are very hard, and require much labor, in the discharge of which, love must have remarkable influence. Which leads to the consideration of another quality in the good and faithful minister of Christ.

FIFTHLY. He is LABORIOUS and diligent in his work ; as much diligence and labor is absolutely necessary in order to discharge it with fidelity, and a fair prospect of success. The office of a gospel minister, far from being a mere title of honor, which one might possess in the
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mean indulgence of indolence, requires painful labor. Should any that sustain the office indulge themselves in a life of ease and pleasure, or employ their time and care in business foreign to their office, except so far as necessity urges, they would act inconsistent with their character, abuse their office, and be unfaithful to their master. The design of their office is, that they labor in the field of Christ, where much work is to be done. It is neither that they might indulge to stupid ease, in a chair of state, nor is it to make them the gainful and idle overseers of a work, done by others in their stead; according to the scandalous practice of some ministers, so called, in a well known established church.

SUCH is the nature and end of their office—and such the difficulties that attend it—and such their Master's directions relative to the discharge of it, as that it cannot be executed with fidelity, without industry, diligence, and painful application of mind. This may easily appear.

THE GLORY OF GOD in the eternal salvation of souls is the end of their office; than which there is not one of greater IMPORTANCE in nature. Has God been pleased to honor them so far as to entrust them with the interests of his kingdom, and the glory of his great name, which are infinitely dear to him? And will not his faithful ministers vigorously exert themselves in the conscientious discharge of so important a trust! As God makes his own glory his last end, so it will be theirs. As he has made all things for himself, they will piously refer all things to him. Acting in character, whether they eat or drink, or

whatever they do, especially as his ambassadors, they will earnestly endeavor to do all to his glory, in a sense that of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.

AND of what unspeakable consequence is the ETERNAL SALVATION of those immortal souls which God hath committed to their care! How awful the thought that any should perish for ever, through the inattention, and remissness of their spiritual guides. The faithful minister must be supposed to have a tender and compassionate heart, which must be deeply and painfully impressed with a concern for those under his watch, who are imminently exposed to a destruction endless and exquisite, far beyond expression and conception. And how shocking the thought that their blood should be required at his hands! The mind must necessarily labor in a view of these things, and in a lively sense of them, he can think no labor too hard, no pains too much for their good. In imitation of the pious and benevolent example of the great Apostle, he is willing to spend and be spent, in the service of their souls.

ADD to this: The ministerial office is not only important to the last degree, but also extremely DIFFICULT; and therefore demands much labor and resolution in order to a faithful discharge. The minister of Christ has occasion to *wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but also against the principalities and powers of darkness*. He is sent to treat with a number of men, who are of a carnal mind, *which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, nor indeed can be.* (d) He may labor all his days to exhibit truth to many

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ny (e) who will not receive the things of the spirit of God, because they are foolishness to them. And he must use his best endeavors to reconcile men to God, (f) *tho' they run upon his neck, even upon the thick bosses of his buckler.* He must teach the humbling doctrines, and urge the self-denying duties of religion: and reprove vice, though practised by men ever so great, and self-important, and however extensive their influence; even though he should be accounted and treated by them as their enemy because he tells them the truth.

IN one word, perhaps no one office undertaken by man, is more opposed by the wickedness of the world, than the ministerial office, if executed with fidelity.

ANOTHER thing, and that not the least inconsiderable, that makes the ministerial office very laborious, is the HARD STUDY which is requisite, in order to a faithful and laudable discharge of it. The minister must be a man of study, in order to obtain a competent knowledge of the truths he is to teach. The doctrines which a minister is to preach, were infallibly inspired by God, and are contained in his written word: They were penned in a very concise, comprehensive manner, and some of them in an enigmatical form and figurative language. A number of these truths are exceedingly profound and mysterious; are therefore styled *the deep things of God.* (g) So deep are they, as to lie far beyond the reach of a superficial glance: yea, the most studious divines, who best succeed in their pious and critical searches, are unable to disclose

(e) Cor. 2. 14 (f) Job 45. 26. (g) Cor. 2. 20.

close their immense treasures. In this sense they may be fitly stiled the unsearchable riches of Christ. Now from this treasury of divine truth, the minister is to supply himself with knowledge for the benefit and edification of his flock, to feed them with wisdom and understanding. The faithful minister, according to his ability and opportunity, will endeavor to declare the whole counsel of God: it is therefore very necessary that he may know, as far as may be, what that whole counsel is, which he is to declare, in its full extent. As far as he falls short of this, so far he is unqualified to convey a knowledge of it to others.

THUS the many things contained in the counsels of God, that sacred mine of spiritual truth, lie deep and will not be reached, unless diligently sought and dug after by hard and penetrating study; yet the minister must have some good acquaintance with them, or he will not be able so advantageously to discharge his office. He must therefore be very *STUDIOUS*, in order to obtain that degree of knowledge of divine truth contained in God's word, which is needful for him. If the faithful minister therefore does not, by reason of a mean genius and narrow capacity, fall below a sense of these observations, his fidelity will compel him laboriously to pursue his studies to his utmost, consistent with his other duties.

MOREOVER, much study is requisite, not only to obtain a knowledge of these truths; but also to make a proper *APPLICATION* of them to himself and others; and with dexterity to apply them to persons and things.

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He must know how to divide the word of truth : and in order to do this RIGHTLY and to the best advantage, he must be a workman indeed. But if he is very deficient in this necessary skill, he will have reason to be ashamed, that he undertook this work, to which he is extremely unequal,

THERE are a variety of cases, conditions and circumstances, attending a minister's flock,—and also truths enough contained in God's word, suited to every particular condition, case, and circumstance. It is therefore a very material part of a minister's office, to make a proper distribution, and pertinent application of these truths, as occasion calls and need requires. Considered as a steward of God's house, he is to select and deal out spiritual food and medicines; to diversify and proportion them to his household, according to their diversity and variety of cases : to every one a portion in due season.

NOT only a laudable knowledge of divine truths ; but also a good acquaintance with human nature ; a just apprehension of the various doubts, distresses, scruples, and difficult cases, to which mankind are liable, is necessary to constitute a good casuist, or an accomplished pastor. And this cannot be obtained without much study, and critical observation. The faithful minister, under a sense of these things, will labor to be thus qualified.

FURTHERMORE, much study is requisite, that a minister may be furnished to come to his people in the course of his ministry with that large and COPIOUS VARIETY
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of subjects, which is useful, engaging, and entertaining to the minds of his auditory. If the preacher is continually insisting upon the same truths, however important and excellent in themselves; and though in some measure he vary the expression, he will soon unhappily lose the attention of his auditory. His moving perpetually in the same narrow circle, and exhibiting the same sentiments over and over again, in a tiresome repetition, has a natural tendency to bring their minds into a careless and stupid inattention. Whereas that teacher who in the compass of his ministry produces a perpetual variety of truths, is likely to instruct, to entertain and animate his auditory. There is something so inviting, alluring, and commanding in an able instructor who imparts an endless succession of important and interesting subjects, in a grateful variety, that it will be difficult for his audience to withhold from him their fixed attention. They will listen with avidity, and find profit and pleasure happily blended together. And after the entertainment is over, they will wait in a pleasing expectation of some other new subject to entertain and feast their minds, the next opportunity, and will give their chearful attendance. Where variety is wanting, the most shining eloquence is by no means a just equivalent, or adequate compensation.

BUT it is utterly impossible that the preacher should entertain his people with such a pleasing and endless variety of new truths, and treat them in an agreeable and instructive manner, unless he give himself to study. The bible indeed contains an inexhaustible store of excellent

cellent truths, but they lie not open to the careless observer. The mind of the studious and inquisitive instructor is always brightening, expanding, and receiving new supplies of knowledge to be communicated: but hard study brings weariness to the flesh, as well as pleasure to the mind. Thus the minister is diligent and laborious, in order to acquit himself with fidelity.

I may add here;—the care in the composition of sermons, is also an additional evidence of the signal usefulness of laborious study. The doctrines, precepts, and sanctions of God's word must be set in order, in a natural, easy, and methodical manner. Various branches of divine truth, having the advantage of a close connexion, and beautiful arrangement, they receive a mutual lustre and energy, and are presented to the minds of men with peculiar profit and pleasure. Hereby the memory is especially assisted, the understanding more enlightened, the heart deeper impressed, and the affections more sweetly and affectingly commanded. Whereas truths, the most weighty, pertinent, and seasonable, may be delivered in so unconnected, obscure, confused, and disagreeable a manner, as for that reason, to be utterly lost upon the hearers.

AND besides this; it is well worthy of notice, that divine truths are not only to be properly arranged, and beautifully methodized; but also to be delivered in **APT EXPRESSIONS** and suitable phrases, wisely adapted to the nature of the subjects handled, and to the capacities and circumstances of the audience. Sentiments are usually
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received or rejected, in some measure, according to their dress. When conveyed in distasteful and offensive language, they often meet with a poor reception : whereas an acceptable and agreeable style has a happy tendency to recommend truth to mankind, and advantageously to introduce it into their minds. *Words freely spoken are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* Now to deliver truth in this manner, both as to method and language, requires much application of mind. The inspired *Solomon*, when a preacher, thought it not beneath his singular, and as it were, miraculous genius, to make this a branch of his study. *He gave good heed to this, and sought to find out acceptable words.* (i) And does not the example of that great prince, celebrated even by God, for his peerless wisdom, strongly recommend this to ordinary preachers.

THERE is the SIMPLE, EASY and FAMILIAR STYLE; the GAY and FLOWERY ; the PUNCT and PATHETIC ; the LACONIC ; the DIFFUSIVE ; the GRAND and SUBLIME STYLE : Each of which have their particular use ; and are to be varied according to the subject matter. In all, perspicuity is to be maintained, and obscurity carefully avoided ; as the original and special design of language is to be understood. The shining gift of eloquence, how often soever it may have been abused in the service of wickedness, ought to be entirely consecrated to God, whose gift it is ; and to his church, for whose use it was more especially designed.

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(i) *Ecc. 12. 9. 10.*

THUS I have considered the needful studies of a minister, which require much labor. I might also mention the time that must be spent in giving and receiving visits: and in particular, attending upon the sick and dying, when the pious friendship of the minister may be most seasonably expressed. But this will crowd the other duties of his station into a narrower compass, and render them so much the more pressing.

Now the faithful minister of Christ, on supposition he has a proper sense of the duties incumbent upon him, the infinite importance of his office, and the accomplishments requisite to it, he will of necessary consequence exert himself with such vigor, in the exercise of his powers; as that he may be well denominated laborious and diligent in his work.

SIXTHLY, The good and faithful minister of Christ endeavors with great care and impartiality to DISPENSE THE WORD AND ORDINANCES of God, in a manner that may be most for his glory, and the eternal interests of his people. I have indeed briefly hinted at something of this already, under the head of laborious study, but as preaching is so considerable a branch of the ministerial office, and of such high importance, it is a subject that demands a more particular and attentive consideration.

As the truths of God's word are of infinite importance and excellency, so the good and faithful preacher will sincerely aim to represent them in their utmost clearness and purity. Artfully to disguise and misrepresent divine truth, is both to injure that, and those who have a right to the

salutary knowledge of it. To give into this practice, is much below the sincerity and dignity of the truly christian minister. He cannot bear to stoop to the ignoble artifice, and mean cowardice of hiding himself or sentiments, under the scandalous subterfuge of words of double meaning, in order to serve some private interest. Supported by christian magnanimity, and animated by the love of divine truth, he chooses that the great doctrines of religion, dictated by infallible inspiration, should shine forth in their full and unclouded glory, to the honor of the great king and witness of truth; though he should be exposed, through the ignorance and prejudice of others, to suffer in his estate and character. Nevertheless, much wisdom and prudence are to be used to guard against the prejudices of those who labor under mistakes, and are unfriendly to certain truths: the discreet teacher will make the easier doctrines introductory to those which are harder to be understood; will labor to set them in the clearest and easiest light; and far from surfeiting their minds, by cramming them with too great a portion of mental food at a time, and of a kind far beyond their power of digestion, he will endeavor to deal it out in such suitable proportions, after he has prepared it in the best manner he is able, that their minds, instead of being overwhelmed, may strengthen and expand by degrees, their appetites for knowledge grow keener and keener, and they make the more rapid advances towards the stature of perfect men.

OUR faithful Divine loves the whole system of divine truth contained in the bible, its sublime doctrines, divine precepts

precepts, surprising narrations, engaging examples, forcible motives, its lively and striking representations, and remarkable predictions of events the most grand and interesting. Nor does he shun to declare all the counsel of God; but if some parts of divine revelation may be said to allure his contemplation beyond the rest, it is those in which the perfections and divine excellencies of God and his Son shine forth with peculiar advantage: or, the glory of God in the face of his Son collected as in a mirror. He by no means neglects the doctrines or duties of natural religion; he opens his eyes to the light of nature, which is a ray from heaven. Nevertheless, in his studies and public exhibitions, he pays a special attention to the peculiarities of divine revelation. That God is the first and final cause of all things, and his glory to be considered as the supreme and ultimate end of all his works. The total ruin of mankind by the fall of Adam. The recovery of the elect by the Son of God. The nature of redemption by him, in the impetration and application of it. Particularly, the justification of the true believer through the Redeemer's righteousness imputed. The infinitely rich and free grace of God in the whole of our salvation. Our absolute dependence on the efficacious influences of the holy Spirit in regeneration and progressive sanctification. The important doctrine of the sacred Trinity, and the office which each divine person sustains and executes, relative to the affair of man's redemption. That the moral law continues in its full force upon all men, as a rule of life, however utterly insufficient for justification before God, though their imperfect obedience to it be

ever so exemplary and sincere. That the highest happiness and dignity of the creature consists in divine union and communion with God. The vital and mystical union betwixt Christ and his church, &c. I say, the good and faithful minister of Christ will pay a particular attention, in his private studies and public exhibitions, to these peculiar doctrines of the gospel which have been named, and numerous others, far too many to enumerate at this time, which fully to illustrate would require a long life, if not an everlasting duration.

THE good and faithful minister, if not deficient in intellectuals, is a PARTICULAR and DISTINGUISHING preacher. When he treats the doctrines of the gospel, he does not content himself with vague, general expressions, nor with equivocal terms, through an artful design. He will endeavor critically to shew the nature of that faith by which the believer is united to Christ and justified, as distinguished from counterfeits—the nature and necessity of that evangelical repentance, with which pardon of sin is inseparably connected, as essentially different from mere legal sorrow.—The true nature and high importance of genuine love to God and man, as essentially distinct from any affection in the unregenerate, which may make a plausible appearance, and to a superficial view may bear a resemblance of this grace, though totally different, whereby many alas are fatally deceived ! He will endeavor to decipher the true nature of a pure and holy zeal for God and his cause, and shew its difference from that spurious, unhallowed, and pernicious flame in some hypocrites, or the wild-fire of mad, giddy enthusiasts, which has assu-

and the name of this christian and heavenly virtue so essential to true religion. He will describe the holy nature of true religious joy; the spring, the tendency, and the fruits of it, as distinguished from the flashy, groundless, and selfish joy of the hypocrite. I might mention humility, and the exercise of various other graces, which the faithful servant of God who ministers in holy things, will as he is able and as occasions call, place in a clear and advantageous light. There is no end of enumerating particulars: I have hinted at the above, only as a specimen.

IN one word; the man of God, thoroughly furnished, will hold up to view, in the course of his ministry, as need requires, the nature and necessity of the new birth: and in the exercise of fidelity, will labor to feed, to nourish, to strengthen, to animate and direct the new creature, in its various stages through its christian course, *until it arrive to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* †

AND as our faithful pastor will distinguish between the precious and the vile, by giving critical rules of trial, whereby they may be much assisted in judging and determining their spiritual state, so also he will accommodate his addresses to their state and true character. He will not apply himself to a whole congregation consisting of sinners and saints, some openly vicious, others strict and laborious in religion, and administer comfort to them promiscuously, as if they were all the true disciples and undoubted followers of Christ: but knowing both the ter-

rors and consolations of the Lord, he would persuade men by applying to them with propriety, according to the true difference of their spiritual state. He would act the part of a son of thunder to alarm the stupid and daring sinner, as well as the gentler part of a son of consolation to revive the humble and desponding saint. The tremendous curses from EBAL were to be denounced, as well as the cheering blessings from GERRIZZIM. According to his instructions, he will inform the unbeliever, that he is condemned already, *and that the wrath of God abideth on him, —that God is angry with the wicked every day— that they shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God— that he is a consuming fire— that none knoweth the power of his anger— that he will shew his wrath, and make his power known upon the vessels of wrath— that if he whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies— that he will make his arrows drunk with blood, and his sword shall devour flesh.*

HE will urge a diligent attendance upon appointed means, but not place them in the room of Christ's righteousness. When he teaches his hearers their indispensable obligations to attend with diligence upon the duties of religion, he points out the principles from whence they should act, and the end at which they should aim. *That whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, they should do all to the glory of God.*

THE good and faithful minister, if favored with un-

common communion with God, in an uninterrupted course, will be likely to treat the great points of religion

in such a savoury and becoming manner, so agreeable to the genius and spirit of true religion, as will be very grateful to the spiritual relish of the pious part of his auditory. To suppose a graceless preacher of the same speculative knowledge will, in this respect, equal one of eminent piety, i. e. be equally savoury, and as agreeably affect the pious heart, in a course of preaching, is an absurd supposition; and extremely contrary to the analogy of nature. It is granted indeed, that the graceless preacher may be loud, clamorous, full of intemperate zeal, wild enthusiasm, and rash impetuosity, and may suit others of the same stamp: but how will such an one suit the taste of the sedate, humble and rational christian, guided in his conduct by the meekness of wisdom, and full of the dove like, lamb like and benevolent spirit of his divine Redeemer!! Or can it be supposed that a preacher, however rational, without a sense at heart of the beauty and importance of divine things, will, in a course of preaching, treat the great and interesting doctrines of divine revelation in so lively and affecting a strain, as another of equal genius, whose heart is ravished with the glory of divine things, and his whole soul deeply impressed as with the whole weight of eternity!!

THE faithful minister endeavors to be very careful in CHURCH DISCIPLINE, to administer ecclesiastical privileges and penalties exactly according to divine order. Knowingly to deviate is of dangerous nature and tendency: it is a gross reflection upon the great head of the church, and exposes to his insupportable curse. Thus I
have

have briefly considered the ambassador of Christ as dispensing the word and ordinances of the gospel: I therefore pass on to another branch of his character.

SEVENTHLY, The good and faithful minister of Christ is a MAN OF PRAYER. Humbly sensible of his own weakness, and that all his sufficiency is of God, he frequently repairs to him by fervent prayer, that he may be made a faithful minister of the new testament; and that the strength of Christ may be made perfect in his weakness. While he uses his best endeavors for the spiritual interest of his people, he humbly repairs to Christ the immense fountain of all supplies, and fervently implores a blessing upon the means, that with pleasure he may see the success of his labors in their salvation; for he well knows that all human attempts are vain, without the ministrations of the spirit in his efficacious operations; and though Paul plant, and Apollos water, God only giveth the increase. He is not only constantly bringing messages of grace, and lessons of divine instruction from God to them; but is perpetually carrying them to the throne of grace that they may receive a blessing, and that the messages and instructions, through a divine agency, may be a favor of life unto life, and not of death unto death. He is a true son of believing and interceding Abraham, in consequence of whose earnest, humble, and pious supplications, even Sodom would have been spared from a miraculous destruction, had there been found but ten righteous in that devoted city, which was made a singular example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

THE devout and faithful pastor is sensible that the richest blessings of heaven have usually been communicated to God's people in consequence of their humble and fervent applications to the throne of his grace : God first prepares the hearts of the humble, works in them pious desires, then causes his ear to hear—agreeably to Ps. x. 17. He promised his people of old great temporal favors, and a greater spiritual blessing ; but he expressly told them, that *He would be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* (a) Moses prevailed with God for the temporal salvation of the whole nation of Israel, by prayer, after God had threatened their total destruction. Very signal indeed was the deliverance of Jonah, from the jaws of death, from the belly of a whale, and (as he more emphatically expresses it, even) from the belly of hell, when he looked to God's holy temple in prayer. (b) At the prevalent prayer of Elijah, the heavens were shut, so that there was no rain nor dews in Israel by the space of three years and six months ; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (c) We have a very striking passage, by which God himself, in his own emphatical language, expresses the efficacy of the sincere prayers of his people. (d) *And it shall come to pass* (saith the Lord) *that before they call I will answer, and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear.*

THAT the faithful minister is a man of prayer, is evident, because, as a true CHRISTIAN as well as a MINI-

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(a) Ezek. xxxvi. 25—37. (b) Jonah ii. 1—7.
 (c) James v. 17. 1 Kings xvii, 1. (d) Isaiah lxy. 24.

STER, he is ordained a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifices holy and acceptable unto God. Besides, the SPIRIT OF HOLINESS which he has received, is a SPIRIT OF PRAYER. The appetites of the new creature incline him to pray: yea, every grace has the same tendency, e. g. Faith inclines and leads him to prayer, it being the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; it realizes the declarations which God makes of himself; his all-sufficiency, his grace, the value of his favor, the certainty of future things. How can the believing servant of Christ, in a realizing sense of these things, cease to pray while in a world of affliction. Furthermore, a spirit of divine LOVE inclines him to pray. This spirit of love is a FILIAL spirit, which naturally leads the child of God to his heavenly Father, in supplication to him and dependance upon him. He receives a spirit of adoption, whereby he cries abba Father!—— Moreover, HUMILITY and HOPE also incline him to prayer—he is little in his own eyes, sees his own emptiness and weakness, and God's all-sufficiency and ability. He comes to God, relies upon him, not doubting the sincerity of his invitations, nor the infallibility of his promises. Thus light arises to him in darkness, and bright prospects shine through clouds of gloominess.

THUS, sensible of the great duty, the high importance, and special advantages of prayer, the good minister, agreeably to the pious inclination of his own heart, gives himself much to the exercises of devotion, to the glory of God and good men.

EIGHTHLY, The good and faithful minister will be EXEMPLARY in his life and conversation. He not only preaches religion from the pulpit, but he endeavors to display it, if possible, in a more striking and emphatical manner in a holy life. Agreeably, he lives much above the world while in it; while he dwells upon earth his conversation is in heaven. And though he may indulge a pleasant, enlivening cheerfulness of temper, in the company of his christian friends, yet he will cautiously guard against all degrees of impurity and levity, unbecoming the gravity of his office, and disagreeable to the purity of his taste.

HE will endeavor to maintain a christian simplicity and godly sincerity; and watch against all deceit and guile, unbecoming an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. It will also be his aim to maintain a tranquility and divine meekness of spirit, and not sink into the meanness of rash anger, or any indecent impetuosity of temper.

IN a word, the great and excellent duties of christianity which he preaches to others, he will endeavor to exemplify in his own conduct, as a christian. Such amiable virtues will give him a lustre in the eye of unprejudiced and pious beholders. Oh how agreeable and animating is it, that while the minister urges upon them the great duty of piety towards God, they lift up their eyes and behold it in their pious minister! When he sets before them the great duty of charity and brotherly love, how agreeable to behold these duties beautifully exemplified in their beneficent minister, who does good to all men

as he has opportunity, but, especially to the household of faith! When he recommends to them the example of Christ, with what delight will they see their pastor in his christian course, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth! That when he warns them against wrath and strife, urging them to pursue the things that make for peace, to see that the preacher, as far as in him lies, lives peaceably with all men! How happy and useful, when he urges upon the people courage and intrepidity in the cause of God and truth, christian prudence and gentleness towards men, to behold the teacher as bold as a lion, wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove.

To add no more under this head, though so copious. It is a blessed sight for a people, to see their minister live over the duties he preaches to others! And happy when they can witness for him, that he is that good man, in all respects, and in an eminent degree, which he urges others to be!

THUS I have gone through with the character of the good and faithful minister of Christ, with brevity, considering the extent of the subject. He lives by faith in the Son of God, relying upon his righteousness, and depending upon his sufficiency through the course of his life.—He is a true lover of God and his eternal Son—A faithful friend to mankind—laborious and diligent in his work—With great care and impartiality he dispenses the word and ordinances of God—He is a man of prayer—and in his life and conversation he exemplifies the religion he preaches to others—though it must be con-
fessed

fessed, every thing he does is attended with imperfection, and no one branch of his character exactly answers to the perfect rule of life; which gives constant occasion for his humiliation before God, and evangelical repentance thro' his christian course. These particulars might have been enlarged, and several new ones added, but this would have carried me far beyond intended limits. I therefore pass on.

II. THE reward which Christ will grant to every good and faithful minister. *Well done! thou good and faithful servant—Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* What a cheering benediction!

THE reward of a good and faithful minister is often granted in a measure, during the PRESENT state, but more especially in the FUTURE world. The latter of which seems more especially to be intended in our text. But as the labors of the ministerial office, faithfully executed, are very hard, probably much beyond the estimate of the world, and may be discouraging to modest candidates who may think of entering on so great a work;—perhaps it may not be amiss to touch briefly upon each.

FIRST then, we shall briefly hint at the reward which the faithful minister may share, even in THIS WORLD. He may in a low degree enter into the joy of his Lord, even in this valley of tears. For, as Christ, a person of transcendent wisdom, enjoyed an unspeakable degree of happiness in the view of divine truth, so also his pious ministers are favored in a lower degree with pleasing views, and the refined and ennobling enjoyment of divine truth.

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He had a knowledge of God, of his perfections, designs, and works, unspeakably beyond any mere creature, which gave him ineffable delight. (e) "He was by him as one brought up with him, daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." So the faithful minister is invited to the study of wisdom. A considerable branch of his office, is to search into divine truths, converse with them, and dwell upon them in the exercise of pious contemplation; and if properly studious, he may make a laudable proficiency in this delightful employ. (f) *Through desire a man having separated himself seeketh and intermedleth with all wisdom.* Divine wisdom is the food and banquet of the renewed mind, (g) *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.* The objects of every pious minister's contemplation are the most glorious in nature——The ever blessed God, and his eternal Son, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and express image of his person; together with those grand and glorious works of the Deity, in which the divine perfections are the most fully and agreeably exhibited. All possible excellencies natural and moral, reside in the divine mind, in an unlimited and immense degree——infinite wisdom and skill, irresistible power, boundless goodness, mercy and condescension, all collected as in a mirror, in the face of our divine Redeemer; and all appear in the most sweet, amiable, and refreshing light. In a word, the sight of divine truth is the most refined and exalted entertainment conceivable. This is as it were, the life and felicity of the soul, as inspiration informs us.

This

(e) *Prov.* viii 30. (f) *chap.* xviii 1. (g) *chap.* iii 18.

This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

SOME ingenious natural philosophers have spent many years in the agreeable contemplation of mere natural truths; and have enjoyed much pleasure in diving deep into the secrets of nature, and soaring aloft among the stars; expatiating and ranging in the field of human science. But the ingenious and pious christian divine has much the advantage of the natural philosopher. The wonders of God's kingdom of nature lie before the divine as well as the philosopher, and equally invite his contemplation and wonder. And God's spiritual kingdom, which contains richer and diviner wonders, lies more especially before the divine, where the moral, as well as natural perfections of God appear to the best advantage, to him that has a spiritual eye to discern divine beauties.

ADD to this, that office in which the christian minister honors and pleases God, and has a prospect of promoting the noblest interests of his fellow men, is another source of pleasure to his pious and benevolent heart. In this respect *he enters into the joy of his Lord, who saw the travail of his soul, and was satisfied.* The advancement of the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world, or the prosperity of Zion, is the object of the pious wish, and earnest pursuit of every minister who prefers Jerusalem to his chief joy of a private nature. The attainment of that good which the mind prefers, or which lies nearest the heart, gives the greatest pleasure. As the selfish man rejoices in the acquisition of private good, and the true patriot delights in the advancement

advancement of the public interest and prosperity; so the pious benevolent minister rejoices in the honor and glory of Christ, and spiritual felicity of his church. This affords a delight truly Godlike and divine. This particular admits of great enlargement—but I must pass on

SECONDLY, To consider the reward of a faithful minister in a FUTURE STATE. Then especially shall he enter into the joy of his Lord, in a degree ineffably more glorious than falls to the lot of the most eminent saints in this state of imperfection. The reward in this present life bears no proportion, and is really as nothing when compared to the ETERNAL reward of the future world; which may be the reason why the former was overlooked, and only the latter mentioned in our text.

HERE the pious and faithful laborer in Christ's vineyard, received the earnest, but there he shall receive and enjoy the whole heavenly and eternal inheritance, which shall be exceeding large; *(b)* For he that overcometh shall inherit all things, and Jehovah shall be his God, and he shall be his son. He shall be where Christ is to behold his glory, which, without an intercepting cloud, shall shine forth in its fulness and strength. He shall be admitted to the beatific vision of God. In this will the happiness of the blessed chiefly consist. They will have a more immediate sight of God and his glories, than can be obtained on this side heaven. Here we see through the glass of ordinances in a manner comparatively dark and obscure, but there the sight shall be surprizingly clear. *(i)* For now we see
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(b) Mat. v 7. *(i)* Prov. iv 18.

through a glass darkly, but then face to face : now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known. The knowledge of God with which the saints are favored in this world, is like reflected, or rather refracted light before sun rising ; but in heaven as the sun in a clear day. (l) *The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Though it is not probable there will ever be a direct and intuitive view into the mysterious essence of God. Every creature from the very condition of his nature, probably, is necessarily incapable of this, (m) which doubtless is an incommunicable prerogative of the Being of Beings.

NEVERTHELESS, the faithful minister, present with the Lord, will have, as far as his finite, though enlarged capacity can admit, a perfect sight of God, without mixture of darkness or error. In this imperfect state, the saints have only some transient and imperfect glimpses of God's glory ; surrounded with clouds and darkness, it is but a little that we can see of God ; (n) but in heaven they shall see him as he is. Their understandings shall be perfectly clear and luminous, and their hearts perfectly attuned to divine things ; and God's beauty and glory will shine on them with a brighter beam and fuller ray, than we at present can possibly imagine. They shall see every thing in God which tends to excite and inflame love, divine desires, and the most cheerful devotion.

EVERY thing they see in God must be perfectly agreeable to their spiritual disposition ; therefore all they see

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(m) *John i. 18.* (n) *Job xx. 89.*

will tend to gratify divine love. They shall see as much love in God to them as they can desire: Love desires union to the beloved object; and with the utmost joy they shall see themselves united to the infinitely excellent and amiable object; in a most wonderful union, unspeakably near and dear. (o)

THE good and faithful servant of God in blessedness shall be as it were all EYE to behold his glory, and all AFFECTION to love and admire him. This sight will completely satisfy his soul with divine pleasure: so great shall it be, he can desire nothing greater; so sweet, he can desire nothing sweeter, (p) "As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." The joy will be perfectly rational, solid, pure; spiritual, rapturous and inexpressible.

HE will behold the glory of God especially in the face of Christ, or in the divine wonders of redemption: he will rejoice in the prosperity of the church; their final triumph over their enemies; and in the glorious blessedness, to which they shall be finally brought. Particularly, he will rejoice in the blessedness of those, in whose salvation, under Christ, he has been happily instrumental. "They shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." (q)

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(o) *John* xvii 21. (p) *Dan* xii 3. (q) *Pf.* xvii 15:

THE faithful minister while in this state of imperfection, with pious pleasure, studied into the deep things of God, for which he had a divine relish ; but the pleasure was attended with weariness and a languid laxation of body ; but in heaven his soul will be all vigor and activity, filled with divine knowledge : and his capacity tho' large, yet still enlarging ; and his taste for divine science, though keen, yet growing continually keener, he will stretch forward in divine contemplation, with perfect ease and admirable rapidity, unknown lengths in the boundless field of knowledge, doubtless far beyond our present comprehension.

HERE below, he rejoiced in the honor and glory of Christ, and prosperity of his church : this afforded him delight truly God-like and divine. But this pious delight rises unspeakably higher in heaven, according to his superior advancement in the knowledge and love of God, and divine benevolence to his church.

HIS social felicity, in a happy union with the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, will be ineffable : each of whom shall shine in perfect beauty, in the image of Christ ; and according to their measure, "be filled with all the fulness of God."^(r) Each one shall love and rejoice in every member of this blissful society, and receive beatific returns of love from every celestial member, far above our present conception. Oh ! how great is the reward of the good and faithful servant, who has entered into the joy of his Lord ! Who

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is able to conceive the vast extent, or to take the true dimensions, of “that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!” After millions and millions of ages shall have been rolled away, then the innumerable ages of an everlasting duration of blessedness and glory shall still remain! Surely “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” I pass on to some

I M P R O V E M E N T.

This subject affords a number of inferences, the most of which I shall but just mention.

1. HENCE learn that it is indeed a very great thing to be well fitted and furnished for so great and important an office, as the gospel ministry,

2. HENCE, how extremely mistaken are they, who vainly imagine that the minister’s office is very easy; and that instead of living a laborious life, he may pass it away in indolent rest, or diverting amusements.

3. Is the reward of the faithful servant so great, hence how abundant is the encouragement, and how forcible the motive to fidelity in discharging the duties of the gospel ministry! What are all our laborious studies, and all our other trials, though they may seem hard, compared to that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which shall be infallibly conferred upon us if we act in character!

4. HENCE learn the indispensable duty of a people who are favored with a good and faithful minister, to support him in the duties of his station—that he may not be forced from the important work to which Christ has called him, to furnish necessaries for his family support.

5. How despicable are those in the ministry, who instead of discharging the duties of their station with fidelity, and magnifying their office, in imitation of the great apostle's example, on the contrary, bring it into contempt, by acting out of character! Instead of consecrating their time and talents to Christ, for the honor of his name and benefit of his Church, they waste them in levity and vanity, or in the service of Mammon, Bacchus, Venus, or some other idol. To what future contempt and indignation from Christ, and to what deplorable wretchedness do such expose themselves! Is not this too dreadful alas to endure, even in conception! But these hints I have not time to illustrate.

6. If the character and reward of a good and faithful minister have been faithfully represented in the preceding part of this discourse, then how affecting to his bereaved people should the death of such a minister be! It becomes them in a day of adversity to consider, and humbly to eye the hand of the supreme disposer of events. Stoic apathy, or insensibility under the rod of God, is extremely disagreeable to the spiritual disposition of his children. It is offensive to their heavenly father, when they despise his chastening dispensations, and are unaffected at the tokens of his displeasure. It is by no means unbecom-

coming the character of good men, that their hearts be tenderly affected, and deeply impressed at the loss of their dear, pious, and useful friends. When Moses the servant and prophet of the Lord died, the children of Israel wept for him thirty days. When Samuel died, the Israelites lamented him. So the disciples of John, when their master was dead, came and told Jesus, and poured their sorrows into the ear of infinite compassion! So the elders of Ephesus wept fore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. Under affliction we should accept of the punishment of our sins: i. e. we should be penitently humble under God's mighty hand; quietly submissive to his holy will, earnestly attentive to the voice of God in his discipline, in the exercise of a meek and teachable temper; and disposed in all circumstances, to our utmost ability, to honor and please him.

SUCH is the pious disposition which ought to be in every congregation, from whom God takes away a good and faithful minister: may this be your disposition, my brethren, from whom God in his holy providence has taken away your beloved pastor, whom you have long esteemed as a learned, sound, judicious, instructive, entertaining, faithful, and successful minister. You have for a long course of years from sabbath to sabbath seen him in this desk, and heard the great and most excellent truths of God agreeably fall from his lips: and some of you have still oftener seen & heard him in the private walks of life. But his social expressive countenance you shall no more behold; his entertaining lessons of instruction you shall no more hear

—his endearing and animating conversation you shall no more enjoy 'till these heavens are no more! Alas! He is gone! Gone from this worshipping assembly! Gone, for ever gone, from this gloomy world, never to be seen more 'till the great rising day!

BUT though he is dead, yet his precious memory, many of his endearing speeches, and his beloved character yet live: and surely will long live in your friendly and retentive minds.

HE descended from a pious and creditable family, esteemed and well beloved by their acquaintance. In his early life there were striking appearances of ready sprightly powers, and a certain vigor and strength of mind. While a member of college, his laudable proficiency in academical studies, discovered an uncommon acuteness of genius. He was well skill'd in the classicks: he had a remarkable discernment into the idiom of the Latin tongue; and could write in that learned language with unusual elegance and purity. His critical skill in the Greek was considerable; and in Hebrew learning, I suppose he exceeded most of his brethren in the ministry in this remote corner of the earth. Soon after he left college, his skill in the languages, and shining talent in composition, entitled him to the character of a very exact and accurate scholar.

HE had the reputation among his learned acquaintance as being well versed in the liberal arts in general; and especially in logical learning was thought to shine with a
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particular lustre; and by some of his most intimate acquaintance was esteemed a very dextrous and masterly reasoner.

DURING some of the first years of his ministry, his style was remarkably correct, clear, elegant and nervous, but after a course of years, as his attention was more engaged with things of the highest importance, and his mind more occupied and even crouded with severer studies, his style became less delicate and flowery, yet continued easy and clear, and perhaps lost nothing of its pathos and energy.

HE was a useful member in ecclesiastical councils and presbyteries, in many respects, and in particular as a happy and dextrous draughtsman. A great variety of matter which many writers without much time were unable to compose into any regular order, under his commanding pen would soon take a beautiful form, every thing agreeably ranged, duly disposed, and gracefully expressed.

AND among the various kinds of writing, it appeared to me, he rather excelled in the epistolary way, as he was formed for such remarkable sprightliness, agreeable keenness, unaffected ease, neat connexion, and pleasing vivacity, which appear with remarkable advantage in this kind of writing.

HE was a good historian, and not a little acquainted with the affairs and policies of the various kingdoms, dominions, states, and countries of the earth; more especially with those affairs which have more nearly concerned the church of Christ and his visible kingdom in the world. which more especially engaged his attention.

HE was also a considerable proficient in the study of physick, and a practitioner for a number of years after he began his ministry, and by many much admired for his skill in the healing art.

AFTER he had laid aside the practice of physic, which was more than thirty years before his death, divinity became more especially his favorite study, in which he was laborious, and made great proficiency.

HE ever set up the bible, that infallible standard of divine truth, as the only unerring rule of faith and practice. Tho' it was his opinion that public creeds and confessions of faith were not without their uses, and that they might be of special service as public exhibitions of the religious sentiments of those churches, who adopted those theological formularies.

IN the course of his preaching, he insisted much, and with remarkable clearness upon the grand, leading, and most important doctrines of divine revelation. In particular, upon that humbling doctrine of the deplorable depravity of mankind since the fall; that by nature they are dead in trespasses and sins.—He was particular as to the œconomy of redemption:—the important doctrines of the sacred trinity:—the offices which each divine person sustains and executes in the affair of our redemption. Who was more full in the doctrines of grace; or that could set them in a more convincing, amiable, and striking light than he! Or who better taught the nature and necessity of the new birth! Of progressive sanctification! Who

placed in a clearer light the efficacious agency of the holy spirit in the application of the benefits of redemption : or in the rise and progress of a saving work of God in the souls of the elect ! Their justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone !

HE has labored hard to guard his people against all dangerous errors and mistakes ; in particular, against the giddy wildness of enthusiasm, and the licentious tenets of antinomian delusion.

HE was esteemed an exceeding evangelical and experimental preacher, very close, particular and distinguishing. Numerous were his critical marks of true holiness, or rules of trial, to discriminate between the precious and the vile ; or to point out the difference between saving grace and its counterfeits : and he carefully varied his addresses according to the different state, cases, and circumstances of the various classes of his hearers.

WITH great diligence and perseverance he searched the scriptures, and meditated in them day and night ; and such was his acquaintance with them, as that some were almost ready to call him a perfect APOLLOS. In the sacred volume he found an inexhaustible treasury of truths the most useful and entertaining, by which, through grace, he both enriched himself and others. He brought forth out of his treasure things new as well as old. In the course of his ministry he carefully avoided the example of those who move round and round in the same narrow circle, insisting on a few subjects in an endless and tedious repetition

repetition, but he moved forward in a sphere truly extensive, and proceeded on a large plan, from one important and entertaining truth to another, in a grateful and almost endless variety. On this account he was highly esteemed by the judicious.

IN sermonizing, his method was correct, natural, easy, and clear: the matter weighty; commonly expressed in an advantageous style, easy but animating. For the most part he was both doctrinal and practical in the same sermon; i. e. in the former part he endeavored to elucidate or clear up some doctrinal point, to establish and confirm it by proper evidence, to set it in the most plain and convincing point of light, answer objections if needful, consider cases of conscience, &c. This with a view to make his hearers more and more knowing in divinity, or to remove scruples from their minds. Then in a pathetic application to their consciences, he would endeavor not only to make them see, but feel, how interesting the subject was to them, as it concerned their souls-eternal salvation or damnation, and so command their hopes or fears; or shew how the glory of God was concerned, and so excite the pious hopes and fears of his children, that so the spiritual and natural springs of action might be effectually moved. He endeavored so to place truth before his auditory, as that it might descend through the understanding, and from thence sink into the heart with the utmost influence.

He had a ready and fruitful invention, a rich and lively imagination, and a clear and commanding voice, which he
could

could vary with ease, and to great advantage. In his delivery, he spoke with proper deliberation, neither quick nor slow: and with utmost ease he could give a remarkable emphasis to his expressions, and so happily variate the manner of his pronunciation, according to the various nature of his subjects, as that his elocution was either solemn and grave, majestic and commanding, terrifying and alarming, soft and persuasive, gentle and melting, insinuating and alluring, as occasion required. These ministerial qualities, together with a remarkable sense of the weight and importance of divine things, with which his heart many times was apparently impressed, rendered him a very pathetic, popular, and useful preacher.

OH! with what astonishing terrors have I heard † him represent the torments of hell, and the imminent, amazing danger of the impenitent sinner! With what glowing colours, and sweetly surprizing language would he paint the glories of heaven, and describe the holy and elevated joys of immortality! In what melting strains would he represent the sufferings of Christ, and his dying love to sinners! So lively were his descriptions of the great Redeemer's excruciating sufferings, as that the solemn scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary would seem to open afresh to the view, and revive anew in the imagination of his auditory; so that Christ might be said to be set forth crucified before their eyes, in his animated descriptions, as well as in the sacramental symbols. With what alluring persuasions would he pray and intreat sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled

† In younger life I enjoyed his preaching two years, at Lyme.

reconciled to God ! Such was the apparent fervor of his spirit, and the tender emotions of his compassionate heart, as that sometimes he would appear as a flame of fire, and then all dissolved in tears. Some of his stated hearers have not scrupled to call him one of the greatest preachers of the present age.

IN his extemporaneous performances, he was remarkably correct, his sentiments well ranged, his words aptly chosen, and each word in its proper place. He excelled most of his brethren in the ministry as to the gift of prayer. He had a special command of proper and pertinent expressions in his addresses to heaven : sometimes he was remarkably laconic and comprehensive ; at other times agreeably copious and diffusive. He never made the same prayer twice, but excelled in an extraordinary variety both as to substance and expression. He could excellently adapt himself with much propriety and pertinency to special occasions, and sudden emergencies. At times he seemed to come near to God's throne of grace, and pour out his soul before him in the most ardent desires and devout addresses. And it has been reported, that God in the course of his providence has granted him some signal answers. *

DURING the last thirty years of his life, he has ministered to one of the largest congregations upon the continent ; and his labors have been abundant, even to the utmost

* One instance is a kind of miraculous cure of a young woman at Chebacco, while he was at prayer.

most of his power, and sometimes beyond it: this is evident, as his constitution, which was delicate, has at times sunk under the unequal burden.

HE was not only indefatigable in his studies, but also very vigilant of the state of his numerous flock, applied himself with great care and fidelity to minister to them, not only in public, but in private, according to their particular cases, and different circumstances.

HIS remarkable labors and diligence in his office were honored and crowned with an answerable blessing from heaven. While he ministered to his people at Lyme, he had many seals of his ministry: at a time of uncommon effusion of God's spirit of grace, he entertained charitable hopes that near two hundred souls were savingly renewed. And in this town he has with pious pleasure seen the success of his ministry in a happy revival of religion, numbers flocking to Christ, and following the Lamb of God, whithersoever he goeth, exemplifying the religion of Jesus in a shining course of christian obedience, some of whom have excelled in divine knowledge, and pious liberality.

HE was a man of uncommon sensibility of heart, of a delicate turn and keen relish for friendship, most constant and faithful in his friendly connexions. For a course of years he cultivated a large correspondence abroad, particularly with a number of learned, ingenious, and pious ministers of the church of Scotland. He loved to see the mourner comforted, the distressed relieved, the poor assisted, and the meek exalted. I have been privy to a remarkable

able instance of his pious liberality, but what were the number of his secret alms the world must be ignorant until he shall be rewarded openly. He knew well what belonged to a polite address, and courtly language to the great, whom he was disposed to treat with a becoming respect, but he had too much greatness and dignity of mind to stoop to the ignoble service of flattery; or to move a single finger to varnish or gild the vices of men however high they might rise in worldly wealth, grandeur and power; or however they were flattered, courted and adored by others. Probably he would not have meanly truckled in a way of adulation, or even have disguised his religious sentiments in a way of honoring tyrannic power, to have gained a kingdom.

AMONG his friends and familiar acquaintance, he was very free, pleasant and sociable; but never talkative, beyond the bounds of true decency and politeness. Sometimes he would give some scope to his enlivening wit, and sprightly humor; but would cautiously guard against all levity and vanity, as knowing what belonged to the gravity of his office; and the importance of abstaining from all appearance of evil. He could be meek, without meanness; humble, without servility; pleasant and chearful, without levity; serious and grave, without melancholy; devout without superstition; zealous against men's vices, without bitterness to their persons.

IN a word, through the main course of his ministry, he gave us reason to believe, that he lived by faith in the Son of God, relied on his righteousness, and depended on his
sufficiency

sufficiency. That he was a true lover of the supreme being, and of the divine redeemer; earnestly seeking the glory of his name, and the interests of his kingdom:—Was a faithful friend of mankind;—laborious and diligent in his work;—Was a man of prayer:—And in his life and conversation he endeavored to exemplify that religion which he preached to others. And thus was a good and faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

If any should enquire, Did he then rise superior to all human imperfection? This is by no means pretended. He had his infirmities, of which none was more sensible than he; as is evident in many parts of his private diary, where he humbly laments before God that he was no more conformed, in heart and life to the rule of his duty. He was a man subject to like passions as we are, which to govern agreeably to the pious desires of his own heart, under certain trials, required his vigorous endeavors, in which he did not always succeed to his own satisfaction.

BUT tho' his natural passions were strong, I have known him under a long series of severe provoking trials, (at Lyme) behave with a meekness, truly exemplary and surprizing. Such was the power of divine grace, which was sufficient for him.

HE was not without some degree of instability in his constitution; from whence some men, who have been thought unfriendly to him, took occasion to style him Jesuitical, as tho' he were a man of duplicity; but had they a just and impartial view of his true character, we trust, they

they must have esteemed him an Israelite indeed. For however in lesser matters, his judgment and disposition might vary at different times;—yet from the time when he dates his conversion, which was at least thirty five years before his death, he has appeared in an UNWAVERING manner to adhere to the great, essential and infinitely important doctrines of christianity; with unshaken courage to exert himself for their support and defence, to pay a most sacred regard to all the precepts of our most holy religion, not only in an uninterrupted course of excellent, enlightening, close, pungent, and animating sermons, but also in a life of great strictness, labor, self-denial, and apparent devotedness to God, whose glory he seemed to make the central point of his vigorous aims, and unwearied endeavors. In these respects he has shewn himself to be a man of christian UNIFORMITY, and exemplary STABILITY. Oh how happy to be taught, animated, supported and guided by him who is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

DURING the last three months of his life he was confined, and his bodily anguish was daily increasing; * “yet with christian fortitude he endured all. His prospect of dissolution towards the last part of his illness was clear—near—certain! His declarations of his constant sense of the presence and peace of a God in Christ; of his unwavering assurance of an interest in his favor; of his longing to meet with death, and steady confidence of being supported in it; and joy at the apprehensions of its nearness, were on many occasions (when he could speak) refreshing

H

entertainment

* This last paragraph was extracted out of the Essex Journal &c.

entertainment to his friends that sat around his bed. All his anxieties were occasioned by his flock ; their case seemed to lie nearer to, and heavier on his heart, than his own : but at last, after long hard struggling, he sweetly and silently slept away into the bosom of his Lord"——From whom, we trust, he received that cheering benediction *Well done ! thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord !*"

BUT while your beloved pastor is ascended, as you trust, to the joys of immortality, are you not sunk under the weight of disheartning sorrows ? Indéed, it becomes you to mourn with keen sensibility under God's chastising hand ; but especially to make the best improvement of so instructive a providence. This sorrowful occasion then seems to invite a few words by way of address to you, with whom this servant of God hath been so nearly connected.

FIRST, I would address myself to the bereaved children.

MY dear friends, with the tenderest affection I can sympathize with you under the corrective frowns of heaven. The great disposer of all things has taken away not only your venerable and instructive minister, but also your dear and affectionate father, at a stroke. He might well have been very dear to you, considered only in the sacred and important connexion, as your spiritual guide ; but in addition to that, you were united to him by the sweet and endearing ties of nature ; from whence has arisen a pleasant, mutual intercourse of natural affection : add to this the innumerable instances of the lively and striking exercise

cise of paternal love, delicate friendship, and affectionate tenderness, which you have received in the course of your education, under his kind smiles, nurturing hand and obliging protection. So that not only your high esteem of his venerable office and character, but also your filial affection, and natural gratitude, have joined their influences to unite and bind your hearts to him by strong and endearing bands. When such an union is dissolved by the hand of death, a keen pain is excited in surviving relatives as if the bands of nature were burst, or their hearts rent asunder.

BUT however trying and distressing this dispensation be, consider, it is ordered by God, a Being of unerring rectitude and boundless goodness. In this, he has aimed at wise and holy ends, worthy of himself : among the various ranks of created beings, he never yet injured a single individual. This consideration, were there no other, might well be enough to silence a thousand complaints rising in the heart of a mourner. And though for the present you may be without a cheering view of the wisdom and goodness of God in this his corrective frown ; yet you may enjoy that valuable favor hereafter, if the correction prove salutary, and yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

WE live in a world of sin which is inseparably connected with sorrow. It is good for us at times to have our hearts wrung with pain, that we may hate and dread sin the more, which is the moral, meritorious cause of all the natural evils and distresses that fall to our lot. The school of affliction, if we are suitably studious in it, may afford us some of the noblest lessons, and the richest as well as the
pleasantest

pleasanteft instructions :—we may learn to be more weaned from the world, and become more heavenly-minded ;—to depend lefs upon the creature, empty and deceitful, and more upon the all-fufficient Creator ; to fee an end of perfection here below, turn off our eyes from beholding vanity, to lift them up and fix them more intenfely upon the transcendent glories above ; that while we dwell below, our converfation be in heaven—and learn to make quicker and nobler advances, in our preparation for that world of bleffednefs. Such instructions, (oh how important !) have often been given, and learned in the fchool of affliction.

EVEN our exalted redeemer was once a man of sorrows—when he dwelt in this valley of tears, and was alfo taught in the fchool of affliction, and made great proficiency in learning. Infallible infpiration informs that *He learned obedience by the things that he fuffered.* (f) And *He was made perfect through fufferings.* (t) In humble imitation of his divine example, may we alfo learn obedience by the things which we fuffer. And under that falutary difcipline, Oh may we all make more rapid advances towards that glorious ftandard of perfection !

YOUR affliction may feem heavy, but it is comparatively light. It is incontestably very light compared with the meritorious caufe of it ; it is alfo light compared to the future glory which you fhall fhare, if through grace, you rightly improve under it. If you please God under his rod, all things fhall work together for your good, and you fhall

(f) *Heb.* v. 8. (t) *Chap.* ii. 10.

shall enjoy the society of your pious relatives hereafter to a thousand times greater advantage than ever you did, or could have done, amidst the darkness, the sins and sorrows of the present imperfect state. Double your diligence then in preparing for the future state of blessedness and glory.

You have lost your earthly father ; may the father of mercies, the God of all consolation be your father and everlasting portion ! You have lost your pastor ; may the Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, the only wise God our saviour, be your teacher and instructor, and make you wise to eternal salvation ! And may your light affliction, which is but for a moment, work for you *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ! (u)*

I pass on to a Second Address, which is directed to the bereaved church and congregation.

MEN, Brethren, and Fathers ; it is your duty and interest to humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, which he has stretched over you in his holy providence, seriously to consider the meritorious cause of this corrective dispensation, to examine what improvements you have made under the labors of that good and faithful servant of God, whose ministry you enjoyed for a course of years, and whom you so justly esteemed and honored.

BE exhorted then to give the more earnest heed to the things you have heard, lest at any time you should let them slip. The excellent sermons of your late Pastor must

(u) 2 Cor. iv 17.

must, in a sense, be preached over again in your hearing; but oh! in a manner how different from that in which you heard them delivered before! If you ask me when, and where this shall be? I answer, at the day of judgment, before the awful tribunal of Christ, in the presence of an assembled world. It shall then be known what doctrines you were taught, what arguments were offered, what motives were urged, what pathetic addresses were made, and what allurements were used. What effect the sermons have had upon you, shall be critically examined, and the truth shall appear without any disguise or misrepresentation. Whether you received or rejected the great truths and messages from God by his late ambassador, will clearly appear in the light of the great day.

WHEN you have heard of your state of sin and guilt by nature, by God's faithful minister set before you, according to infallible inspiration, it will be demanded and determined at the great day, whether you were suitably affected with it, and properly solicitous to be delivered from it.

WHEN you have had the glorious plan of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ laid before you, in the plain, beautiful, strong, and striking light of divine revelation, it will be made to appear at the day of decision, whether you heartily acquiesced in it, or rejected it as disagreeable to the gross relish, or unhallowed disposition of your minds.

WHEN you heard the doctrines of divine grace clearly explained, and incontestably proved—the infallible Judge will

will hereafter determine, whether corresponding impressions were made on your hearts, whether with humble gratitude you received them, or treated them with neglect and disapprobation.

WHEN the personal and mediatorial glories of the Son of God, our great Redeemer, have been proposed as themes for your contemplation, and when the important doctrine of his divinity has been evinced and supported by the strongest arguments, placed in the most easy and convincing light, and when you have heard his superhumane excellencies and divine beauties represented, or seen them displayed in the light of divine revelation, it shall be infallibly decided, whether you esteemed him as the chief, among ten thousand, and loved him as altogether lovely, or undervalued and rejected him:

WHEN the nature and necessity of regeneration and saving conversion have been clearly exhibited before you, whether you in a state of nature were greatly engaged, or very indifferent about your being the subject of this most important change, shall be then known to all worlds.

WHEN the doctrine of the absolute necessity of justification before God, by the imputed righteousness of Christ has been preached, it shall be publicly seen hereafter, whether you sought it by FAITH, or as it were by the DEEDS OF THE LAW.

WHEN you heard of the absolute necessity of true holiness and a life devoted to God, it shall be demanded and determined another day, whether you were ardently desirous

rous of perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and of walking to heaven in that most lovely road : or whether you was not rather disposed to be careless ; or to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and make Christ the minister of sin.

WHEN the nature of true religion as distinguished from counterfeits, and critical rules of trial were laid before you, it will be made to appear at the day of decision, whether, with proper fidelity and scrutiny, you engaged in the great work of self-examination.

WHEN you who are parents, or heads of families have been repeatedly urged to the practice of that great duty of regular government and visible religion in your families, and the vast importance of the good education of children or servants—the infallible Judge will hereafter determine, whether you made conscience, in the use of your best endeavors, to discharge parental duties, or were criminally negligent.

WHEN vice has been reprov'd, and painted in its hideous deformity, and virtue recommended in her own attractive, illustrious, and truly divine charms ;— it shall be infallibly decided, whether your heart was disaffected to the former, and enamour'd with the latter.

AND when you have heard of the glories of heaven, and torments of hell, it shall be known to the whole assembled world, whether you were properly solicitous to avoid the eternal abodes of horror, and secure a title to the ineffable delights of immortality, in the kingdom of glory.

My brethren, when these important matters, with numerous others, shall be canvassed, and you closely pressed with the most pungent interrogatories, at the great day of decision, there will not be one drowsy, inattentive hearer. Every heart will be penetrated, and every faculty engaged. This will be a joyful day to those of you, who, through grace, love the truth, delight in it, feed upon it, walk in it, and are cordially obedient to it: you will find the Judge your friend, whose condescending smile will be to you, as the dawn of heaven. But as to impenitent sinners, a shivering horror will run thrilling through every vein and nerve of their vital frame; and unutterable dread, distress, and consternation shall seize and fill their guilty souls. If any here present, who have lived under the ministration of your late pastor, shall be found hereafter among this miserable number at the Judge's left hand, then wretched beyond expression will you be! All the means of grace you have enjoyed, every sermon you have heard; yea, every invitation and offer which have been made you, every argument and motive agreeable to the mind of Christ which have been pressed upon you, every gentle and endearing entreaty to return to God and happiness, through Christ, which you have heard, will be brought in judgment against you. Oh! how dreadful the reckoning! how dismal the score of your guilt! But God forbid! Grace prevent that this should be the lot of any one here present!

In the mean time, it will be your highest wisdom so to live according to the spirit and rules of christianity, as

that your whole life may be one continued preparation for a future judgment, and a state of endless perfection in holiness and felicity. A life of true preparation, is a life truly devoted to God through our Lord Jesus Christ; or, a voluntary conformity to the best of beings, and an intercourse with him, through our divine mediator. And so far as we are conformed to him who is the fountain of being and blessedness, we are animated by his spirit, aim at the same ends, and rejoice in the same interests with our divine leader, the Captain of our salvation.

THIS direction which I have now given as a preparative to future blessedness may be summed up in fewer words, *viz.* **LIVE IN THE EXERCISE OF DIVINE LOVE.** This is the way to a happy life here, and perfect glory hereafter. Divine love is the sum of duty, and, considered in its happy fruits and blessed consequences, it is the sum of blessedness. In a word, it comprises holiness and happiness.

A spirit of divine love and peace, is not only most amiable, but eminently useful for a people, who, like you, are as sheep without a shepherd, as it may allure a minister of the same lovely disposition to fix his residence among them, and feed them with knowledge and understanding; whereas an unchristian, illiberal and malevolent spirit, is as contrary to the disposition of a truly great and **PIOUS** divine, as light is to darkness.

DIVINE love will be your best defence against your spiritual enemies, an impregnable armour against the attacks
of

of Satan and his instruments ; for if we live in love and peace, THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU : and WHO WILL HARM YOU, IF YE BE FOLLOWERS OF THAT WHICH IS GOOD ? There is a divine dignity, a true christian grandeur in a pacific, forgiving, benevolent spirit, whereby a private christian, or church, may rise superior to their abusers, and return good for evil. This is truly great, excellent and divine, whereas the contrary spirit, is low, little, mean, despicable, and worse than brutish, (x) where both tempers are elegantly and pathetically described and contrasted. Abuses indeed may be so great, as may justly require, and demand a prosecution of the offender, yet, even then, it ought to be done in the exercise of love, goodness, and gentleness, which is consistent with the utmost firmness and resolution.

EARNESTLY seek then, that God would abundantly shed abroad divine love in each of your hearts, and enable you exceedingly to grow in that heavenly grace. Consider, how divine love ennobles and dignifies the mind. It ardently desires the happiness of others—of families, societies, towns, provinces, countries, and kingdoms ; yea, it wishes the happiness of mankind, even to the latest posterity. Blessed with this principle, you will love your worst enemy, and pray for your greatest abuser ; you will return good for evil, and blessing for cursing. It will move you to an humble, meek and graceful deportment ; for this virtue suffereth long, and is kind, it envieth not, it vaunteth

(x) James i. 14, 15, 16.

eth not itself, is not puffed up ; it doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It carries true dignity with it, and makes a person resemble even God himself ; for divine love is his fairest image. Did this celestial virtue universally prevail upon earth, what a lustre would it immediately give mankind ! What excellent order would immediately take place among all relations and conditions of men ! Servants would be faithful, masters kind and condescending, children chearfully submissive and dutiful, parents discreetly tender and affectionate, the wife kind and ingratiating, the husband loving and endearing, the minister wise, instructive, devout, and compassionate, the audience inquisitive and teachable. Each one pursuing the happiness of others, and finding his own in the attempt.

WELL may it be said, How good and how pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity ! Divine love is the true source of the purest pleasure and delight. Be persuaded then to seek and pursue it, cultivate and advance it. This is a direct course to the world of love and felicity, from whence this virtue descends, and where you would hope to arrive, and, with your ascended pastor, enter into the joy of your Lord, rejoice with him, and be his crown of rejoicing for ever and ever. AMEN !!!

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND

JONATHAN PARSONS, *A. M.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

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THE HISTORY OF

THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

BY

W. H. RAY




S E R M O N I.

The truth of the word of God.

PSALM CXIX, 130.

*The entrance of thy words giveth light :
it giveth understanding unto the
simple.*

 **T**HE general design of this Psalm is to excite the members of the true Church to preserve the purity of faith and practice, and to avoid all opinions not justified by the word of God. To this end the Psalmist tells us *the word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths,* a lamp and light, not only to our general course, but in every particular action: *Able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished to all good works.*

To promote this important design, the inspired writer argues from the very genius of the doctrine, and shows that the truth which is contained in the word of God is worthy to be learned by all. For although the knowledge of other things may be very useful in life, yet these other things will never shew us the blameable cause of all those calamities to which all mankind are liable in this world; nor teach us the only way of relief under a sense of guilt and danger, when the wrath of God lies heavily upon us. Indeed something of God may be known by studying the works of creation; such strictures of him may arise in an attentive mind as to beget reverence of his majesty; but these discoveries are not comparable to those which the apostle speaks of. So natural conscience may teach men some difference between good and evil, and that we are more inclined to vice than virtue: but no human heart could find out the rise of moral evil, 'till it was discovered by a supernatural revelation: but this revelation teaches us from whence it sprang, in the plainest manner.

THE portion of scripture which I have read to improve our minds and better our hearts, gives us leave to discourse upon the TRUTH, the EXCELLENCE, and the EFFICACY of the word of God.

I. "The truth of the scriptures". Thy words, or writings, sent to the children of men. The things contained in that book, which, by way of eminence, is called the Scriptures, is the word of God: It must be confessed, that among the many who enjoy the external dispensation of God's word, few, very few believe the truths contained in it from a divine testimony. But omitting many arguments that might be offered, it is evident from the writers and the writings, that the Scriptures are the word of God.

"CONSIDER the writers:" Examine their character and condition, and see if they are not worthy of credit. As they delivered nothing in their own names, so they take none of the glory to themselves. They spake not divine truths, that they might acquire worldly honors or riches; but were content to suffer all manner of reproach and persecution for the truth's sake which they delivered. They spake in God's name, and affirmed that what they uttered was by a revelation which they received from him. Yea, they wrote many things that tended to their dishonor, that God might be glorified, and the truth preserved to future generations. Now, what sort of men can you imagine the writers of the Scriptures to be, if they were not under the
influence

influence of an infallible guide? To suppose they were sincere, honest men, affirming they received this revelation from God, when they knew they did not, is the most absurd thing in the world. To suppose they were wicked, designing men, is to suppose that for true, which is altogether improbable. What wicked man would have written to the world, that *the Lord hates the workers of iniquity, that he abhors the covetous, that there is no peace to the wicked, that whoremongers, adulterers, drunkards, and liars, shall have no portion in the kingdom of God and of Christ?* What wicked man would have written the most excellent rules of holy living and righteous dealing? Can it be supposed that wicked men would inculcate the strictest rules of moral virtue, and openly detect and expose all manner of vice? Would a man that lived in covetousness, oppression, or slander, rise up in the face of danger, before a multitude and say, *all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them?* Would the revengeful and malicious have the face to say, *dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay it saith the Lord?* Would they have the front to say, *if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good?* Would they say, *recompense*

to no man evil for evil; render not railing for railing; provide things honest in the sight of all men? Would they have said, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, Godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity? Or would the impure and unholy, who lived in any course of impurities have said, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. We have wronged no man; we have corrupted no man: we have defrauded no man. Make straight paths for your feet; follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord— Looking diligently, lest any root of bitterness springing up, should trouble you, and thereby many be defiled?— Is it, I say, supposable that any wicked man by himself, or a company of them conspiring together, should expose, and render themselves and character odious in the sight of all men, both good and bad? Surely they could not imagine that such a forgery would have any tendency to advance their secular interest, or worldly honor; but much the contrary every way. Hence there is not the least probability that the Scriptures are the forgeries of wicked men: and if neither good nor bad men would have forged such a book, it must be the word of God,

or a revelation from heaven. How unwise a part therefore, are those guilty of acting, who despise, or set light by the holy scriptures! Suppose what is written in the Bible should prove true; suppose a heaven of endless blessedness, or a hell of endless torments should be assigned to those with whose characters they are connected; then, what will become of the proud scorner, and bold despiser of Christ and the gospel? *The wicked shall be turned into hell* (says the scripture) *and all the people that forget God.* And again, *he that believes the gospel shall be saved, but he that believes it not, shall be damned.* Are they not all therefore like madmen, who run the desperate risk of eternal damnation; or choose so dangerous a road before a safe one?—But their extreme folly will appear in the strongest point of view, when we consider

“THE writings themselves.” Some think the majesty and grandeur of style, though it condescends to the very lowest capacity, is a manifest display of infinite wisdom in revealing the profound mysteries of salvation in such a manner: and indeed the plainness of the speech exceeds all human performances, however adorned with eloquence, and has a greater adaptedness to pierce the heart: But this I shall not insist upon at present.

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THE Subjects treated on in the scriptures, argue their being a divine revelation. Look into the Bible, and there you may read *the glorious works of God in creation, redemption, and preservation; divine mercy exercised to his people, and inflexible justice exercised against his enemies, in overthrowing their designs, restraining their violence, turning their counsel into foolishness, and plunging themselves at last into destruction.* Read over volumes of uninspired writers, and human darkness and weakness are manifest on every subject. Read arts and histories, counsels, policies, and enterprizes, in other writings, and they appear to be indited by the spirit of man: but all the things in the holy scriptures appear to be divine. All the works of nature, providence, and grace, are ascribed to God, that he might have the glory of all: and who will imagine that such debasing of the creature, contrary to the pride of man, should be written to exalt God in every thing, unless it was by divine inspiration? Besides, there are great and glorious truths that are spoken of in the Bible, which could never have been known had not God revealed them. They are so far above human ability to have found them out, that they cannot be comprehended now they are revealed. Particularly the astonishing truths respecting the redemption of lost sinners by the Son of God. Who could have

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thought of God being manifest in the flesh ; making himself of no reputation, taking upon him the form of a servant ; humbling himself, and becoming obedient to death, the death of the cross, that he might procure a righteousness, honorary to the divine character, and safe for the self-desperate that believe in his name ? Those great and glorious truths must have been hid for ever, had not God revealed them ; and now they are revealed, they are still unsearchable riches ; things that Angels admire, and stoop down with intense desire to look into ? So again ; the revealed doctrine of the Trinity of persons in one God. The being of one eternal, self-existent, independent God, is so plainly deducible from the creation of all things, that it is scarce possible to contemplate the extensive variety of creatures, without acknowledging one God over all. But that he who is but one in essence, should be three in personal subsistence, without division of substance, is a truth, which reason could never comprehend nor invent. There are no footsteps of these sublime and important truths from the light of nature, nor any discoveries of them through the volumes of creation and providence. But these, and many other truths depending upon them, are discoveries of supernatural revelation only. The words of Job, that perfect and upright man of God, are applicable

applicable here. *Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knows not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith it is not in me: and the sea saith it is not with me. It is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air:*

AGAIN. Scripture prophecies and their accomplishment, argue the Bible to be the word of God. It must necessarily be the prerogative of God himself to foretell events which have a punctual fulfilment. We may in this case properly use the challenge which God gave to his people about their idols †. *Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them, and declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that they are God's.* It plainly appears, that, whoever was the author of the scriptures, foresaw future events, which had no natural cause to produce them; events that were supernatural, and contrary to second causes: and from whom should such events be distinctly foretold, and precisely fulfilled, but from the wis-

dom of that God, who foreseeth all things? and therefore whose word can this be if it is not the word of God? For instance:

WHO but an omniscient God could have foretold the restoration of the JEWS from their long captivity, and the re-building the temple by the hand of CYRUS? Yet so it was prophesied of him. ¶ *He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, saith the Lord of Hosts:* and we are particularly told what that city was, and who was to build it, and to lay the foundation of the temple. † Now it is remarkable, that this prophecy was before the captivity of the JEWS, and when there was no probable reason to think they would ever be captives in Babylon; nor ever have occasion for re-building their city and temple. Yea, it is further remarkable, that this prophecy was at least, an hundred years before CYRUS was born; and therefore probably before his parents were born. Now, who could foretell that there would be such a man in the world, and that his parents should be inclined to call his name CYRUS? Who could foresee that this CYRUS should be raised up and endowed to be an instrument in providence to conquer BABYLON; to subdue nations before him, to take kings and cities, and to destroy
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¶ *Isa.* xlv. 13.

† *Ch.* xlii. 28.

the glory of kingdoms, so that they should never more recover their ancient splendor? Who but the omniscient God could foresee that this same CYRUS, though an heathen, and so had a natural bias against the Jews, should have such affectionate regards to them, as not only to discharge them from their long captivity, and give them free liberty to return unto their own land, but to encourage and assist them in building their city and temple? Well might God alledge this as a memorable instance of his prescience, and challenge all the false Gods, and their votaries to produce the like, as in Isa. 45. 21: *Who has declared this from ancient time? who has told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? and there is no God beside me, a just God and a Savior, and there is none beside me:* and so Chap. 46. 10. *Remember the former things of old, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* Surely none but God could foresee, none but God could foretell such great events: and therefore the word in which they are written down is the word of God.

AGAIN. Who but the omniscient God could have foretold, that *the Sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, until*

Shiloh

Shiloh come; & unto him should the gathering of the people be? JACOB had bequeathed to JUDAH particularly spiritual blessings. * *Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee;* and for greater certainty he adds, § *The sceptre shall not depart, &c.* The word translated scepter, signifies a rod or staff of any kind; and particularly the rod or staff which belonged to each tribe as the ensign of their authority; and thence it is transferred to signify a tribe, as being united under one rod or staff of government, or a ruler of a tribe. JUDAH was then constituted a tribe, and had a staff of government as well as the rest of his brethren. Now, such a staff, such a ruler shall not depart from Judah; such authority as Judah then had, was to remain with his posterity, ¶ he should not cease from being a body politic, having rulers and governors of their own, 'till a certain period. The word translated law-giver, signifies not only one who makes laws, but one who is Judge of law, or exercises jurisdiction; and in the Greek it is translated *εΓΟΥΜΕΝΟΣ*, a leader or præident. The same word in the English bible is translated a *Governor*. † Hence the meaning is, that there should not want a Judge of

* Gen. xlvii. 8. § ver. 10. ¶ See Dr. Newton vol. I. page 94, 95, &c. † Judges v. 14.

of the race and posterity of Judah, *until SHILOH come*, i. e. until the coming of the Messiah: Or thus; *there shall not be taken away one having authority, or having the principality from the house of Judah, or a scribe from his childrens children, until Messias come, whose is the kingdom.*—*And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* i. e. the Gentiles shall be gathered, or become obedient to the Messiah.

Now consider; was it at all probable when this prophecy was delivered, that the posterity of JACOB, should have princely authority given them? or if such a thing might happen, that any of these shepherds, or their posterity should be kings? or if they should, how improbable was it, that the authority should be in the hands of JUDAH? Is it not highly reasonable to suppose his elder brethren should be preferred before him? And when MOSES wrote this prophecy, which was several hundred years after it was first given, still there was no human probability of JUDAH's having the authority; for MOSES who was the chief magistrate, was of the tribe of LEVI; JOSHUA, his successor, was of the tribe of EPHRAIM; and afterwards God appointed SAUL to be their king, who was of the tribe of BENJAMIN. Yet, against human prospects, afterwards the tribe of JUDAH got the supreme rule, and continued in it
until

until Christ came. Yea, it subsisted in our Savior's time: *they had their chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people*, though their authority, relative to the State, was somewhat abridged, & their judgment could not be executed without the consent of the roman governor, as appears from John 18. 31. Their Sceptre was then departing, and in about 40 years afterwards it totally departed. Their city was taken, their temple was destroyed, and they themselves were either slain with the sword, or sold for slaves, and from that time to this they have never formed one body of people, but have been dispersed among all nations; their tribes and genealogies have been all confounded, and they have lived without a ruler, without a law-giver, and without supreme authority in any part of the earth: Nor will they ever be able to shew any marks or signs of the Sceptre among them, until they discover the unknown country where never man dwelt. || But the gathering of the Gentiles have been unto Christ ever since. The conversion of CORNELIUS was the first fruits of the Gentiles, and the harvest afterwards was very plentiful. In a few years the gospel *took root downward, and bore fruit upward* in the most considerable parts of the world then known. Well, if these things are so, does not this prophecy and its accomplishment

|| *Bishop Sherlock.*

ment furnish us with an invincible evidence, not only that Jesus Christ is the Messiah that was to come, but that the scriptures are the word of God? for who but God, could foresee and foretell that the Sceptre should depart from JUDAH, before ever JUDAH had any supremacy? Who but God, could foresee and foretell that the Sceptre should depart though Judah was invested with rule? Who could foretell the time, the circumstances, the destruction of Jerusalem, with that exactness which the accomplishment agrees to, if he were not the Omniscient?

I should offer other evidences to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, but they will naturally fall under the head of the excellency of the word; and before we enter upon that head, let us make one or two remarks.

1. HENCE observe, something of the unreasonableness of unbelief. I suppose it probable that some who have heard me adduce the evidences to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, think the time has been spent to little good purpose. Who among us is there that does not believe the Bible to be God's word? We hope that we are not infidels, that there should be a call for the minister to undertake the proof of the scriptures to be a divine revelation

velation. But stop a little: how come you to believe the scriptures to be of divine original? Is your belief of them any more than an opinion of their truth, arising from education? Do you receive them as true from a divine testimony to the truth of them? A right belief of scripture truths arises from seeing the certainty of the evidence to the truth of them. There is such proof of the scriptures being the word of God, as will justify a man's belief of them upon the strictest principles of reason. What more unreasonable than not to believe them to be God's word, from that evidence which is unanswerable? You cannot think that any but a God could have revealed those supernatural, most important truths that are written there. You cannot think that any but the omniscient God could have foretold many things recorded, with their various circumstances, with that exactness as the accomplishment proves them to be, and therefore you may well confess that unbelief is infinitely more unreasonable. Not to believe the divine testimony to the truth of the word, is to disbelieve the truth of God himself: and what bolder affront can be given to God, than to disbelieve the scriptures to be writings which he has sent us? It is implicitly to call him a liar; an unholy being; a devil, for the devil is a liar, and the father of lies. O how amazingly stupid are men's

men's consciences grown! Some unbelievers have natural conscience accusing them if they tell a plain lie; and yet they seem very easy while they give God the lie every day they live. What is the reason that unbelief is so little thought of; or if it is thought of, men look upon it as a light matter? Is it a light matter to affront God, and despise that evidence to the truth of his word, which none but the only wise, and omniscient God could offer?

TRUE, I suppose you will say, true, this is an affront not to be borne with. I thank God, I believe the scriptures to be the word of God. If I could live according to my faith, I should do well enough. But are you not mistaken about believing the scriptures to be God's word? If you believed that the law in its commands and threatenings, was really God's word, would you not feel yourselves under guilt? would you not feel yourselves miserable, wretched, self-ruined sinners? "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and if God impress the evidence upon your conscience so as to convince you it was really his law, would not the terrors of his wrath fall upon you? It is without doubt true, that if you have not believed unto righteousness, and do not yet feel the wrath of God lying upon you, you do not yet believe the commands and cur-

ses written in the bible, are really the word of God. And so, are you not mistaken about believing in Christ? If you have not the evidence so borne in upon your conscience as to assure your heart that God is the speaker, you do not believe that it is the gospel of the grace of God. || I am afraid you will not heartily give in to these things. You try to persuade yourselves that God is the writer of the word: but you are doubtless mistaken if you think you believe it; for if you believed the law, to be God's law, you would be pricked in the heart; your countenance would be changed, and your thoughts would trouble you, so that the joints of your loins would be loosed, and your knees would smite one against another; you would be weighed in the balances and be found wanting. But notwithstanding all your faith, are you not crying, what shall I eat? and what shall I drink? or wherewithal shall I be clothed? O how few, compared with the whole, how very few are solicitous to know whether they believe the divine word as it is, in truth, the word of God, and not of man!

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|| i. .e Impenitent sinners have not that realizing sense and practical conviction of the truth of the gospel, which comes into the Apostle's definition of true faith, Heb. 11. 1. though they may believe the gospel as they do other historical facts e. g. that there was such a City as Rome, such a Hero as Julius Cesar.

2. LET us carefully enquire what use we make of the word of God, under the advantages we are placed of knowing it is really true. We have great advantages of considering the truth and importance of the scriptures. We often hear that faith in the divine truth, arises from the in-bearing of divine light; so as to convince the conscience that the word spoken is indeed the word of God, and not of man. But have our hearts been so persuaded, as to give glory to God, as the author of the scriptures in the law and the gospel, in the threatnings and promises? Have we set to our seal that God is true? God has made it appear, and will further manifest that the scripture is his word, and that he is a God of truth. But his word, however adapted to the important end of our salvation, will prove of no final benefit to us, unless our hearts are persuaded to believe really it is the word of God. -If you never saw the unbelief of your hearts; if you never knew the time when you could no more believe the scriptures to be the word of God than you could make a world, you have reason to think that you believe them only as the word of man to this day. † All men, by nature, are disinclined to give God the honor of his testimony to the truth of the word. And
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† *The author must be supposed to except those that may have been sanctified from the womb, or renewed in childhood.*

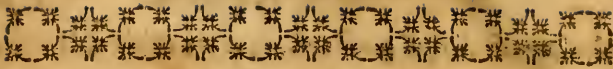
have you had this disinclination overcome by spiritual illumination enabling you to know it to be God's word? If it be so, you have felt the efficacy of the word: If it is only believing the law to be God's law, it has been as an arrow shot from his quiver in your hearts; and you have felt yourselves poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked. If you believe the gospel to be God's word, you have seen a glory in the divine righteousness of the Mediator, as it honors the divine character in the salvation of the chief of sinners. You find the law excellent as a rule of duty, and delight in it after the inner man. You groan under the body of death which yet remains in you, and long after deliverance. You glory in nothing, but in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified unto you.

3: LET us admire and adore the God of all grace, that he has given us a sure word of prophecy. Who has made us to differ from fallen Angels, in this regard? and what have we in the bible truths, committed to us, that we have not received as a free gift? Why were we not left to spell out the way to happiness by the dim light of nature, with the poor heathen that are perishing for lack of vision? It must be resolved into the mere good
pleasures

pleasure of divine goodness, that we enjoy this word while others are denied it. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*

O let this infallible word, this well attested word, be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths through the dark regions of this lower world : Let it be the sword in the hand of the Spirit, by which we fight and overcome. O let us read and hear it with sacred reverence, as the word of God and not of Man. Let us attend it, as if God himself was speaking to us from heaven, as he spake to Moses, or as Christ spake to Paul. And, O that divine influence may accompany the word to the salvation of our souls ! A M E N.

S E R M O N




S E R M O N II.

The excellency of the Scriptures.

P S A L M CXIX, 130.

*The entrance of thy words giveth light ;
it giveth understanding unto the
simple.*

 **NOTHING** can be such an entertain-
ment to the understanding, as truth clear-
ly apprehended; and of all truths, those
contained in the Bible come to us ratified by the best
evidence, God's authority; such an evidence as
none but God could give. All God's works disco-
ver their author; but he *has magnified his word above
all his name*: and if men do not receive it as the
word of God and not of man, it is not for want of
evidence to make it sufficiently manifest to be from
God, but because of the prejudices and blindness of
your

your hearts. † This I hope has been cleared up in some measure in my first discourse upon the text. And now, according to the method at first proposed let us consider,

II. SOMETHING of the excellency of the Scriptures. The text implies the proposition; for if there are truths which God has revealed to men, this revelation was the result of infinite wisdom; and it cannot be supposed that infinite wisdom should conclude to reveal himself and those truths to men, and call up their attention to them, unless they were important.

It is true, the scriptures have many and great truths in them, which puzzle and confound many of the philosophers and wise politicians of the age. Even among those that profess to believe the scriptures as God's word, the most of them seem to grope in the dark; and some glory in their ignorance of the interesting doctrines of salvation; and tell us we should be content with indisputable points, and let alone those they call intricate: and this, I apprehend, is as much as to say, that because the learned world have contended against the main doctrines of divine revelation, others should not

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trouble

† 2 Cor. vi. 4.

trouble their heads about them, but willingly live and die in ignorance : and the same reasoning might as well lead us to be indifferent to all truths of supernatural revelation ; for no truth is plain to us, until we see the evidence of it, though it be ever so plain in itself; What doctrinal truth, in particular, is not disputed, though it may be essential to christianity ? Can we fix upon any one doctrine of supernatural revelation, but what has some enemies to fight against it ?

BUT this argues nothing against the excellency of the word of God : it may be read and heard to great advantage, for it is calculated to give light and understanding, both as to the matter, and manner of its composition.

I. THE Scriptures are composed of the most excellent matter. There is nothing requisite as a rule of direction in faith and christian practice, but the bible informs us of it.

ALL the great articles and fundamental doctrines of our holy religion, are originally fetched from the bible. It is true, we explain our sense of christian doctrine and duty too, in those standards which are adopted by the church, because the sense and meaning

ing of scripture is the word of God, and not mere letters and syllables. If we consider the practice of deceivers, we shall find that the mere subscription to the words of scripture, cannot give good evidence that a person rightly understands the fundamental articles, or has any true christian knowledge at all. "A man of the most destructive principles may repeat any words of scripture, and profess to believe them, while he has a quite contrary meaning to the true sense of the word." Summaries of christian doctrine are highly necessary to prevent the introduction of new creeds into the church one Sabbath after another, just as the humour of the preacher inclines him; and to hold forth to one another, and to all christian churches round about, what are in general our sentiments, † how else can churches be so far known to one another, as to have the way open to christian communion? How shall they know that they are agreed in what is essential to christian duty? How can occasional communion be allowed to a church that is liable to a new creed every Lord's day? We pretend no infallibility in standards, but by them give our public sense of the infallible word of God, so as to be known to one another, and to the churches of our Lord Jesus

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Christ

† Mr. Danlap has set this matter in a clear and striking light; to which the inquisitive and critical reader is referred.

Christ in the world. Neither is there any national or provincial church in the history of protestant churches, but what is known by some public standard; and therefore those churches that do not fix their sense of scripture, so as to be known in the fundamental articles of religion, are not parts of the whole body of the protestant church; but if they have any faith, it is a private faith, liable to changes from sabbath to sabbath, and is probably taught them by a private spirit, and not by the spirit of Jesus Christ who takes bible truth and shews it unto men.

But we fetch all our principles from the word of God. There they are written down in fair characters, and established by unanswerable arguments with the strongest motives to holy living in the world. How admirably do the scriptures speak of the ONE, independent, self-sufficient, and all-sufficient God! *The King eternal, immortal, invisible; the Lord God of Gods, who rideth upon the heavens, and is most high over all the earth:* and speaking of his adorable perfections, what can equal the representation? speaking of his power: *Is any thing too hard for the Lord? he makes strong by his mighty hand, and redeems by his out-stretched arm. Strong is his hand, and high is his right hand. None who contend with him shall prosper; but he is a strong hold to the righteous*

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ous in the day of trouble. Speaking of his knowledge and immensity: The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. He looks to the ends of the earth and sees under the whole heavens. His knowledge is too wonderful for us; whither shall we go from his spirit? or whither shall we flee from his presence? and speaking of his wisdom: The only wise God, wonderful in counsel; a God of judgment; he established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. The foolishness of God is wiser than man: So of his holiness: There is none holy as the Lord: Glorious in holiness. The holy one of Israel is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. And the like might be said of the other perfections of his nature. Again. How excellently do the scriptures represent God's framing the world, with all its admirable furniture which we behold! and he that created all by the word of his power, upholds and preserves them by his continual concurrence, and rules and directs them by his allwise providence from the beginning of time to the latest period. I might also mention the fundamental articles of the christian religion; such as the fall of all mankind in the first Adam; their loss of the moral image of God, the corruption of their nature, their utter inability to recover themselves, the provision of a
mediator

mediator, his atonement and sacrifice for sin, the efficacious work of the holy spirit, besides other articles of our holy religion; but the time would fail me. The word of God sufficiently acquaints us with all these grand designs, together with the way how justice is satisfied, all the holy perfections of God are honored, and the chief of sinners are saved: also, how the redemption of Christ is applied, and what great and glorious privileges arise therefrom. All these articles are so fully opened in the word, that there is no need of any thing more to be known about them, than what is left in the bible. *These things has he written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the son of God.*

AGAIN: All points of christian practice are excellently opened in the bible. Being assured of the doctrines and promises of salvation through Christ, has a prevailing influence upon the will, draws the affections, and renders the whole man obsequious to the gospel. In this way faith exercises, it is, according to the Apostle Paul's account. † Now, the scriptures give us excellent rules of conformity to God in thought, word, and deed. They teach

† Gal. v. 6.

teach us the nature of God as he is related to us; the nature of our duty in our several relations and circumstances of life, and the nature of the world in which we sojourn.

No description of the nature of God is so excellent as that in the bible. The knowledge of God is absolutely necessary in order to obey him; for who can serve and glorify an unknown God? Who can love, admire, and obey; who can shew forth his praise, unless they have some knowledge of the glories of his nature? Well, the holy scriptures excel all other books that were ever wrote, in giving the clearest and fullest description of the glorious perfections of the divine nature. How clearly is divine Justice manifested, in the severe denunciations of wrath against all sin, in remarkable and astonishing judgments executed upon sinners, and in the fire of divine wrath depending upon the Son of God when he was made a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of his people? What glorious displays of the infinite purity of his nature, in the stamp of his own image upon intelligent beings, in the rules of his government, in the sanctions he put upon the law, in the infinite distance he stands at from those that stand in the way of his glory, in the redemption of sinners by Christ Jesus, and in qualifying

fyng the elect for his immediate pretence in heaven? What displays of his mercy, in bearing the injuries offered him by sinners, in waiting to be gracious, in debating the case with sinners before he destroys them, in pleading with them that despise his offers before his wrath arise without remedy; especially, in applying the redemption purchased by Christ to particular souls, in bringing forth his prisoners out of the prison house, in releasing them from their misery, and restoring them to his favor which they had lost, in promises of support through the wilderness of this world, and finally in exalting them to a state of eternal life and blessedness? What a display of infinite wisdom in assigning all things to their several ends; in knowing all his works from the beginning of the world, in creating all things in their admirable variety, in keeping all the wheels of providence in such order and motion that none can miss the end; especially, in finding out a way to punish sin and pardon sinners; a method wherein justice might triumph and mercy be exalted, wherein holiness might be honored, and mercy might shine forth in his surpassing love to the guilty and self-ruined? Now, all these, and other attributes of God, are described and exemplified in the scriptures, to teach us the nature of the divine perfections, and his dealings with men.

NEITHER

NEITHER are there any writings so adapted to give us the knowledge of ourselves. To know ourselves is an important branch of knowledge, without which, we shall neglect the greatest duties, and abuse and corrupt those we perform. Without the knowledge of ourselves, we know not to what end, and for what work we are to live in the world: we know not how to pray, nor what to ask; we know not how to give or ask counsel; we know not sin nor duty, safety nor danger: therefore the knowledge of ourselves is a necessary part of knowledge. Now, there are no writings like the word of God to give a man the knowledge of himself; for the word teaches the good estate in which man was created, and the bad estate into which he is fallen; the sins he commits against the law of nature, and the sins he commits against the law of grace. It lays down rules by which he may judge whether he has obeyed the call of the gospel; what relation he stands in to the promises or threatenings, to the rewards or punishments of the approaching world: The word of God teaches him how to know whether he acts from a good or bad principle; whether the moral nature of his actions in the sight of God be disinterested or selfish; whether his seeming love to Christ, and zeal for his cause, be real and evangelical, or it does not arise from the proud mo-

tives of his heart. The word of God teaches him how to know whether the christian temper, or that which is opposite to it, is the prevailing disposition of his soul; whether an holy and heavenly temper, or a sinful and earthly mind, has the ascendent in his heart; whether he is led by the spirit of God, or by the spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

AND as the word of God is an excellent rule to teach us ourselves, so it shows us the various spiritual diseases that need a cure, the vanity of the imagination, the sinfulness of the passions, the obstinacy of the will, and the deceitfulness of the heart: and for each of those diseases, the word prescribes one certain cure—the blood of Christ; *The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin*, and glorying in his cross will be attended with the mortification of every lust. So again, the word of God gives the most excellent rules, not only respecting man's outward actions; to be holy in all manner of conversation; to be sober, temperate, chaste, diligent in duty, just, charitable, benevolent, meek and humble in his deportment: but it forbids all idle and vain words, and requires that our words be savory, seasoned with salt, that thereby we may minister grace to the hearers: and all must spring from faith, working by
love

love, supreme love to God, and love to men. The gospel precepts of love, patience, self-denial, resignation, not only oppose the working of sin in the heart, but are to restrain the desires and inordinate affections of the soul. And all personal, relative and stational duties; as they respect the disposition of the heart, and the conduct of the life, are opened before us in the word of God. This summary is not designed to reckon up all the branches of christian duty, but only to show something of the excellency of the word, as to christian practice. And I will add, if men would but mind what the word says, they might find it profitable for instruction in the many relations they bear to God, to themselves, and to all about them, together with the right manner of performing them all.

II. As the matter of the scriptures is most excellent, so the manner of its composition is excellent also. The subjects treated of in the word of God are treated of in the most excellent manner. Many have written to display their learning and eloquence, but all of them come inexpressibly short of the grandeur and majesty that may be seen in the style of the holy scriptures. Though they are written in a familiar, plain style, adapted to the lowest capacity, yet, divine wisdom and authority shine forth in the

truths contained therein, so as to penetrate the heart, work upon the affections, and incline the will, beyond any thing that human art can do.

How instructive is the style of God's word? Not only is the scripture full of instructive matter, but where can we meet with such plain representations of things, as in the bible? What history is written with so much simplicity, and at the same time with such grandeur, as the history of the creation? Where shall we find the lessons of moral virtue inculcated with so much emphasis and perspicuity? Where is the whole mystery of devotion, in the several forms of confession, petition, supplication, thanksgiving, vows and promises, so clearly taught us as in the bible? Where are the rules of wisdom and prudence; where are vice and wickedness; where are holiness and righteousness; where are threatenings, admonitions, or promises, opened in such light and clearness, as in the word of God?

AGAIN, the style of the scripture is entertaining. Writings please, when every thing is suited to the several affairs they speak of: when there is nothing superfluous, nothing defective, and when the design is noble, and the expression just. Now, all this is true of the bible. Its history pleases by exactness; its

its rules of life please by the lively manner wherein they are proposed: its descriptions are natural; its comparisons indeed, are sometimes very bold, but always just, and its whole style is so beautified and set off with such easy and significant metaphors, as give a lustre to the expression, and accommodate the loftiness of the sentiment to the lowest capacity. If to talk of great and noble things in plain and familiar language is the height of eloquence, and the most entertaining manner of speaking, then the bible can never be sufficiently admired, whose doctrines are clothed with parables and allusions borrowed from things well known, that thereby the truth might be the better adapted to influence the hearer.

AGAIN, the style of the scriptures is affecting. What human composure is so well adapted to move the passions, as the manner in which bible truth is written? What are those warmths excited by an impressed imagination from the vehemence of style or expression, compared to those solid affections excited by application of the truths contained in the word of God? What representations are so adapted to seize the souls of the guilty with wild amazement, as those by which the scriptures represent the fire of avenging justice, burning and ready to de-

vour

your obstinate offenders? Or where can we read the tender compassions of a God towards the miserable, expressed in such moving language as there? When the poets and orators of every age have done their utmost to paint the glories and terrors of another world, they can invent no motives that will seize the passions like those taken from the scripture. Paul's reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, his epistles to the churches in their various circumstances, the energy and plainness of his style, far exceed the common rules of art. Would men of genius read the bible with as much taste and critical observation, as some of them read plays, poets, tragedies, and other things that are merely human in their composition, they would soon find the style of God's word vastly more striking than any other writings.

AGAIN, the sublimity and elegance of scripture style excels all other writings. There is nothing wherein writers have attempted the sublime, more than in representing a storm or a battle; but they fall vastly short of the scripture representations of those awful scenes. What master of invention and art can represent the awful grandeur of our God, in a storm of thunder and lightning, as David has
done

done in the 29th Psalm? || *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests.* What language can paint out the power of God over the watry and fiery elements equal to this? Which of the heathen writers did ever represent the voice of God in the clouds, and the blazing fire shooting through the whole heavens, in a manner so natural, and tending to strike souls with awful veneration and trembling? The animate, and inanimate world are spoken of as leaping at the terrors of the sound and fire: and who that has any just sense of God, in such a representation, can refrain from trembling before him, with awful veneration of his majesty? Only reading the psalm, methinks, might excite us to ascribe the honors due to his name, who sits sovereign upon the floods, and
reigns

|| *An awful storm of thunder and lightning, July 10, 1764, put me in mind of the passage in the 29th Psalm.*

reigns king for ever. So what merely human skill can paint out such an idea of a glorious combatant, as the prophet Isaiah has painted in his description of our Saviour's bloody and victorious conflict upon the cross? ¶ What is Virgil, and all that have endeavored to write after the copy he has left them, compared to the life and exactness, the grandeur and sublimity of this representation? Here you have an image before you, of a conqueror without a parallel: his garments dyed in blood, and so the colour that great generals wear when they return in triumph from the slaughter; marching as a victor, while he treads the wine-press of God's wrath, treading down the enemies of his church, as grapes in a wine-press; dying and conquering death and hell, in sight of the great armies of his enemies. Let us once more observe the manly style of the apostle Paul, and we may easily see that the elegance of his expression, far exceeds the most celebrated orations of Cicero. What heroism appears in those passages wherein he undertakes to vindicate himself? *Whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I: are they Israelites? so am I: are they the seed of Abraham? so am I: are they the ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure,*

in

*in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the deep: in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Here is matter and manner that might suit the nicest ear, and inspire the faint hearted with fortitude. Especially if we read and consider the surprizing heroism of the following lines. *Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities.**

THUS I have considered the excellency of the matter and manner of the sacred writings: and who but the infinitely wise and almighty God, could have inspired men to write such an excellent book of doctrines and practice as the bible is? Who can make a body of rules to reach the conscience, and give motives and instructions to seize the conscience, but he who is the Lord of conscience?

USE I. These things serve to reprove those that esteem other things more excellent than God's word. Will you say, who among us is so infatuated as not to prize the most excellent truths of the word, before other things? *Ans.* No doubt there are many, yea, by far the most, that prize some other things before the word of God. Particularly, such as break God's law for worldly gain, esteem the world more than their bibles. Did not Demas who revolted from the profession of the truth, esteem the present world before the word of God? Did not Judas, who betrayed the cause of religion, and sold his master for thirty pieces of silver, love the world above the word of God? And those that will break the law of God for smaller matters, plainly teach us that they do not see any real excellency in the word: Satan need not make great offers to many persons, in order to draw them off from their adherence to the word. They can easily break the sabbath, or wrong their neighbor for small gains: and indeed some that profess a very high esteem of the word, pay very little regard to the rules and duties required in it. Surely, such as these are not sensible of the excellency of its doctrines or precepts. They may flatter themselves that they are great christians, and that they highly prize the word; they may eagerly run to hear it preached or read, in season and
out

out of season; they may attend to private as well as public opportunities, but if they can violate God's law for trifles, it is a sign that sin is sweeter to them than all the excellent rules in the word.

SUCH as will not part with their interest for the sake of the word: here you may bring yourselves to an easy trial: here is a temporal interest, and there is the written word; which do you choose, obedience, or temporal interest? Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The Thessalonians shewed their high esteem of the word, when they received it with much affliction. But if you swerve from duty, and are loth to endanger your interest, you may easily say which you esteem the highest. You may say, I must do as the world does, or I cannot be rich. If I am punctual to pay my debts, if I do not huckle and shift, or gripe the laborer, I shall not increase so fast as some of my neighbors: or if I do not deceive, I cannot gain that reputation among others which I desire. But if that be the ruling temper of your heart, you have no realizing sense of the excellency of the word.

AGAIN. Such as do not read and hear it with care and diligence. Instead of this, there are some that sel-

dom read it at all. They have time to read plays, novels, or entertaining histories; they have time for sports and recreations, but little or no time to read or hear the great and excellent things of the law, or the gospel. Or if they read or come to hear it preached, with how little care and attention is it? Some sleeping in the house of God, others gazing from object to object, others by their irreverent deportment, evidently appear not to hear with a relish, but rather a disgust of the truth. Now, if you belong to this number, it is very apparent that you do not esteem and prize the words of God as the most excellent things for your entertainment. It is no difficult task for any person to draw a conclusion from such premises. If you are attentive to diverting stories, and careless under the dispensation of the word; if you are diligent in the affairs of the world, and negligent or irreverent under the word, you may easily see that you are destitute of that sense of its excellency which true christians have. You may have the word much upon your tongues; when it is not hid in the heart: but if you really love it from a sense of its excellency, you will attend to the reading and preaching of it with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, readiness of mind, hide it in your heart, and bring forth the fruit of it in your life.

USE II. If the matter and manner of God's word is so excellent as has been represented, then let us enquire into our own esteem of it. There is plain, certain, clear truth in God's word, truth when applied, produces excellent effects. It is the mean whereby the holy Spirit produces terrors and agonies in souls under conviction of sin, whereby he melts the hard heart, and makes it pliable for use: and if we esteem it, as all true believers do, our hearts are suited to the matter of it, and we taste the goodness of it. There are some that do not oppose the truth contained in it; yea, that have a sort of affection for it, who do not esteem it excellent as christians do. But have we that gracious disposition to the word as is proper to true believers?

Ask yourselves. Do I exercise myself much in the truths of the word? If you esteem it for the excellency of the matter and manner, you will read it and hear it preached, you will pray over it and meditate upon it. True christians will take all fit occasions to read and hear the word. *I was glad,* says David, *when they said unto me, let us go up to the house of the Lord.* Christians will be much in conferring with themselves and with others about it.

2. Do I delight to lay up the excellent truths of it in my heart? If you rightly prize the truths in
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the word, you will not be content merely that you have them written in the bible, and preached in the pulpit, but you will lay them up in your heart, and obey them in your life, Hypocrites may delight in the word, as there are many entertaining things in it, that furnish them to display their gifts among others, but a true christian delights to have his heart and life conformed thereto. If you are a child of God, you cannot take up with a naked meditation upon, or discourse about the word, but your heart is reconciled to it, and you practice the truths therein contained. You delight to get them written in your heart, and hold them forth in your life. You receive the ingrafted word with meekness, and walk by the same rule. As the word is a transcript of the divine nature, so your heart is a transcript of the word; and if you are cast into the mould of its doctrines, you will obey from the heart, that form of doctrine which is delivered to you therein.

3. Is my heart suited with every part of the word? Those that have a sacred relish of the excellent truths in the word, esteem all of them excellent, those that contradict the carnal desires of the heart as well as others; those that discover sin, as well as those that promise salvation. Hypocrites esteem the promises, and will search after and listen

to the comfortable parts of the word, and will rise like a land flood, upon reading or hearing the blessings: but those parts which press self-denying duties, or rip up and lay open the pride and hypocrisy, the worldliness and carnality of the heart, they read and hear with coldness and indifference. But Paul highly esteemed the word that convinced him of sin, and wrought the most amazing works of terror in his heart. *The law is holy, the command also is holy just and good.* And though the law is used to revive a sense of sin in your heart, though it does discover to you the plague and vileness of your heart, and produce great terror in your conscience, yet you will esteem it never the less, but the more for that. That word of God which is set home with power, to convince and humble you, to break your heart, and stir you up to duty, you will be delighted with. Some high professors do not love the prophets of the Lord, because they do not prophesy good concerning them. Hence prejudices creep into your hearts, because the word dispensed does not approve and applaud them; and therefore they *hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaks uprightly.* How was Lot hated in Sodom, Christ and his apostles by the Jews, Knox and Latimer in England and elsewhere? If the word is pressed close upon a proud, covetous, or carnal professor, he does
not

not esteem it: He is willing indeed, that others should have a word for them, but he is sick of a disease which I shall call, *NOLI ME TANGERE*. But if you have a sacred esteem of the word, you love to hear the naked truth of things, truths that will touch you to the quick. You like that part of the word which stirs up your fear, and is contrary to the lusts of your heart. You highly prize that part of the word that brings you to the knowledge of yourselves, and to the knowledge of sin. Wicked men hate the word; they do not love to read their own doom in the word; they are willingly ignorant of that which accuses and condemns them. But if you are a christian, you have a universal esteem of God's word.

4. Is my esteem of the word abiding? Some men have great affection for the word by fits; they hear it with joy for a time, but it is not abiding: they are pleased with the truth for its novelty, or for the newness of the manner of its delivery, and rejoice for a season in the light of it. Or, perhaps, they are under terrors of conscience, and therefore esteem the word, and as soon as they can stop the cries of conscience, they see no real excellency in it. As conviction and terror is worn off, their affection to the word goes off with it. The stony ground
hearers

hearers received the word with much joy, until the sun arose, and tribulation arose because of the word, but then they were presently offended. Sometimes it is honorable and profitable for men to be zealous about religion; and while and so far as the word is a friend to their worldly interest, they like it: but this affection dies away after a while. So you may be pleased with the word and soon disgusted. You may esteem it for the newness of the method, or because it is reputable to esteem it, or because you expected it would flatter you, and build you up in your false hopes: but this is not to esteem it for its real excellencies.

USE III. Let all be excited to testify their esteem of God's word in the most proper ways. Meditate upon the doctrinal and practical parts of the word, upon the promises and the threatenings, upon your misery, and remedy. Let your thoughts dwell upon these things: this is the way to evidence and increase your esteem of all parts of it. And further,

THE more you dwell upon the word, the less you will be entangled with vain and worldly thoughts. Man's heart will be busy, and therefore it is best to employ it about good things. If you do not employ your thoughts about spiritual things, they will

be employed about carnal things. The imagination of the thoughts of the heart are naturally evil, only evil and that continually. If you let your heart run as your carnal disposition inclines you, you will spend your time in thinking on things that are carnal: therefore you should pre-engage, and pre-possess your thoughts with better things.

AND the more your thoughts are employed about the excellent truths of the word, the better you will be fitted for the concerns of this life. It is very difficult to busy one's self in worldly affairs, and not be ensnared thereby: there are so many, and various temptations, that it is hard being concerned about it, and not entangled with it; and nothing will tend more as a means, to make you devout and serious, than accustoming yourselves to holy meditations upon the excellency of the truths of God's word. If you busied your thoughts this way, you might engage in, and follow worldly business to the praise and glory of God. As soon as you wake in the morning, you should season your heart with some excellent truth in the word; dwell upon it, let it be fixed in your heart, and that is the way to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. It is a good remark of one upon these words, "a carnal man goes about heavenly business with an earthly

earthly mind ; and a godly man goes about earthly business with an heavenly mind. 22

FINALLY ; if you dwell upon the word in delightful meditation, you will dwell with God. The working of your heart will be after God. If the word is precious to you, God will be precious ; Christ will be precious. Let your thoughts be seasoned with the truths of the word, and God will be near you, and you will solace yourselves with him ; you will take in his name by devout meditation, and it will be as ointment poured forth in heavenly affection,

S E R M O N III.

The Efficacy of the word of God.

P S A L M CXIX, 130.

*The entrance of thy words giveth light :
it giveth understanding unto the
simple.*

THE excellency of an object truly apprehended, will beget esteem in the judgment, and love in the heart. Those therefore, that have a good understanding and taste of the holy scriptures, will admire the beauties, and confess the sweetness of the things contained in them; for there we find the secrets of wisdom, suited to an intelligent mind, adapted to sanctified souls, and tending to advance practical holiness: Truths suited to close in with the conscience, presenting us a glass to behold our own filthiness, and directing

to an open fountain to wash them away; truths suited to bring down the loftiness of our proud hearts, and to exalt the rich and sovereign grace of God in the conversion and salvation of the self-ruined. And the manner also, agrees to the dignity of the matter; for it is easy and instructive, accommodating sublime truths to the lowest capacities, and yet so exalted as to gratify the most refined understanding; truths that are great and important, rendered delightful by the plain and familiar way in which they are represented; truths most affecting by the energy of their style, truths adapted to excite veneration of the divine majesty, and inspire with christian heroism, by the sublimity and elegance of expression.

THESE things were insisted upon in the preceding discourse, and, I hope, not altogether unprofitably. But unless souls feel something of the power of the word of God when read or preached, they will not sit under its shadow with great delight, nor will its fruit be sweet to their taste. Therefore let us consider

III. THE efficacy of God's word when it is applied: for although the truths of God's word are admirably suited to produce the most necessary and
excellent

excellent effects, yet it will neither convince nor renew, sanctify nor comfort, assure nor strengthen, unless it is applied by the holy spirit. And therefore our Saviour tells his disciples, that it was needful he should go away, that so he might send the spirit to do his work; and *when the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* The word is the means, but it is the spirit of Christ makes it effectual. To read and hear the word, though with ever so much diligence, and yet neglect the spirit, who searches the deep things of God, leaves men in darkness about God's mind. The object to be known is fixed in the bible, but the faculty that must know it must be impressed by the holy Spirit. And this, I apprehend, is particularly aimed at in the text. *The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple.* If ever the word is efficacious, it must have entrance: there can be no saving impression unless the word enters into the heart.

It is the first work of the Spirit to convince of sin. But how is conviction brought about? It is by the application of the law of God to the conscience. *I had not known sin, says Paul, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said thou shalt not covet: for by the law is the knowledge of sin,*

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When the spirit sets home the truths of God's law with power upon the conscience, it works conviction of sin and misery. The law, having entrance into the conscience, awakens those principles in men which puts them under terror. The law applied, puts men upon thinking upon the truths contained in it, and gives them a new credit to those truths. Conscience subscribes to the certainty of them, and discovers how they become sinners, and so condemns them for sin. It is this makes them sensible of their obligations to obey God as a law giver and rightful sovereign, and that they have broken God's law, and therefore are sinners, and lie under guilt. The law set home with power by the holy spirit, convinces them of actual sin, and the aggravations of it. The law thus applied, convinces them of original sin, the dreadful fountain from whence all the streams flow: yea, it will make them sensible of, and bring them to confess, that the very bias of their nature forcibly inclines and leads them into sin; it makes them feel that their hearts are prejudiced and rise up with enmity and pride against the sovereign Lord of heaven in dispensing his grace. No wonder then, when the law enters the conscience, that men are sensible of their misery according to the threatening. No wonder fearfulness surprizes them, and they tremble with the thoughts of devouring
fire

fire. They feel themselves bound over by the law to suffer punishment. Conviction reads all the curses to them, and charges them home. It is like the flying roll in Zechariah's vision, swifter than a flash of lightning, and more terrible than hot thunderbolts: or like the roll of Ezekiel's prophecy, filled up *with lamentations, mourning, and woe*. It is this that fills sinners with fearful expectations of deserved wrath: yea, spiritual plagues are already begun in their consciences, and as they read the law, they see themselves exposed to all the rest. They are sensible that the sentence of the law is positive, and the glorious perfections of God are engaged to accomplish it. Try they will, either to fortify themselves against the wrath of God, or to buy themselves out of the hands of justice by their duties; but if the law, having entered, keeps possession of conscience, they find neither of these courses will avail. The applied law makes them sensible that they have to do with a great God, against whom there is no rising up, and from whose omniscient eye there is no hiding, and that they have nothing to come before the Lord with, or to bow themselves before the high God. It is the powerful impression of the law upon the conscience, that convinces them of the justice of God in the sentence of condemnation, brings them to self-despair, and to leave themselves
in

in the hand of sovereign mercy. They are sensible of the emptiness of all those hopes that supported them, and makes them inquisitive whether there may not be some way opened to them for their deliverance.

AND so, if the gospel has entrance into the heart, it convinces them of righteousness and judgment. When the spirit of God powerfully impresses the great truths of the gospel upon men, they are convinced that they are the truths of God; and particularly those truths that concern the person and office of Christ; truths which discover his all-sufficiency and readiness to save the miserable and self-desperate. It is this conviction that persuades, and, the renewing change upon the will, that enables them to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered unto them in the gospel. It is the knowledge of gospel truths that gains their esteem of Christ, and their choice of him as the object of their trust, and disposes them to look for acceptance with God, solely on account of his righteousness: When they know the gospel is the word of God, they see Christ is a suitable object of faith, and find an inclination to venture upon him for safety. They believe the testimony that God has given of him, and embrace the promise of

the new covenant, in which salvation is engaged upon believing. This is the faith that purifies the heart, and works by love, that mortifies sin, and overcomes the world.

BUT upon whom has the word of God, especially the truths of the gospel, these good effects? *Ans.* Our text says it is the simple. Some render it babes or little ones, agreeably to Mat. xi. 25. Others, NON TUMENTES SPIRITU: i. e. to those that are not haughty and self-conceited, that do not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, that have the loftiness of their hearts brought down, and are sensible they lie at sovereign mercy. And where sinners are brought to this, by the application of God's law to their consciences, they are prepared to receive the gospel when God is pleased to make it enter into their minds and hearts. Hence

THE simple are opposed to hypocrites. Those that read or hear God's word with a double heart, from carnal designs, or self-righteous views: and indeed, nothing is a greater hindrance to the word's entering so as to produce faith and beget love and the other branches of the christian temper, than the pride and self-righteousness of the heart. This temper unsubdued will be an everlasting bar to the
reception

reception of the gospel. But where the proud motives of action are brought down; where the sinner is brought to self-despair, and lies at mercy, the gospel usually enters into his heart. Such an one is sensibly helpless, and prepared to hear what God the Lord has to say unto him. He that sees himself viler than the beasts that perish, that is sensible he deserves the same hell that the devils have, and has given up all hope of relief from every quarter; unless sovereign mercy takes him up. This, it may be supposed, is meant by the simple in our text. Man is naturally far from this sort of simplicity: he is rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing, and therefore is sent empty away from the word when he reads or hears it. It requires the agency of an almighty arm to prepare souls to receive the instructions of the word into their hearts. For all are dead by nature; dead in law, deprived of the moral image of God, destitute of vital principles of holiness, and blind to the beauty and excellency of bible truths. Therefore there must be a supernatural influence upon the mind and conscience to convince them of the state of their case, and that they have forfeited all mercy, and are utterly helpless, or they cannot be reckoned among the simple, according to our explanation, which they

must be, before the word of gospel grace has entrance into their hearts to any effectual purposes.

THESE things open the way to consider, what judgment we ought to make when the word is set home with power upon us? Or how shall we know when the word is powerfully impressed upon us, whether it be by the spirit of God or another spirit? The right resolution of this question is of very great importance to every one that would not be mistaken about himself: But as it will take some time to resolve this question with any considerable clearness, we shall leave it to the next discourse, and conclude the present with some application:

I. IF the word of God must have entrance into the conscience and heart; if it is admitted into all that are recovered to the favor and image of God; then learn what to think of those that do not admit even the law of God to enter into them for the conviction of sin. It is very evident that many, very many that enjoy the favor of God's word, and may read and hear it frequently, do give it no admittance into their hearts. While others about them, and perhaps in their own families, yea, their own children, have the law and gospel too, enter for their conviction of sin, and begetting faith, they
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are proof against every thing that has hitherto been offered them : while the law is applied to some, and excites great fear of the curse threatened, they are at ease in Zion. Though God sends forth his summons for them, fairly written and easily read in his word, they are quiet still. Now, whatever such persons may pretend about believing in Christ for salvation, they cannot give a good reason of their hope, nor answer it to their own consciences why they hope to be saved. Secure sinner, how often do you say to yourself, I hope I shall be saved. You hope to be saved ! why, you neither admit the law, nor the gospel of God into your heart. If the law entered into you by the spirit of God, you could not lie asleep in your sins. If the law in it's commands and curses entered into your consciences, it would make your carnal Hearts fall down, and your hair stand an end. Were conscience but thoroughly awakened by the thunder and lightning of God's law, it would marr all your carnal comforts, and strip you naked of the vain hope that is in you. You hope to be saved ! Why, you do not believe the law denouncing the curse to eternal torment is God's law || ; nor the gospel offering eternal

|| The meaning is, that stupid sinners have no realizing conviction of the truth of God's law and gospel, though they may have a rational, inactive belief.

eternal life, is his gospel. True, you say, but I hope I shall: and why do you hope you shall be convinced of the truth of the one or the other? You do not reform: you do not use the means: your pretence to use them is nothing but abusing the means of grace. And do you hope for this blessing while you live unreformed? It is not near so cross to a carnal heart to reform and be strict and diligent in using means, as it is to come out of self and believe unto righteousness. But instead of reformation, you are going boldly in the way to damnation, and are constantly putting far away the evil day. Why then will you flatter yourself that you hope to be saved, when you have no sense of the necessity of salvation? Your conscience is dreadfully benumbed and stupid: you make your heart as an adamant stone, harder than a flint, harder than the nether mill-stone. The instructions of God's law glide off, as rain falling upon a rock: the hammer of the word makes no impression upon you. Where then is the ground of your hope? Do you hope to believe the gospel, when you never believed the truth of the threatenings in the law? If you believed that you were condemned already, and the wrath of God lay upon you, you would soon reform and grow very diligent in using the means of grace. O secure sinner! my heart trem-
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bles for you. I have often prayed in secret for you by name; but I am afraid, I am greatly afraid you have got such fast hold of deceit, that you will never lose your hold, until you lift up your eyes in torment. You lie under a judgment worse than all the plagues of Egypt. I am afraid God has said of you, let that man (that woman) alone; let him take his course; I have done with him, and let my ministers trouble themselves no more about him: and therefore he must rue his folly among the reprobates for ever.

2. LET those that feel the terrors of the law of God in their consciences, incessantly beg that the word of the gospel might enter into their hearts by the efficacious grace of the spirit. God has convinced you of the truth of his threatenings, and put you in fear of his wrath, and he that inspired the prophets and apostles to write the gospel of his grace, can interpret every truth of it to you, and assure your heart that he is true who has testified. O, labor that you may have this testimony. How indefatigable are the men of the world to gain worldly good? How intensely engaged are those that thirst after knowledge, to enter into the life and spirit of the books they read? And may it not turn to better account to be indefatigably diligent that the
truth

truth and spirit of the gospel might enter into your hearts? I do not call you to work up your hearts to believe the gospel, for this is not in your power. But although you cannot effect it yourselves, you can take pains in using appointed means, and God is able to open the door and let you in: if he does not cause his gospel to enter into your hearts you will not believe. If you had more knowledge of the law, and were more distressed with its terrors, you would still grope in the dark. One observes upon the case of the unconverted; "He that has not the right key, is as far from entering the house as he that has none." And so you that have not the right knowledge of the gospel cannot enter into the life and spirit of the gospel; but you can strive and beg for its admittance into your hearts. You can plead your extream want, and the sovereign mercy of God. And if you *cry for wisdom, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek for it as silver, and search for it as for hid treasures*, you not only attend the means, but you may find it. Wisdom stands at the door of God's word, and can open the treasures of gospel truth to your inmost sense and liking; and if he enters you into his school, you shall know the truth. Yea, wisdom sends us out to invite and call you: *She hath sent forth her maidens; she cries upon the high places of the city*

city; who so is simple, let him come in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled: therefore strive. He that taught the eu-
much that which he knew not, may teach you also: therefore if others faint, you must hold out.

3. LET those that have entertained the gospel as the truth of God, enter more and more into the spirit of it. Have you felt the efficacious influence of the gospel upon your hearts? O labor after more knowledge of it, in all its important points, especially the knowledge of Christ in his mediatorial character; for the knowledge of God in Christ, is the knowledge that enlivens all true religion. Do you assuredly know that Christ is the Son of the living God? Why, this knowledge will have influence on your faith and practice. God's word will be in your hearts, and you will teach it diligently to others in a life of practical holiness. But as you would do this to better purpose, be exhorted and engaged to follow on to know the gospel yet more clearly and fully; hereby you shall see more into the mind and counsel of God concerning you. When you were first made to open the door and let the gospel enter into your hearts, you had wonderful experience of its power. Let this

be a motive to press you on to feel and experience more of its efficacy still. Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? O let that taste sharpen your desires after more of the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. The grace that first got entrance for the gospel into your hearts should persuade you to be on the stretch after more: being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, you should serve him without fear, and yield yourselves to him more and more daily, as a testimony of gratitude, and with desire to honor God in the world.

SERMON




S E R M O N IV.

*How we may know when the
Word is divinely impressed.*

P S A L M CXIX, 130.

*The entrance of thy words giveth light :
it giveth understanding unta the
simple.*

 **HOUGH** the scriptures are demonstra-
bly the great truths of God, and most
excellent in the matter and manner of
their writings, yet the important truths will never
convince us of sin, righteousness, and judgment ;
never humble, renew and cleanse us, unless they are
applied by the holy spirit. Sin and guilt are im-
pressed on our hearts by him who made us, and it is
this excites us to fly from the wrath which is to
come ; but the presumptions of pride and carnal

reasoning influence us to seek our safety where it is not to be had, until we are reduced to self-despair, and to leave ourselves at the disposal of sovereign mercy. It is the application of the gospel that enlarges our knowledge, and leads us to embrace the saving truth. When the promise of the Father, and of Christ, takes the law of God and shews its commands and threatenings to us, it enters into the inmost recesses of our souls, and is sharper than a two-edged sword in our hearts: and when he takes the gospel and shews it to us, and persuades our hearts that it is the word of that God who cannot lie, it so enters as that we find sufficient relief for our guilt, and a righteousness which is the answer to the accusations of conscience before God.

THESE things were more fully considered in the preceding discourse, which seems to open the way for considering the important question proposed, *viz.* What judgment we are to make when the word is set home with power upon us? Or how may we know when the word is powerfully impressed upon us, whether it be by the spirit of God, or by another spirit?

IN order to give a plain answer to this question, I shall first of all consider, some things that persons experience.

experience. Not only true christians, but those that are under the curse of the law, may have the word of God set home with power upon them. Those who are already made sure of the truth of the gospel, and do believe the truth of God in his testimony concerning Christ, stand in daily need of divine influence to carry on the work of faith and holiness in their souls; and the holy Spirit dwells in, and is given to them, to shed abroad the love of God in their hearts. It is by the spirit's setting home the word with power, that they are crucified with Christ, sin is made bitter to them; they loath it, and resist its motions, and live devoted unto God. Those that are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, stand in need of the promised help of the spirit; the advocate to convince them of sin, and convert them from the error of their way, to the wisdom of the just. Experience teaches us, while in a state of nature, that we cannot regenerate ourselves, and experience teaches the converted that they cannot stand in a day of trial, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unless the strength of Christ is manifested in their weakness. Yea, it is evident from scripture and observation, that many men have had powerful impressions of the word by the holy spirit of Christ, who were never savingly converted to God. The spirit of all grace has been poured
out

out, and revived a work of God, when some, in the issue, provoke the Lord utterly to leave them.

AGAIN ; experience teaches us that the spirit of grace powerfully sets home particular parts of the word. Sometimes persons have distressing portions of scripture, and sometimes encouraging portions, powerfully impressed upon them. We are in danger of two extremes, either of self-flattery, or of discouragement : and as an help against both these extremes, persons have the word of God laid before them and set home upon their hearts. Sometimes, when they flatter themselves in their own eyes, the spirit of Christ impresses some distressing part of the word upon their consciences : at other times, when their souls are cast down within them, the good spirit brings to mind some relieving and encouraging part of the word. As those parts of the word which are terrible or encouraging are excellent in themselves, so they are of eminent service to souls, when applied by the holy spirit. We may observe in times of revival, that God uses various ministers of Christ to carry on his work. Some have one gift, and some another : some open the truth in one method and some in another : some have a particular gift at preaching the law, and some at preaching the gospel ; and God gives suc-
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cess, by the instrumentality of the different gifts; sometimes by the law, and sometimes the gospel; sometimes by terror, and sometimes by encouragement. And so the spirit of the Lord, by applying various parts of the word, lifts up a standard against a flood of iniquity, by making use of particular parts of the word, that the word of the Lord might not depart out of the mouth or hearts of his people forever. Sometimes the spirit of Christ brings a message from the word to persons consciences, not very unlike the message that Abijah brought Jeroboam's wife: he said to her, *come in thou wife of Jeroboam, for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.* So the spirit of God takes some word of terror, and does, as it were, call out the person to whom it belongs: "come in and attend to this terrible message, for it belongs to thee. Why shouldst thou stand at the door, as if thou couldest hide thy dissimulation, when nothing can be hid from me? Come in, O thou dissembler, come in and read thy character and thy guilt and danger, in the word I have brought thee. Forasmuch as thou hast made other gods, and hast scornfully rejected me, therefore hear thy doom to utter destruction, unless thou dost return unto me." Sometimes also, the spirit of Christ comes with a word of consolation to raise up dejected souls. Perhaps

haps he brings that relieving word, *I will give a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them that choose the things which please me, an everlasting name, and they shall not be cut-off.* Or, if through the spirit they mortify the deeds of the body, he may say, *ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption crying abba Father.*

AGAIN. Experience teaches us that the word is set home in the reading as well as the preaching of it. In the one and the other, sometimes the word flies like an arrow shot from a bow, or a sharp sword used by a skilful combatant, and pierces a sinner to the heart. So the word came home under Peter's sermon, for those that were convinced were pricked in their heart. So also it came upon Saul in his way to Damascus, which filled him with trembling and astonishment. And so Felix the Governor was greatly afraid when Paul preached before him concerning the faith of Christ, and reasoned of righteoulness, temperance, and judgment to come. Sometimes again, the word comes with encouraging power, both in the reading and preaching of it. Thus while Paul and Silas preached to the prison-keeper and his family, exhorting him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and promising that

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if he did, he should be saved, and all his house; it is said that he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Though he trembled and fell down before Paul and Silas, yet this word applied, set him at liberty and raised him up. So those that were pricked in the heart under Peter's sermon, when he exhorted them to repentance, and encouraged them to hope for pardon, many of them received the word with approbation and comfort. So when our Lord was conversing upon the scriptures as he was at a feast, *one of them that sat with him*, hearing the conversation had great relief, and said, *blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*

AGAIN. Sometimes the word comes home with power, in a different sense from its original design. It is no uncommon thing for christians to be greatly comforted by a word of promise set home upon them, though it really in its original design, respected only some public blessing, perhaps the deliverance of the church. v. g. That text may be set home with power; *I will bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry.* Suppose, I say, it should be that, or some other promise of the like import, that is set home and gives great encouragement to a dejected christian. And when he comes to look it over in the xlvi chapter

of Isaiah, and reads the particular respect it had to the church of Israel, rather than to particular believers, he is ready to sink under an apprehension of his deceiving himself, and to conclude that it was not from the spirit of all grace. But the conclusion from such premises is not good: there is no reason for me to conclude that the promise was not given me by the spirit of God, merely because it related to the public good of the church; for it is usual with the holy spirit to apply scripture by way of analogy, or likeness of cases. The promise indeed may respect the welfare and glory of the church: but the same promise is very suitable to set forth the free grace and mercy of God to particular believers in every age, and thereby the spirit of God may comfort his people. Thus one text of scripture suits the case it was not written about. So for instance, that in Hosea xi. 1. *I called my Son out of Egypt*, had a direct reference to the people of Israel whom, God by *Moses*, had antiently called out of *Egypt*. And yet the same text is^{applied} to Christ, by the Evangelist, Mat. ii. 15. So when Herod destroyed the male children in Bethlehem, it is said there was great mourning; and that scripture in Jerem. xxxi. 15: *A voice was heard in Ramah; Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted for her children, because they were not.*

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That this scripture was then verified, Mat. ii. 17 18: whereas it is very evident that the prophet Jeremy gave an account of a fact that happened long before, and the meaning can be only that there was a likeness of cases and effects. The great lamentation for the children which Herod put to death, was as if Rachel, that tender mother, had risen out of the grave, and was bewailing her lost children. Well, if the spirit of God takes one scripture in the written word, and applies it to quite another case, certainly we may expect he should do the like in setting home the word upon the heart, when he would have it enter into us.

BUT although this is a great case which demands the strictest attention; yet, I would not detain you too long upon what is matter of experience. It has appeared to me needful to take this pains in order to prevent mistakes, and to shew people something of the experiences of divine influence, and the liableness of persons to impute that to the impression of another spirit, which is really the spirit of God. Let us now attend to the question, and observe upon it.

1. MANY times when the scriptures come with power, it is from a special work of the spirit of

God. He helps us by way of remembrance, bringing such and such truths afresh to our minds. Hence Paul calls the sanctifying influences of the spirit, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God in Christ. Therefore also our Lord says, John xiv. 26. *The Comforter whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* By impressing the truths of the word, he is a remembrancer of those important things on our hearts, which we have read and heard. He is promised for this end, even to convince men of the reality and great importance of bible truth, whether it respects the law, or the gospel, John xvi. 8, 9. It is apparently from the spirit of Christ, that any souls are convinced of the truth of God's word. It is in that way that God begins and carries on a common and special work of grace in souls. It is in that way God gives relief to the discouraged, strength to the faint hearted, and support and deliverance in times of temptation. Or if the word becomes quick and powerful in the conscience, filling souls with a distressing sense of sin and guilt, it is from God, for in this sense the word is called *the sword of the spirit.* Eph. vi. 17.

2. THE devil may set home the word with affecting power. There is no question to be made of the

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the power of satan that way. The imagination is a glass, through which a thousand objects may be presented before men. And, by the use that God permits the devil to make of the imagination, he may cast objects into various shapes, suited to the case before him. It was by impressing the imagination that he provoked David to number the people. It was by impressing the imagination that he tempted our Saviour to command stones to be made bread; tempted him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, especially when he tempted him with the kingdoms of this world, and the glories of it, to fall down and worship him. And in these cases he powerfully impressed the imagination with the word of God. And so still, he may set home the word with affecting power by impressing the imagination, so as to draw men aside from the truth of their state. He is the god of this world, and, by the influence he has upon the imagination, he blinds mens minds. And so by setting home scripture in that way, he may flatter hypocrites in their sins, and they may think themselves eminent christians: or he may discourage true believers, and make them ready to conclude against themselves that they are poor deluded hypocrites. And when either of these cases happen, by means of the word's coming home with power, there is great reason to think

think that the hand of satan is in it ; for it would tend to contribute to his designs, in either case, to make use of the word of God in a perverse way, to harden sinners, or discourage saints.

3. HOLY angels may set home the word with power. *Are they not all ministering spirits ; sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation ?* Surely then they are many ways serviceable to the elect. And the devil is suggesting and putting in evil thoughts into men's hearts, so the good angels are suggesting good motions. God employs them in the administration of his power, mercy and justice, as the scripture teaches us ; and they often ward off evils that are coming upon particular saints, by impressing their hearts with some portion of the word. The holy angels are as forward to do good, as the evil angels are to do hurt. No doubt they often remind men of what is written in the word. They put the women in mind of what Christ said to them, Luke xxiv. 6, 7. *Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee ; saying the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.* And if angels did remind christians of the word of God then, they may do it now. True indeed, they cannot make the word enter into the heart, in that way
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which is proper to the spirit of God : neither can they put power into the heart as the spirit of God can : but they can present truth before the mind, and impress it upon the imagination, in such a way as to be very affecting.

4. MEN'S own frames may cause the word to come with power upon them. The particular frame that a person is in, contributes very much to an affecting sense of the word. For instance ; if a person lies under discouragements, this will produce an affecting remembrance of some awful portion of the word of God. If he is carnally confident or presumptuous, that will dispose him to affect and please himself with some word that he makes use of to establish his heart with his own deceivings. If he is in a believing frame, then the promises connected with faith will be apt to flow in upon his mind. When the affections are up, some word suited to the particular frame will be apt to come with power upon the heart. When our Saviour only looked upon Peter, he remembered the word of the Lord. And so when Peter preached to the people at Cæsarea, and the holy Ghost fell upon them, *he remembered the word of the Lord.*

5. WHEN the spirit of Christ sets home the word it is always by light in the conscience : he not only affects

affects, but convinces. *The entrance of thy words giveth light ; it giveth understanding.* Whatever means God may use to remind a person of his word, he always impresses the truth by light, letting in divine light into the heart. When the spirit of God sets home the law or gospel, he does by no means set aside the reasoning faculty, but rather enlarges the bounds of its knowledge, provides it with a new province, wherein it may exercise itself with greater certainty. It affirms, in the strongest manner, the notices of God in his law, and the reasons of duty naturally imprinted upon the conscience. He leads persons to see things in their own colours : he lays open the frauds and impostures of the devil, the purity and perfection of God's law, the vanity of worldly things, the deceitfulness of the heart, the odiousness of sin, the glory of God, and excellency of Christ. Hence Paul tells us (Eph v. 13.) *all things that be reprov'd, are made manifest by the light : for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light.* The holy spirit leads persons to dwell upon the word of truth, and gives them the spiritual knowledge of it : he opens the understanding to attend to the things that are spoken : he gives them the meaning of the word, so that they see the great things of God and his law. This is the way of his working, *to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the*
shadow

Shadow of death; to guide their feet into the way of peace. He opens their understandings, that they may understand the scriptures. Hence, when the spirit of Christ sets home the word, he makes men sensible it is he speaks, and that what he says is really true; that the word set home, is really the word of the faithful and true witness. And they receive his testimony, and make no more doubt of it. It is not a matter of opinion that the word set home is true, but it is matter of certainty. Conscience knows it to be God's word, and sets its seal to the truth. If it be a word of terror set home upon a sinner, the spirit of Christ enlightens natural conscience to see the reality of that awful truth, and the man's thoughts are led to dwell upon it. So the spirit of God assures him of his guilt and danger of eternal destruction; and again, perhaps, enlightens him into some other word, to encourage his hope of deliverance. He is led to an understanding of these things, & the word sinks into his heart. And so the spirit of Jesus Christ sets home the word of the gospel on the renewed conscience, by light. When, with the word of grace and salvation, there is a spiritual understanding given to see the true meaning of it, or its accommodation to the particular case, and a beam-
ing in of this light into the conscience, to persuade

or assure the heart of the truth of it, this is from the spirit of God : hence it is that Christ calls his disciples *children of the light*. Sometimes there are such divine irradiations with the word, when it is set home on a christian, that the great and glorious truths of God's law appear very wonderful ; and divine light shines in with the word of the gospel, so that the gloriousness of God, and excellency of Christ in his mediatorial character, fill the soul with sacred surprize and pleasure. Sometimes when a christian has such a spiritual sight and sense of this glory as to be deeply affected with it, he is afraid whether satan does not delude him. But, let not your heart be too much troubled about this matter ; for it is beyond the power of satan to shew you the glory of God in Christ. He can represent the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, in a landscape, to the imagination ; but though he knows there is a God, and that Jesus Christ is the son of God, he does not understand the glories of either ; nor can he beam light into your mind and heart, for you to realize the gospel glories and excellencies of them. If he could do this, he could do that which is the distinguishing work of the spirit to do : if he could do this, he could turn men from darkness to light ; from the power of sin and satan to God.

6. WHEN a particular word is set home, it is no certain sign that it is the person's own case. Men are very liable to great mistakes, either in their favor, or against themselves, by thinking if a word of truth is brought to mind, and follows them, it is, or will be their own case: but it is very dangerous for a person to draw such a conclusion: for, as has been observed, satan may impress the imagination by the word, and may affect the person greatly thereby: or a particular word may follow and much affect him from the particular frame he is in. How easy is it for satan, by permission, to harrass the mind of a true christian, by impressing what Eliphaz said to Job, upon his mind, viz. *Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?* and shall a true christian conclude himself to be a vile hypocrite, because that word pursues him with affecting power? Or, may not satan as easily cherish and strengthen the false hopes of an hypocrite, by impressing him and affecting his heart with the words of our Saviour, *son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee:* or that, *O woman great is thy faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt.* And if it may be so in either or both these cases, how unreasonable is it for me to conclude either that I am a true christian, or a mere hypocrite, merely because one of these, or such like scripture, is powerfully impressed on my

mind, and affects me with joy or sorrow? And the same may be said also, as to the particular frame a person is in. Suppose a true christian is under a dark cloud, and great dejection of spirit, he will construe every thing against himself, and those scriptures which speak terror to hypocrites and unbelievers, will naturally pursue, and greatly affect him: And on the other hand, suppose an hypocrite has a strong presumption that he is in the favor of God, and shall certainly be saved at last, then those scriptures which speak of God's love to men, or of the certainty of salvation, or the happiness of heaven, will be very apt to come with affecting power upon his mind, and fill his heart with transporting joy: And from hence it is as plain as the light of the sun, that the word's coming on a person with affecting power, is no certain sign that it is that person's wa- case.

Use I. Learn hence, a great degree of affection under the impressions of the word, is no evidence of their being from a bad spirit, or from the spirit of all grace. For men may be deeply affected with hope or fear, joy or sorrow, either from the spirit of God guiding them into the truth, and assuring their hearts of the reality and excellency of it; or the particular frame of discouragement or presumption

Assumption they are in, may cause the word to affect them; or satan, by the medium of the word, may powerfully excite their affections to believe a lie. Some persons are much disposed to take every impression of the word for the spirit of Christ applying the word to them, especially if they are greatly affected by it, whether the affection be that of joy, or sorrow. It may be that persons have very happy and gracious frames stirred up in their hearts; it may be that the joy and sorrow, the love and hatred excited, arose from divine light shining into the mind and heart; through the medium of the word; and if that is the case, then the spirit of God assures them that it is God's truth which is impressed, and they are led to understand it, and to see the glories of God and divine things in it. But again, it may be, that persons are very powerfully impressed with the word, and exceedingly moved by some precious promise coming with power upon them, when it is not from the spirit of God; and in that case, they have no renewed manifestations of divine glory, no spiritual sense of the truth and excellency of divine things, but the ground of this high frame is only this, that the promise seemed to come with great power upon them. Now, in such a case as this, if hope or confidence is excited, it is built upon a foundation of sand, and will not endure the trial.

USE II. Learn hence, what a dangerous mistake some persons run into about conversion. They are awakened and thrown into great distress about their souls; perhaps, by the spirit's applying some word of the law to their consciences; and soon upon this they have some invitation or promise powerfully impressed upon them, and its coming unexpectedly and powerfully, is the reason of their concluding themselves converted. But if what we have observed, in answering the question, be true, it must be very dangerous to ground their hopes of being converted upon such a bottom as this. It is the same principle, though in other words, with that of saying God loves me, or Christ died for me in particular; and therefore I will rely upon him. And the word does not teach us such a way of coming to the knowledge of our interest in Christ. There is no promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any person before he receives Christ as offered in the gospel. And therefore, though a promise should come to you with ever so much power, before you receive Christ, you have no good reason to think it is from the spirit of Christ, but rather that the impression is from a delusive spirit: for God never manifests his love, until men are brought into a state of favor, which is by the faith of dependance*. When persons

* *Stoddard's guide to Christ.*

persons have a comfortable scripture powerfully impressed upon them, they often think that God loves them; but they must have their hearts persuaded of the truth of the gospel by the in-bearing of divine light upon their consciences, before they can know that God loves them, or that Christ died to save them alive. Why then should any build their hopes, or be gratified with their frames which arise from such an uncertain foundation? What if some sweet promises in the word do come with power upon you; is it any sufficient warrant to take them as applied by the spirit of God? No, my friends, by no means. You may, indeed, have great emotions of joy, and think highly of your interest in the divine favor thereby, when you have no ground for the one or the other from the word of God: For it is a plain case, and has been sufficiently proved, that Satan, or the particular frame you are in, may be the cause of impressing the word upon your heart; & therefore the joy, be it ever so high, may be a false joy; and the hope, be it ever so strong, be but the hope of the hypocrite.

USE III. Let all that have the word of God set home upon them, carefully observe from what spirit the impression comes. There are many that do, and will conclude their frame is good; their hope
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and joy, or their dejection and darkness, must be right, merely because it is the result of the word's coming to mind, or being set home with power upon them. This they call the spiritual application of the word to their souls, and to lay themselves open to the most fatal delusions of the devil; and very often ensnare and delude others thereby. In this way Satan gets great advantages against the interest of Christ's spiritual kingdom, in times of revival, and brings the glory of the work into contempt, or hides it under wild, enthusiastic flights. Will it follow, my friends, that because the word comes with power, therefore the spirit of God applies it? No; there is nothing in all this but what the devil may do; nor will it produce any thing that implies saving grace. The word may be brought to mind, and follow you from day to day, and never reach your conscience, never assure your heart that it is God's word; never bring you to realize any spiritual excellency in the truth impressed upon you, and never sanctify your soul. For may you not have very powerful impressions of the word without any divine light, any sacred relish of the beauty and excellency of divine truth contained in the word? May not the word come to mind and follow you, without any spiritual sense of the gloriousness of the holy perfections of God, and the glory of Christ's

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all-fulness, so as to satisfy your heart with a sight of that glory? If so, then you had need carefully observe whether, when the word of God is impressed upon you, it is by the spirit of Christ, or by some other spirit. And for your help consider,

I. WHEN the spirit of Christ applies a particular word to satisfy a person of his good estate, he discovers the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is this discovery that draws forth the gracious and sensible actions of the heart, and it is the sight of these actions of the heart, that satisfies a christian that he is forgiven, and has a special interest in the promises. That application of the word, which is not in a way of spiritual illumination, is not from the Father of lights, but from the prince of darkness. You may be greatly affected with seeming love to God, and with a seeming joy in God, by the impressions of the word from an evil spirit, or from the particular frame you are in, but those impressions could not give you a good evidence of your being converted. God does not shew christians the goodness of their state in that way; but by enlightening the mind to see and realize what is written in the word, he discovers the gloriousness of God, and the riches of his grace in Christ, and thereby stirs up those holy dispositions

of soul, and gracious actions, which, if seen in a distinguishing light, will satisfy and comfort a true believer. So Job and David, Peter and Paul, knew their interest by the knowledge they had of the effects of divine light discovering divine glory. So every christian has a gracious and heavenly frame stirred up in his heart, when, with the word read or preached, he sees more of the glory of God, the excellency of Christ and divine things. Spiritual frames arise from clearer and more sensible manifestations of divine glory, than the person had when he was declining. What says John, the beloved disciple? *Every one that loveth, knoweth God.* And what says Paul, the apostle? *I pray that your love may abound more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment.* And if it is by the knowledge of God in Christ, that the love of the heart is excited, when it is thus excited it may be seen, and so you may be satisfied that you embrace the gospel, know that you love God and Christ, know that you hate sin, and thereby know you are a true christian.

2. WHEN the spirit of Christ applies the word to comfort a christian, he not only discovers the gloriousness of God in Christ by the word, but also assures the heart that it is God's word, and therefore the truth. Persons may have strong affections of
seeming

seeming love to, and delight in God, that are stirred up by having the word impressed upon their minds by the adversary, or by a strong imagination of their being converted: but when these affections are duly examined, they will appear to be pride of heart, and self love. The hypocrisy of such persons may be easily seen by a discerning christian, let the frame be ever so high, and that by the barrenness, pride, or unfruitfulness of your life or conversation. One observes, "there may lie the greatest hypocrisy under the greatest affections." But how comes it to pass that the height of a frame is not a good evidence of its being gracious? I answer; because such frames may be excited by impressions of the word from an evil hand, or from a false opinion of the goodness of our state. How then shall I know that the word of promise is applied by the spirit of Christ? I answer; when the word comes with such light and evidence as no evil spirit can bring it, then it is applied by the spirit of Christ. But what light and evidence is that? Ans. Such as not only discovers divine glory, but persuades the heart it is really God's word. The same discovery by the word which gives an inward sense of divine glory, will bring me to entertain it as God's word. If you know that Christ is come from God, and believe that God has sent him; you

will receive the word not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God. You may, by the impressions of the word from satan, suppose the word brought to you is God's word, but his impressions differ from a divine testimony in this, they will not persuade your heart that the word so impressed is certainly God's word. When Christ asked his disciples whom they thought he was? the answer is not, we suppose, but *thou art Christ the Son of the living God*. Impressions of gospel truth, by an evil spirit, may lead you to suppose Christ is the Son of God, and able to save sinners in a way honorary to God: but when the spirit of Christ brings the gospel home to you, your heart will be assured that he is the Son of God, and able to save the chief of sinners, in a way inexpressibly glorious to God himself.

3. WHEN the spirit of Christ applies the word to a christian, he has right apprehensions of divine things. I do not mean that he knows them fully, but so far as he knows them he has a right knowledge. The way to eternal life consists in the right knowledge of God and Christ Jesus; such an apprehension of God and divine things, as does convince them of the beauty and amiableness of the divine character, as represented in the scriptures. He is
convinced

convinced that such a being as God is, a God of infinite rectitude and holiness, is worthy of supreme love, and quiet submission. Those that have the word impressed by another spirit, may speak something of the infinite perfections of God, but they have no true apprehensions of them: they have no right sense of the divine nature and attributes, nor of the glory due to his name. It is true, they may know so much of God and Christ, and divine things, as to be affecting, but not so as to be convincing: They may know something, so far as to transport them, and stir up their zeal, but not so as to convince their consciences. They may have some knowledge about God, and about Christ, and yet remain ignorant of the true character of God and Christ too, and of the truth of the gospel. You may be greatly affected and melted with what you read or hear of the name, the character, and the love of Christ, and not have any just apprehensions of what you read or hear. The stony ground hearers were greatly elevated; the word was powerfully impressed upon them, with the divine things our Saviour taught them, but they had no just and realizing apprehensions of them: and you may be so impressed with the word which speaks of the glorious perfections of God, and the excellencies of Christ, as to be affected when you look on the things themselves only

as probable; but if the same divine truths are borne in upon the renewed conscience by the spirit of God, a person sees the glory of God, and knows the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; with open face he beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and knows it to be his glory.

4. WHEN the spirit of Christ applies the word to a christian, it draws out the gracious exercises of the heart. The word may come so home to others, as to produce high frames and some hopeful appearances in the life and conversation for a season. It may come with such power as to reform many sinful practices, and men may be so impressed with the mercy of God in providing a Saviour and way of salvation, as greatly to elevate their hearts, and from thence they may think that they are converted. But if divine light is borne in upon a renewed conscience, by the application of the word, it will never fail of drawing forth the gracious exercises of the heart. *Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord*, says David. And when ever the spirit of Christ applies the word of grace to a christian, it will bring him to a special intimacy with Christ, into the holy of holies, where he shall discover the great works of God; his judgments, his comforts, his glories, which are locked up from others. Then God in
Christ

Christ will be the object of his joy; this joy will not spring from self love, but from love to God in his true character. It is God that entertains his soul, and the effect of it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is a discovery that will break you off from all former pleasures, and engage all your affections upon the worthiest objects. When the spirit of Christ breaks in with divine light upon the heart, then faith, love, repentance, are excited, universal holiness and righteousness are excited; as the apostle Peter says, *grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

UPON the whole; we are in no danger of too much caution about the impressions of God's word upon us. I have seen so many ill consequences of taking every powerful impression, as an evidence of divine influence, that it has appeared necessary to consider the variety of their causes, that you might be better able to judge for yourselves. And you may see from what has been said in answer to the question, that the powerfulness of an impression by the word, is no evidence of its being sent by the spirit of all grace: no, not if it should fill your heart with joy and comfort. You cannot therefore, exercise good reason, and yet think that to be a safe

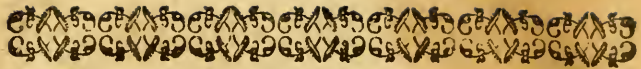
safe way of judging : for it does not follow, that, because the word comes with great power, and greatly affects us, therefore it is from the spirit of God. Our text teaches us quite another rule of judging. *The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.* And if the word is applied to your souls, we might hope, you would have more knowledge and understanding than to take every powerful impression of the word for divine influence ; for if the word gives light and understanding when the spirit of all grace gains its admittance, then surely, every impression and every frame is not divine, nor are all experiences truly gracious ; but all true experiences, whether of a common or saving work of grace, are agreeable to the word, and cannot be otherwise. And if the entrance of God's word gives saving light, it will produce evangelical simplicity and godly sincerity in your heart, dispose you to walk humbly with God, to bring forth the fruits of self-denied charity, and universal obedience. If the entrance of the word gives you spiritual light, you will be sensible that men are liable to be deceived ; that there is great danger of it. And although you may have a good hope of heaven, you will be far from that presumption which is common to those of an antinomian turn. You will fear lest you should split upon the
same

same rock that the Israelites did, and come short at last. Yea, you will fear lest you should give occasion to others to think you will come short, by remitting or abating in a life of practical godliness and mercy. If you are a true christian, the word has entered with such divine and efficacious light, that you are become in a measure cautious; and though young christians cannot be expected to know much of the devices of satan, and the danger of being imposed upon, yet they will be disposed to jealousy over themselves. I hope God will bless these discourses to such in particular. And if you would use them as a blessing, let this one thing be well fixed in your mind and heart, viz. That you may have great dejections and great joys in your future walk, by impressions of the word, when the holy spirit does not apply it. You must remember that God may suffer satan to abuse the word, or his instruments to corrupt it: or you may feel the weight of it from the particular frame you are in, or from the corruptions of your own heart, and therefore you must learn caution; and the same things should excite the oldest and most confirmed christian to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling; which God of his infinite mercy grant, for Christ's sake, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

A M E N.

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SERMON




S E R M O N V.

On the Knowledge of Christ.

I CORINTHIANS II. 2.

*For I determined not to know any thing
among you save Jesus Christ, and
him crucified.*

 AN has, in common with other animals, a reasoning faculty, and can, doubtless, observe connexions and differences better than the beasts of the field, or the fowls of heaven. And, beyond what he knows in common with other animals, he has an higher province of knowledge for the exercise of his other faculties, and for the direction and government of them, which spreads a dignity and excellency over all the powers of his body, and faculties of his soul.

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OUR apostle in this epistle to the Corinthians, tells us, that the grand design Christ sent him upon, was to spread abroad the most excellent and important things, in the plainest manner. And therefore he paid little regard to the rules of eloquence in his composition or preaching. He “came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God”. His meaning is not that he offered his hearers a confused, indigested, immethodical discourse, of what might happen to come into his head, for he was no contemptible, but a most skilful preacher; but he condemned an affected eloquence, which drew the hearers to admire the speaker, rather than to understand and love the gospel. He did not embellish his discourses with strokes of wit, or with that philosophy which is vain deceit, but with solid truth and scripture evidence—And the reason of this is given in my text. *For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* He had acquired many branches of useful knowledge before his conversion, but when he was brought to know the person and office of Jesus Christ, he contemned all other knowledge in comparison with this.

In speaking to the words read, I propose to consider, what the knowledge of Christ and him cru-

cified includes : what kind of knowledge the apostle speaks of, and the superior excellency of it, to the knowledge of other things. And after considering these things briefly, then make application.

I. CONSIDER what the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified includes.

Now, if we should answer this in the largest sense it would possibly bear, we should say it includes all the great and interesting truths revealed by Christ, and inculcated upon mankind—All the law and gospel; the great and glorious object of all true religion; the divine purposes respecting the state of sinners; those eternal counsels upon which all the interests of a future and eternal existence depend. The good and acceptable will of God, in every necessary and important article of duty; every thing that ought to be done and left undone; every operation men must pass under to form within them holy dispositions, and qualify them for serving God here, and enjoying him hereafter. And this would include in it mens knowledge of themselves, in their original, as from God, and in their fall in and with Adam, the first and great transgressor, together with the proper causes and miserable effects of it. The universal spread of moral defilement

ment, guilt and misery, to all the descendants of the first man, and the glorious method of recovery and salvation by Christ. Here then, might open a large scene of excellent and useful knowledge, without which all other branches of knowledge would be but useleſs ſpeculations, and unprofitable amusements. Happy is the man that findeth this wisdom, and the man that getteth this understanding. The spirit of it is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and its revenue than choice silver.

BUT, I apprehend, the apostle speaks of that knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified which engages the soul to receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel; his personal qualifications, and special character, as mediator of the covenant of grace, a knowledge so necessary that nothing in christianity can be rightly understood without it; for every part of the glorious plan of redemption has a reference to Christ, and is begun, carried on, and perfected by his mediation.

ONE branch of the knowledge of Christ, which the apostle was determined upon, was his personal qualifications. What a strange alteration must there be in Paul! A little before, he was haling men and women to prison for their adherence to Christ, per-
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secuting and making havock of the church of Christ, and breathing out threatnings and slaughter against his disciples ; but now he has the scales of ignorance taken off from his understanding, his disposition to the person of Christ is quite changed, and therefore he thirsted after the knowledge of him above all things. His person is two natures in one person ; for he saw the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily. And indeed, his qualifications to save the self-ruined and miserable, in a way that will glorify the holy perfections of God, depend upon the constitution of his person as God man ; and upon the obedience and sufferings of his life and death, resurrection and glorification, in that character.

IN this view, Christ is well able to secure all that is committed to his trust ; to bless and save his friends, to curse and destroy his enemies, to restore his image in souls, to subdue the corruptions of the heart, and to conquer sin, satan, and the world. For in this view, he must needs have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so as to know how far and wherein his people may be exposed ; which way to confound the devil in all his devices, how and when to give light to their path, and a safe conduct home to his kingdom. He has compassion on the helpless, and is willing, as well as able, to save
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the wretched. His assuming the human nature into personal union with the divine, his becoming a servant to his father, and humbling himself, his suffering himself to be put lower than the angels, yea, lower than man, a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people: I say, the whole and every part of his humiliation is an evidence of his love and readiness to help the miserable. In this view also, he has perfect righteousness and atoning blood, to satisfy for the greatest sins, and procure acceptance for the chief of sinners; to appear before God for them, in the right of his Deity, and prevail for all his people.

ANOTHER branch of the knowledge of Christ, which the apostle was determined upon, was, his designation to office. For it cannot be supposed that Paul, who had been a rigid pharisee, a furious bigot, and an implacable enemy to the gospel of Jesus Christ, should now become a preacher of God and a zealous votary for him, unless he knew him, as one appointed by God to redeem lost sinners. Who can imagine that such a change of sentiment could pass upon one that once despised and abhorred Jesus Christ, if he was not convinced that he was set apart by God, to the office of mediator? Doubtless this was one branch of knowledge Paul was determined

mined to improve in, and recommend to others? For, it is necessarily included in the right knowledge of Christ, to know that he received his commission, as mediator, from God the father, and voluntarily engaged to accomplish the whole work required of one in that character. Therefore we may well suppose it includes the knowledge of his obligation to improve all his personal qualifications for the best interest of those that the father has given him—that by his commission, he has an unalienable right to exercise all his natural powers and abilities for their safety and happiness. That the Father agreed to vest him with this authority, and to make him head over all things to accomplish it—to treasure up all gifts and graces in his hands, and give him authority to exercise all his natural and divine powers in communicating them. The man Christ Jesus has the sufficiency of the united Godhead, and all the power and glory of his mediatorial commission: the Father appointed him on purpose to this work, and has committed the whole interesting concern of souls to him. Yea, he has trusted him with the honor and glory of his own great name, and with the government of heaven and earth, angels and men; the revolutions of states and nations; the worlds of nature, grace, and glory, in subserviency thereto.

IN a word, this knowledge of Christ crucified, includes the knowledge of him as entrusted with the whole work of man's redemption. All parts of redemption relate to him. The first plan of it was founded in his mediation, and from the beginning, through all the gradual steps, to the final accomplishment, he is at the bottom and top of the whole. Nothing referring to God's glory, the setting up and carrying on his kingdom, and saving his chosen, but what is committed to his conduct and management. And he is represented equal to this great and glorious undertaking, *for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: an increated and a created fulness; a fulness of dignities and prerogatives, a fulness of power and of the spirit, a fulness of wisdom and knowledge, a fulness of all grace, peace, consolation and blessedness, is laid up in Christ.* Here then, is enough to determine an apostle of the greatest note for learning and penetration, not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. But

II. WHAT kind of knowledge is it that the apostle was determined to prosecute? Ans.

I. IT is the assuring knowledge of Christ. It is knowledge arising from the testimony of God,
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borne in by divine light upon a renewed conscience. As the witnesses to a fact are more or less credible, so our knowledge of it is more or less certain, provided the evidence be seen. Now, the witnesses that give their evidence to the mission and personal qualifications of Christ, are the most credible, and give solid ground of the most assured knowledge. They all bear witness to the truth, and are all supernatural.

His character agrees to what God has spoken by all the holy prophets, since the world began. It is manifest that he is the promised seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head—The seed of Abraham, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed—The true Shiloh, to whom should be the gathering of the people. It is evident that he is the angel of the covenant; the Lord sitting upon a throne in great glory; the Antitype of all the types in the old testament. No wonder then, that God the Father should testify and say, by a voice from heaven, *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Hereby the Father testified to the glorious dignity of his person; that he perfectly approved his character, and acquiesced in him as the great mediator, through whom he would glorify himself in the salvation of the self-ruined. And be-
sides

sides, the Father bore witness to his mission, by the witness Christ bore himself. The works which Christ did, bear witness that the Father sent him: These are a clearer confirmation of his divinity, office, qualifications and mission, than the best human testimony. And therefore when John sent two of his disciples to him, saying, *art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* he appeals to his works which he wrought before a large assembly of people. *Go your way,* and relate to John the baptist those things which you have been eye and ear-witnesses of. Tell him in particular, *that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised*. Observe to him also, that I do not court the rich and the great, as most impostors are apt to do, but, as you see by my auditory round about me, the poor, even the meanest of the people, have the gospel preached unto them. Now, these and such like miracles could not be wrought by the power of the devil; for the doctrine which was confirmed by them was contrary to his design, and tended to destroy his interest among men. And who can imagine that satan should assist in casting out satan? Neither were these miracles owing to the imagination of the people; for they were in the presence of great numbers, who were his enemies, and not inclined

to believe him: and doubtless their imaginations were ready enough to give a false turn to every thing he did. But the great miracle that gave the utmost evidence to his divine mission, and the divine approbation of him, was his resurrection from the dead. The witnesses produced to prove the fact, were eye witnesses of it, and were capable of giving their testimony in such a case. The action and all the circumstances are plainly related, and all agree in their testimony; nor did the severest threatenings, or greatest sufferings, ever prevail with them to deny or conceal it. This great event therefore confirmed the truth of what he had asserted of his being sent of God, and of his personal qualifications to sustain the office of mediator. For his resurrection did most plainly demonstrate that he did not arrogate to himself the character he bears.

Now, he that has given these supernatural evidences to the appointment and personal qualifications of Christ, can certainly convince men of the truth of them. For instance, cannot God bear in such divine light upon the conscience, as to make men see that the prophecies concerning the Messiah to come, are punctually fulfilled in Jesus Christ? Or may not God make them sensible of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, by that voice
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from the excellent glory, *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?* May not the same voice or power which spake these words at three different times, speak or set them home upon the consciences of men by efficacious light, and assure their hearts of the truth? Especially, what should hinder but the same supernatural power that raised up Christ from the dead, may bear in the evidence of the truth of that fact, so as to assure me that Christ is risen from the dead, and therefore to assure me he is approved and accepted in the whole of his work? This would not be to reveal any truth that is not already revealed in the scriptures. It is no more than we have reason to believe from the written word, that all have, who know Jesus Christ savingly: for the apostle expressly calls it *the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ*. And indeed, how can the gospel come with much assurance, full assurance, and all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unless the spirit of God makes it sure to us?

2. It is an experimental knowledge; or a favor of knowledge arising from experience. And so the church speaks of Christ when she had knowledge of him. *Because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.* And the
apostle

apostle calls it *the savor of the knowledge of him*. It is that knowledge of Christ which brings a relish to the spiritual appetite, and prevails with the heart to choose, prize, and cleave to Christ, as the qualified and approved Mediator between God and sinners. It is a knowledge of Christ that inclines the heart to think much of the excellency of his person and character, to make great account of his blood and righteousness, and of all his offices; to have all his expectations from him, and all his hopes built upon him. It is a knowledge of Christ, that gradually fills the heart with grace and peace, from a gradual experience of the genuine and happy effects of the love and power of Christ upon the soul. Such as know Christ, and him crucified as Paul did, find that Christ only, relieves their consciences of the burden of guilt. They feel the pardoning and cleansing virtue of a Saviour's blood, and know who it was that relieved them of their terrors. When they had just reason to dread the presence of God, as a consuming fire, and were mere sinners, without any righteousness to appear before God in, then Christ, Jesus a crucified Saviour, one approved of God, was revealed to them, and they were made sure that it was safe appearing before God in his righteousness, and their hearts were suited with that honorary and glorious way. And, although the

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more they gain in the knowledge of Christ crucified, the more sensible they will be of the body of sin and death that is in them; the viler in their own eyes, and the deeper sense of their inability to help themselves, or to do any good thing, yet; they will experience the gracious effects of this knowledge, in subduing sin, in exciting watchfulness, and affording sensible help, at times, in the duties of religion. Often-times they sensibly perceive that they are no match for the subtil adversary of their souls, but the knowledge of a crucified Saviour renewed in their consciences, brings wisdom and strength with it. In the exercise of this knowledge, when a christian is sorely tempted, the language of Christ to the heart is the same that it was to Paul when he was sorely buffeted, *my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* And they find, from time to time, that the renewed manifestations of a crucified Saviour, minister heavenly help to overcome temptations. The weaker they are in their own sense and apprehension, the stronger they are in Christ, and obtain the more illustrious victory. The knowledge of Christ makes them strong in Christ, to bear up under, and overcome all infirmities. The more they know of the virtue and excellency of Christ, the more sensible of their own
weakness

weakness, and the more plainly does a sufficiency of divine grace appear to them.

FROM hence we may conclude that many persons are greatly mistaken, who flatter themselves that they have the saving knowledge of a crucified Christ: for they have no assured knowledge of him, which brings forth the true savor of his personal qualifications and mediatorial office. They are trained up to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, and will stick to the religion of their fore-fathers. Or they have been under awakenings and terrors, and now believe that Christ Jesus died for them in particular, and are ravished with the thought. But all the knowledge they have of Christ in his person and character, is from probable argument, and not from assuring evidence. Hence, it is not a sense of his excellencies, but an opinion or confidence of their interest, that delights their souls. They do not prize Christ himself, but glory in their interest, and the benefits they think they have by him. Now and then, they would make use of Christ in their own way, but they live upon their frames and affections, upon their duties and services. Perhaps, if they hear a minister prove it to them, that this is the very way of a hypocrite's living, they will put themselves upon trusting in

in Christ, and will flatter themselves that they do believe unto righteousness. But still they live upon themselves, and get their frames from an opinion of their being in the favor of God, and are strangers to the excellency of the person and character of Christ. Hence, under all their shew of religion, in their very highest frames, they live unto themselves, and not unto him which died for sinners and rose again.

SERMON

P




S E R M O N VI.

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.

I CORINTHIANS II. 2.

*For I determined not to know any thing
among you save Jesus Christ, and
him crucified.*

 HE knowledge of Christ may comprehend the knowledge of all the great and interesting truths revealed by Christ, and inculcated upon mankind; but it is most probable, by the context, that Paul speaks of that knowledge of Christ and him crucified, which engages the soul to receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel; the knowledge of his personal qualifications, his nature

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ture and properties, as Mediator; his ability and willingness to save unto the uttermost, in a way that will honor the holy perfections of God in the highest manner; and the knowledge of his being appointed to his office by God the Father, and his voluntary agreement to accomplish the whole work required of one in the character and office he sustained. Nor can we reasonably suppose that he speaks of that knowledge merely, which arises from probable argument, but of the assured knowledge of Christ. For, the witnesses are all of them supernatural, and give the highest evidence to his mission, and qualifications. His character agrees to all that the holy prophets wrote of the Messiah that was to come. God the Father testified that he approved of him and his coming, by a voice from the excellent glory. The many and great miracles he wrought, were so many confirmations of his divinity, office, and qualifications to finish the whole work which his Father gave him to do. Especially, the great miracle of his resurrection from the dead, gives the utmost evidence of his mission, and the divine approbation. And, doubtless, he that has wrought those supernatural works to prove him a qualified Mediator, sent of God to take away the sins of the world, can bear in such supernatural light upon the conscience, as to persuade the heart

to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God; one sent of God, and able and willing to save the most miserable and helpless. Indeed, men may have an opinion that Jesus Christ is a qualified Saviour, from the force of education; or they may have their affections rise like a land-flood, from an opinion or presumption that he is their Saviour; but it is humbly apprehended, that no person has an experimental knowledge of Christ, but he that has the assured knowledge of him. What pleasure could it raise in a man to hear his neighbor expatiate upon the beauties of the spring and summer, if he did not hear the singing of birds, or see the earth clad in green, and the heavens serene and bright? Or what relish could he have for the most delicious food which he never tasted? No more can any man take pleasure in the excellencies of Christ, unless he has as sure a knowledge of him, in his personal properties, as that which arises from the sight of the eye; no more could he find true relief from the burden of guilt upon his conscience, nor feel the pardoning and cleansing virtue of a Saviour's blood, unless, by divine light borne in upon his conscience, his heart is persuaded that there is a glorious sufficiency in Christ for these purposes, and that it is a sufficiency which God approves.

BUT

BUT these things were largely considered in our first discourse upon the text, which, I pray God to renew a sense of upon our hearts, by the brief repetition of the general contents at this time, and that will prepare us the better to attend upon

III. THE superior excellency of this knowledge of Christ, to the knowledge of other things. Evident it is from the words of the text, that the apostle esteemed the knowledge of Christ crucified before any other. Though he had attained to great knowledge, and was well versed in the several branches of learning then in vogue, yet he *determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* And there was good reason why he and we should determine upon this knowledge rather than any other; because it is the most excellent. For

1. IT is conversant about the most excellent objects. If we consider the knowledge of Christ as it includes all the great truths of supernatural revelations. These have been the study and enquiry of the wisest and best men in all ages. And what subjects can we turn our thoughts upon, and employ our minds about, that are equally excellent with those, which christian duty holds up to view, and which every true christian is conversant with? Here
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the adorable perfections, and several subsistences of the Deity shine forth in their brightest glory. Here the Son of God, in his designation, in his mediatorial character and qualifications; here the spirit of God in all his operations, gifts and graces; here the worship due to God, the obedience he requires, and the nature of that religion he approves; here the works he has made, the providence he exercises, the favors he bestows, the redemption he has wrought, the realities of invisible and eternal things, are written down and held forth in the clearest manner. And what subjects can men employ their minds and time upon, equally sacred and venerable with these? Or if they should gain the knowledge of other things ever so perfectly, it could not render them worthy of esteem, because it could not change their souls into the divine likeness.

BUT we need not consider any thing further than Christ crucified, as the special object, to make it appear that this is the most excellent knowledge. For, as God, he thinks it no robbery to be equal with God; he is eternally and unchangeably possessed of all the infinitely glorious attributes and perfections of the Deity; equal in existences, equal in duration, equal in operation, equal in honor with the Father and the holy Ghost. Therefore all the excellencies

lencies that may be seen in the creatures, whether animate, inanimate, or intelligent, fall infinitely short of those that are in Jesus Christ. And, as man, he is the most excellent of all God's works; the beginning of the creation of God, and the first born of every creature. Many intelligences in our world, are endowed with various excellent qualifications, and the angels in heaven excel them all; but the human nature of Jesus Christ is more excellent than either. No beauty among the other creatures is equal to his beauty; he is the chief of ten thousand for wisdom and holiness, and whatever virtue can be named. And therefore the inspired prophet, writing of his humanity, says, *thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips.* And the apostle says, he has *obtained a more excellent name than the holy angels;* which probably refers to that created nature which is united with his person. Hence, all the beauties in other creatures, whether visible or invisible, fall inexpressibly below the excellencies of the man Christ Jesus. How glorious then must he be, if you consider the mysterious union of these two natures in one person! How divinely qualified to sustain the office of a Mediator between God and man; to adjust and make up the difference which sin has made between God and us! None can fully comprehend the utmost extent of
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his perfection's and glory; but so much of him may be known by us, as to make it evident that the knowledge of Christ crucified is the most excellent knowledge.

2: It is the most grateful to the mind. The highest attainments in other parts of knowledge, cannot yield such solid pleasure to an immortal soul, as the saving knowledge of Christ crucified. The wise king of Israel, speaking of the knowledge of other things, says, *in much wisdom, is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.* And this he doubtless speaks of to excite men to the study of heavenly and divine things, the knowledge of which is grateful and entertaining. For, before, the knowledge of a crucified Christ gratifies all the faculties of the soul. Particularly,

It is most grateful to the mind. It is true indeed, *the natural light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.* The understanding may have those perceptions of the light, and of the sun, and of other things, as to excite esteem and pleasure. How often have studious and contemplative minds been suddenly surprized and greatly entertained with some new discoveries in the works of nature or art? But no discoveries of this sort,
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can yield such delight to the mind, as the saving knowledge of Christ. This great light that came to enlighten the Gentiles, is sweet indeed, and a pleasant thing it is for the intellectual eye to behold the Son of righteousness, when he darts forth his beams, and showers down spiritual blessings upon souls. Holy meditation upon a crucified Christ, yields more pleasure to the mind, than meditating upon any other objects.

AGAIN: this knowledge of Christ pacifies the conscience. Though graceless souls acquire ever so much knowledge of the world, they do but increase pride and lust thereby, and their consciences, if they are not stupified, will accuse and sting them so much the more. The wounds in the conscience of such are deep wounds, and can never be thoroughly healed by an increase in the knowledge of other things, nor by the duties that such men do, or their promises of better obedience. But this knowledge of Christ crucified brings in peace to the troubled conscience. The knowledge of other things may excite men to make the outside clean; but it is the blood of Christ that purges the conscience from dead works, and is the answer to an accusing conscience before God. This divine knowledge of Christ brings us to the blood that sprinkles the heart

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from an evil conscience. It is like wine to wash and cleanse, and like oil to mollify and supple, and heal it: Experience teaches, that a spiritual knowledge of Christ will remove the greatest burden of guilt, that lies upon the conscience, though nothing else will do it. When we know Christ, we know that his sacrifice and atonement is sufficient to cleanse from the guilt, as well as the defilement of all sin; and in an assuring sight, and realizing sense of it, conscience is pacified.

AGAIN; this knowledge of Christ satisfies the desires of the soul. The more men pry and dive into the works of nature, the more perturbation of mind, arising from the uncertainty and disappointment they meet with. But the more they know of a crucified Christ, the more his mediatorial character opens to their minds, and the clearer the evidence of his mission shines in upon their hearts, the more solid pleasure is given to the spiritual appetite. This holy David knew by his own experience; and therefore he prays, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*: and then tells the effect it would have: *Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that the corn and the wine increased*. The assuring and experimental knowledge of Christ, is pleasurable as the sun, scattering his beams at noon.

Blessed

Blessed is the man whom thou causest to approach unto thee: he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Hence, the open and immediate vision of Christ in glory, will terminate and fully satisfy the desires of true christians, when they arrive at their state of perfect blessedness. *In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* When saints arrive at the haven of eternal rest, where Christ shines in the fullest glories of his mediatorial properties, they will have compleat and everlasting satisfaction.

3. It is the most comprehensive. He that has the saving knowledge of Christ, knows every thing that is necessary to be known, in order to glorify God here, and to enjoy him hereafter. He that has the saving knowledge of Christ, needs look no further than to increase that knowledge, to have his mind stored and furnished with all desirable knowledge. For

HE that has the knowledge of Christ, knows the Father also. Men may have the knowledge of God by the works of creation and providence; but they never will arrive to the saving knowledge of him by them. The light of nature is not sufficient to teach us the saving knowledge of God. The

light of the knowledge of the glory of God, that shines out of darkness, and shines into the hearts of christians, shines only in the face of Jesus Christ. But our Lord assures us, he that sees him, sees him that sent him. Christ being one, in essence, with the Father, none can know him savingly, but they must know the Father also; not only with him, but in him, and one with him; for he is *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. The clearest and fullest manifestation of the several glories of the Deity, are to be seen in the person of Christ. Whatever is in the person of the Father, is also in the person of the Son, for he is the very image, the perfect and absolute image of the invisible God. In knowing Christ therefore we cannot but know the Father, because he perfectly resembles the Father, and is one in essence with him. In the knowledge of Christ then, is seen the glory of all the holy perfections of the Godhead, for all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him.

AGAIN: he that knows Christ, knows himself, The thoughts that natural men have of themselves, are very different from what Christ has of them. They are proud, and think themselves well furnished with some recommending qualifications; but Christ knows that they are miserable, and wretched,
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and poor, and blind, and naked. But when they are brought to the saving knowledge of a crucified Christ, they judge of themselves, in some measure, as Christ judges of them. They are sensible of their own vileness, meanness, and utter unworthiness; yea, and of their absolute inability to procure the divine favor. They know there could not have been any need of such great and astonishing provision made in Christ, for the redemption of men, were they not fallen into the pit, and sunk down in the miry clay of moral defilement and guilt: no need of an high priest, upon the throne, interceding for us, if we had not forfeited the divine favor, and exposed ourselves to the curse of God's law: no need of an Almighty King in Zion, to ride forth and subdue the lusts of our own hearts, and overcome our spiritual enemies, if we had not been vassals to sin and satan. But the saving knowledge of Christ, in his mediatorial character, is always attended with a clear and abasing sight and sense of our own sinful, self-ruined, and miserable condition by nature.

AGAIN: he that has this knowledge of Christ, knows his duty. Christ says of himself, *I am the light of the world*: and of christians, *he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light*

light of life. He has set himself for an example in all the duties of the first and second table of the moral law, in all ready obedience to God, and holy submission to his providential will: and one design of it was, that we should follow his steps. Now, where there is this knowledge of Christ, men are enlightened into their duty, and disposed to follow Christ in all things, wherein he has set himself as a pattern for imitation. *In simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they would have their conversation in the world: serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with their spirits and their bodies, according to the gospel of his Son.*

AGAIN: he that has this knowledge, knows the evil nature of all sin. Let men acquire all the knowledge of sin they are able by hard study, and be as great sticklers for religion as Paul was, before his conversion, they will never have the thorough knowledge of the evil there is in sin, without this knowledge of Christ. They may have the notion of it, but not the sense of it in their hearts. But in the saving knowledge of a crucified Christ, sin appears in its own colours, agreeably to the name by which it is called, SINFUL SIN. Nothing can discover the venom and malignity of sin, equal to the

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the sufferings of Christ. And hence the prophet Zechariah teaches us, that the genuine sorrows of a penitent soul, flow from a believing view of a crucified Saviour. *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.* In the knowledge of Christ crucified, we may see the heinous nature of sin: The infinite evil of it, as it is against the nature, the law and authority of God, is more manifested by his bloody sweat in the garden, and his bitter cries upon the cross under the weight of his Father's wrath, together with the other parts of his humiliation, than in the punishment of wicked men, and all the devils in hell. Surely, a God of infinite holiness and glory, would have spared a person of infinite purity and excellence, when he offered himself, had not sin been an infinite evil.

AGAIN: he that has this knowledge of Christ, knows the emptiness of the world. The men of this world, not knowing a better, are continually crying, *who will show us any good?* They take a great deal of pains to do nothing, and make a solemn business of mere trifles. And the reason why they are in such a perpetual whirl after the pleasures, honors, or riches of the world, is because they know no greater good. But they that know a crucified Saviour, know that all the admired greatness
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of this world, is but a great delusion. The knowledge of a glorious Christ, eclipses all worldly glory; and then people will be satisfied to follow Christ, who, though Lord of all, fought no more of the world than was simply necessary. He manifested a great indifference, as well becomes his professed disciples, to all the enjoyments of this life. He knew them to be empty and perishing, and so do they: he knew them to be altogether insufficient for the portion and happiness of an human soul, and he has undoubtedly made all true christians sensible of it too. If then, we have this knowledge of a crucified Saviour, we know, by the Spirit he has given us, and by his own example, that all worldly things are vain and empty.

IN one word. This knowledge of a crucified Christ, is the ground-work of all true christianity. Wherever the saving knowledge of Christ takes place in mens hearts, it produces the most excellent and valuable effects: for *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord:* Mere speculative knowledge, or giving credit to human testimony, will not produce such effects: but this assuring and experimental knowledge of Christ, will change men into the same image. It is the
foundation

foundation of all true religion; by the influences of the holy Spirit, bringing men into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Particularly; this knowledge of a crucified Christ, produces a God-like disposition in mens hearts. The law, which is the transcript of the moral character of the divine Being, is written upon, and operates in their hearts; and the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, and draws out their love to his character. This is the new heart and new spirit promised in the scriptures, in the place of an heart unapt to receive divine impressions. It displays the nature of the moral perfections of God in the frame of the heart and faculties of the soul. There are many speculative christians, who have a kind of knowledge that does not produce this effect. They are sometimes filled, as the phrase is, but it is with self-love, self-delight, and self-fulness, and not with the fulness of God. Tho' some of this sort are free from gross enormities, yet they never attained to the saving knowledge of God, but carry such an image of their frames or their own goodness continually before them, that they have no spiritual discerning of God in Christ. But he that has the spiritual knowledge of a crucified Christ, has the image of divine purity and goodness written upon his heart. Is God a Being of

transcendent and infinite holiness? He that has this knowledge of Christ is holy too, conformed to the nature and will of God, not actuated by the principles and precepts of carnal men, nor any worldly maxims. Is God infinitely just and righteous in himself? He also is of an upright heart, and loves this attribute of God. Is God a Being of infinite truth, ready to fulfil and perform all his promises? And he that knows Christ, hates falshood and deceit, and loves fidelity, sincerity, and punctuality to his engagements. Is God infinitely good and merciful? So is he a lover of mercy, disposed to be pitiful and compassionate to the miserable—holy in heart, upright in heart, the law of kindness is in his heart. This knowledge produces a gracious principle, which inclines him to delight in, and esteem the divine character, and earnestly to desire the enjoyment of and communion with him. He knows God in Christ, not as the devils know him, or as hypocrites know him, but in the frame of his own heart, being moulded into the divine image, and having the resemblance of God drawn upon him. The nature and holy perfections of God are copied out in his nature, and the same spirit is in him, which was also in Christ Jesus:

AGAIN: this knowledge of Christ will produce a life and conversation agreeable thereto. He that
knows

knows and is delighted with the divine character, will have a practice, in some good measure, corresponding therewith. He loves an holy, upright, faithful life, and hates every false way: and therefore he yields himself unto God, as one that is alive from the dead, every faculty of his soul, and every member of his body is a witness of his love to God in his moral character, and his submission to his wisdom and sovereignty. It is not uncommon for men to pretend they know Christ and have faith, who are empty of good works, and destitute of the gracious effects of divine knowledge; but such pretences are detestable. Others glory in the bulk of their duties, and frequent attendance on the means of grace, and are ready to say with Jehu, *come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts*, whereas it would be much more agreeable if one could see the character of the divine beauty and holiness drawn out in their hearts and lives. There is not a greater contradiction in the world, than for a man to pretend to the saving knowledge of Christ, and yet to live an unholy, unrighteous life. Saving knowledge will appear in the practice. *Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* Whoever omits or disregards the duties of God or man; whoever does not conscientiously discharge the duties of righteousness in his relations and dealings,

is not of God, but of the devil; and so is he that does not discharge the offices of love. A pretended knowledge of Christ may be known by an unrighteous life, and even by the neglect of second table duties. It is morally impossible that any person should have the saving knowledge of Christ, and lead an unholy, immoral life. This divine knowledge will produce pure and undefiled religion; it will produce piety, righteousness, charity, sobriety, self-denial, and the like, in the external practice, and keep us unspotted from the world:

AGAIN: this knowledge of Christ will dispose men to seek the glory of God as their chief end. The glory of God is necessarily his own chief end in all his works, as he is a Being infinitely glorious in himself. And hence, *he made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil.* He made and will dispose of all for his own praise, and the purposes of his own glory. It is for his own glory that he wills the happiness of the elect, while the finally impenitent are designed for the day of evil, that he might glorify his great name in their eternal destruction. The final happiness of believers, is an end subordinate to his own glory, and relative thereto, if considered as a distinct end. Well, does God seek his own glory in all, and above all things? So
does

does he that has the saving knowledge of Christ. He prefers God to himself, and seeks his own happiness with a view to the glory of God. It is true, he seeks his own happiness, but it is subordinately, and God's glory supremely. He sees such an excellency in God's great name, that he longs to glorify him in the most active manner. Why? Because he loves his divine character above all things. Many that profess to have this knowledge of Christ, are blinded by self-love and self-interest. Being really ignorant of Christ, they know not what the saving knowledge of him would produce, and therefore settle down upon false notions about religion, setting themselves, and their own happiness above the glory of God. This fills the christian world with false religion. It lies on the foundation of self-love, through ignorance of the excellency of Christ, and the gloriousness of God in him. They will own perhaps, that they ought to love God and his glory, more than the world, and the things of the world. They will lay themselves out to do many things, very good in themselves, but they are not excited to do any thing, chiefly for the glory of God, and from supreme love to God. Why? Because they do not know the glory and amiableness of the divine character, and therefore do not perceive why God is to be loved and preferred in all cases before themselves

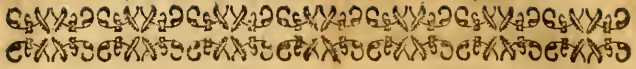
themselves, and why they should love themselves, and seek their own happiness supremely for God himself. But he that has the knowledge of Christ crucified, sees the wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth, and sovereign dominion of God in an amiable light; and hence he employs all the faculties of his soul, and all the powers of his body, supremely to his glory, and regards him as his last end in all things. The selfish motives working in the heart, which produce false religion, under colour of that which is true, have no dominion over him. He is not kept back from sin chiefly for fear of shame, but because it is against the nature and dominion of God. So far as holiness prevails, he is not prompted to acts of righteousness, charity, and self-denial, from self-applause or self-interest, but from the authority of God in the law enjoining these good offices; from supreme love to the divine character ruling in his heart, and a desire to honor God in all that he does. As far as he resembles Christ, all his social virtues, all his religious performances, all his righteous and charitable practices are consecrated to God, and done with a view that the divine Majesty might receive the more homage, and the greater revenue of glory. Whether he eats or drinks, wakes or sleeps, does any natural, civil or religious works, this is his fundamental principle, to do all to the glory of God.

O that we might all be suitably impressed with a sense of these things, and not be left to flatter ourselves of having the special knowledge of a crucified Christ, while we are not universally, and cordially, devoted to God and his glory ; devoted in heart and life to his revealed will, from supreme love to his character and sovereign dominion. If this is not our religion, it is not owing to any defect in the assuring, experimental knowledge of Christ, but to our ignorance of Christ, and to the falseness of our profession. The sacred writings ascribe the noblest influence and efficacy to faith. *Faith purifies the heart*, not only justifies, and is the answer of a good conscience before God, but begins a work of sanctification in the heart. *Faith works by love* ; does not glory in external priviledges and professions, in flights and pretences, but works by supreme love to God, and love to men for his sake. *Faith overcomes the world* ; it will make men heroes for God ; it influences to mortification and self-denial, subdues the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and disposes and excites men to those christian practices of holiness and righteousness, love and goodness, which are contrary to the tenor, temper, and tendency of this world. But from whence does this faith spring ? Why, from the knowledge
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of God and Christ. *This is life eternal*, says the faithful and true witness, *that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* The knowledge of God in Christ will beget reliance, delight in God, and produce holy affections and christian practices. Light, that great beauty and blessing of the universe, was the first production of the great God in the creation of nature, and so it is the first thing wrought in the soul, where there is a work of saving grace. God comes into the heart, by enlightening the understanding, and so making men light in the Lord. How vastly beneficial is the change produced by spiritual illumination! What a different sense has the enlightened soul, of the person, properties, natures, mission, and doctrines of Christ! In what a different view does a man consider these interesting truths revealed in the word, from what he did before the light shined into his dark soul! When the light of the Son of Righteousness shines into his mind, it warms his heart with love to the divine character, and to christian practice. And hence, what hopes does it inspire; what desires does it raise; what new dispositions does it excite; what resolution and constancy does it produce; what vigilance, diligence, and vigor does it animate! O this knowledge of a crucified

cified Christ is the source of all true religion: It is *an ornament of grace unto the head, and a chain about the neck.* It is a knowledge that furnishes a thousand sources of wonder and pleasure: it inspires with peace and serenity in the midst of danger; it supports and comforts in the prospect and approach of death, and presents to view, the glory, honor, and immortality before us.

SERMON.



SERMON VII.

The knowledge of Christ improv'd.

I CORINTHIANS II. 2.

For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.



WHAT is it that makes men disinclin'd to embrace a crucified Christ? Is it the want of those excellencies that are truly recommending, and should attach the heart of every one of the human race? Or is it some rooted blindness and enmity to the most worthy and beneficial objects of attention? It cannot be the former, for, as we have heard, Christ Jesus is the most excellent object, in his personal qualifications, infinitely amiable in his divine, and

and inexpressibly beautiful in his human perfections. And those that have the saving knowledge of him, find by experience, that he is most grateful to their understandings, pacifying to their consciences, and delighting to their hearts. Did we know Christ, we need look no further, than an increase therein, to have our minds stored and furnished with all desirable knowledge: he that knows Christ, knows the Father also, for they are one in essence, and he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express character of his person. He that knows Christ, knows the prejudices and vileness of his heart, his unworthiness of mercy, his inability to help himself, his pride and meanness. In a word, he knows his duty, knows the evil nature of sin, and the nature of true religion. Therefore it is not the lack of beauty and excellency in Christ, that so few prize and embrace him; but it must be resolved into the blindness and enmity of their hearts. They do not see his moral beauty, nor have any taste for it, nor for those interesting things which the knowledge of him includes. It cannot be for want of evidence of his mission, for his wonderful miracles and works of grace, prove him to be sent of God: but it is, as Christ said of the Jews, *they hate him and his Father also*. Why else do they wilfully transgress his laws, and maintain a controversy with him? A disregard.

to the authority of God, is called rebellion against him : it is bidding defiance to his authority, and a manifest proof that our hearts are at enmity against him.

BUT it is time to apply the whole. Therefore

I. LEARN hence, something of the nature of saving faith. I know of scarce any thing among us, that is more controverted in religion, than saving faith. Strange indeed ! Strange with a witness ! Especially among a people that solemnly profess their adherence to those standards that particularly describe it ; and among a people that have had it publicly opened, explained and guarded, times without number. And yet

SOME place faith in assenting to conjectural or probable evidence. But this is only opinion at most, by which men are inclined to think the gospel is true rather than false. This, however, is enough to bring men to make a profession, with some affection and adherence to the truth.

OTHERS place saving faith in subjective assurance, or in a persuasion that Christ is theirs, or died for them in particular. But this is no part of saving faith ; for such a particular persuasion has

no promise of salvation in the holy scriptures. The bible no where teaches us, that if I am persuaded Christ is my Saviour, therefore I may conclude that my sins are forgiven me, or that I am justified, or ever shall be justified. Such a particular persuasion is, no doubt, in many hypocrites. Who could be more confidently persuaded than the Pharisee was, when he said, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this Publican?* And yet he was rejected of God, and his thanksgivings were an abomination to the Lord.

SUCH errors as these are very dangerous, not only to the persons that embrace them, but to others also; for they tend to promote scepticism in matters of religion, and a denial of all supernatural revelation. One, contrary to his most solemn profession, says this is saving faith; and another, that is saving faith, until the hearers begin to think, and many of them to conclude that it matters not what faith is, or whether a man has any faith at all about the gospel. But as a preservative, our Lord prays for oneness of faith and affection, *that the world might know that the Father sent him.* And were there this oneness of faith, of the right kind; it would tend to persuade the minds of men, that really Christ was sent of God, and that his doctrine was divine. But
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when, among members of the same body, one has this faith, another that, the usual consequence is infidelity; especially where men professing great confidence (as is not uncommon) live in scandalous wickedness. This exposes a crucified Saviour to the derision and scorn of his enemies. Surely then it is time to get well settled in the nature of saving faith.

And

THE description we have given of the knowledge of Jesus Christ may help to some understanding of the true nature of faith, and what is implied therein.

And

I. As to what is implied, which is the knowledge of ourselves. It is a great misery of mankind in general, that they will not employ their thoughts, in good earnest, about those things which most of all deserve them. Hence, while there is a diligent enquiry and inspection into other men and other things, there is a great aversion to the knowledge of ourselves. Men are more quick sighted to discern the faults and blemishes of others than their own. It is common for those that are most sinful themselves, to be most forward and free in judging and censuring others. Our Saviour speaks of them, in Mat. vii. 4. who saw the same sins

much

much greater in others than in themselves. And the wise heathen were sensible of this evil; and Mr. MASON says, they represented it in the following manner. “Every man (say they) carries a wallet, or two bags with him, the one hanging before him, and the other behind him; in that before, he puts the faults of others; in that behind, his own, by which means he never sees his own failings, whilst he has those of others always before his eyes.”

BUT he that knows Christ, has turned the wallet, and placed that which has his own sins, before his eyes, and that which has the faults of others, behind his back. This is wrought by the spirit of God, partly by bringing men to a sense of their sin and misery. This work of God in the conscience, gives them an affecting sense of what they are, and what they have done, and of what they ought to do. The law of the ten commands is a perfect law, directing and obliging all men, in the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their lives. This law is a transcript of the moral perfections of God: as therefore his moral character is holiness, justice, goodness and truth, such is his law: i. e. it is agreeable to his will who is perfect holiness; it is consonant to the rules of justice, and is for the good of mankind. This law allows no place for sinful tempers

pers of any kind; it strikes at the root of every disposition contrary to the perfection of the soul. The design of it is to secure the honor of God, to sanctify the faculties of man, to regulate him in the whole tenor of his life and conversation, to point out the most exalted state of holiness; and since man is fallen from God, it is to give him the knowledge of sin, and show him the necessity of Christ.

Now, when the spirit of all grace opens the eye of conscience, and brings home this law, it confounds a person that has trusted in himself as righteous, and brings on him a conviction of guilt, exposing to eternal misery. Hence, because it discovers sin, and the wrath and curse of God, the apostle calls it *the ministration of condemnation*. It perfectly lays before man the extent of his duty, and inexorably condemns him for the least defect. And it becomes sensibly the ministration of condemnation to every guilty offender, when conscience does its proper office. It takes away all pleas that a sinner offers in bar of the sentence of condemnation, and pronounces in his heart that he is a cursed, condemned creature.

THE knowledge of Christ supposes this, and therefore the apostle says, *the law is a school-master*

to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. The law thoroughly applied, shuts a sinner up unto the faith; he finds himself surrounded with an impossibility of escaping the sentence unto death, unless a Saviour is provided. He finds nothing about himself that can encourage his hope, but is held under the terror and discipline of the law as a prisoner in confinement, lying at the mere mercy of an offended Judge. When this alarm is sounded through the conscience, he has an affecting sense of his sin and guilt. The sins of his life, and the sin of his nature, stare in his face; his indisposedness to God and godliness, his aversion to God and holiness, his unfitness, utter unfitness to enjoy God and the happiness of heaven, and his inability to help himself, the poor sinner is convinced of, by the application of the law to his conscience. This was the method God dealt with Paul in order to conversion, Rom. vii. 9. People that are strict and conscientious, as Paul was, are usually very secure as he was. They are without the law, though they have the letter of it, and are sticklers for it. They have the law in their hands and in their heads, but it does not reach their hearts; and therefore while they are dead in sin, they are alive in their own conceits. But when the law is applied, and they feel the power and spirituality of it, they see that in sin

which they never saw before. Then they feel their corrupt bias, the bitter root, and their bent to backslide; sin in its defiling, deforming nature, affronting the majesty of heaven, trampling upon the authority of God, and bringing the awful curse threatened upon them. This makes a sinner lose the good opinion he had of himself, and convinces him that he is in a state of sin, and so in a state of death. God sets up a Judgment seat in his conscience, and he finds himself but a dead man. This makes the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in his heart, and presses him to self-weariness. He cannot find any help, any relief in himself, nor in any or all the creatures. He is weary of this state of sin, is scorched with the burning wrath of God, and longs after pardoning mercy.

ALL this work, is a necessary work of the law upon the conscience of sinners, so far as we can judge, and so far as we have an account, in the new testament of those that were converted, though we dare not limit the divine prerogative. But this appears necessary, for where is the sinner that will let go his own righteousness, and seek after such an almighty helper as Christ is, if he is not sensible that he must perish without him? Who will consent to have all the glory of salvation taken from him and
given

given to another, if he is not reduced to self-despair? Or does God put forth his power and grace to help, before all helpers sensibly fail the miserable and self ruined?

2. As to what is contained in saving faith; and that is a knowledge of God in Christ, which is distinct from all other kinds of knowledge. It is a most dangerous mistake that some have fallen into, that there is no special difference between the faith of devils, and the faith of God's elect, or the saving faith of true christians. There is evidently both an objective and a subjective difference. The knowledge of Christ which is given to the elect of God, and which is the ground of their receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation, is totally diverse from any knowledge the devils have, or can have of Christ. For, whatever assurance they have of his person as the Son of God, and his sovereign dominion over all—whatever knowledge they have of his external brightness and glory in the government he exercises over all worlds, yet they have not any spiritual knowledge of him as the moral governor over all. They see no beauty nor amiableness in his character, nor can they possibly have an inward perception of it; for if they had, they would necessarily esteem it in their judgment, and be pleased

and satisfied with it. And consequently they could not be in a hell of torments, but must be in a heaven of joy and delight. But (as I considered upon the second head of discourse from the text) the knowledge which true christians have of a crucified Saviour, is not only assuring as to the object, but it is experimental, or a favor of knowledge: They have an inward perception of the beauty of Christ in his character and government, entirely different from what devils, or any wicked men have, or can have; for if devils or wicked men know he is just, holy, and faithful to his word, yet they have no perception of his moral beauty, no sense of excellency in that character, and therefore they cannot approve and like Christ in that character. But true christians have a new perception of Christ, wholly different in nature from what they had before, and from what devils have; something entirely new they perceive of the glory of Christ, which they could not gain by any kind of perceptions which they had of him before.—And as there is an objective, so there is a subjective difference. The spiritual perception of the excellency of Christ, produces a sacred delight of soul with that character discovered, and a dependance upon him as the purchaser of all grace and glory. Neither devils nor wicked men are pleased with the true character

character of Christ, as they do not know him in that assuring and experimental manner that christians do, so they do not prize and delight in him as they do. Their knowledge cannot produce any such exercises of spirit as the spiritual knowledge of Christ does. But in this also, the faith of christians and the faith of devils essentially differ. For, the knowledge of Christ which is proper to the elect, produces a divine pleasure and resignation of soul unto Christ. Hence christians prize and love, and rely upon Christ in his mediatorial character: they give up their guilty souls to him for pardon and acceptance, their filthy souls to him for cleansing from their moral defilement, their stubborn souls to him for deliverance from the dominion of all sin, their impotent souls to him, to overcome all temptations, to conquer all sinful inclinations, to strengthen and fortify their minds to holiness, and to secure and preserve them unto eternal life. Hence also, the promises and threatnings, the commands and prohibitions of God's word appear to be great, certain, and excellent realities. Their faith is no indolent persuasion, that casts off care and watchfulness, and indulges sin or the neglect of duty; but they feel themselves bound to watch and pray, to fight and wrestle, and to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, though all their hope is built upon Christ.

How greatly mistaken therefore, are all those about the nature of saving faith, who place it, either in a mere assent to the gospel, or in a persuasion that Christ is their Saviour! These arminian and antinomian errors which are received, some by one party and some by another, have spread in the christian church, have almost destroyed the true gospel account of faith, and have been the final ruin of many precious souls. But these christians who have been instructed into the nature of true and saving faith, will consider the tendency of such erroneous principles and carefully guard against them. They are principles foreign to the gospel, and tend to distract and unhinge the mind, like the wind that tosses the ship, drives it from its anchor, and carries it away to be split upon the rocks. They are principles that will keep the heart always fluctuating and unsettled, and those that are taken with them, will find no good come to their souls thereby, but they will exclude themselves from the blessings of Christ's purchase.

II. LEARN hence, those heads of families are great offenders and deeply guilty, who carelessly neglect the education of their households in christian knowledge. For the better advantage to be gained by this inference, let us consider.

WHETHER

WHETHER there is not a very great defect, if not a total neglect of educating families in the doctrinal knowledge of Christ, and of what is implied therein? This doubtless, is very different, in different families; and perhaps, if the matter should be thoroughly examined, some heads of families that make the highest profession of experimental religion, may be found the most defective in educating their households; and other heads of families may be found the most careful in family education, tho' they pretend to no christian experience. But if the duty of educating families in the doctrinal knowledge of Christ be strictly examined, shall we not be found very defective indeed? Will it not be found that we come so short of what might be done, and is a duty to do, that we may reasonably expect God should judge us unworthy to have such a trust lodged with us any longer? For, have not some of us come very short of our duty, in obliging our families to learn by rote, the bare words of the shortest and easiest standard of christian doctrine and duty? If not, how comes it to pass, that our children and servants are incapable of answering the plainest questions in our shorter catechism? Or, how comes it to pass that many in our families, who have years over their heads, seem to have little or no knowledge of the true meaning of those truths,
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which perhaps they have got by rote? Or, how comes it to pass that any of ours should have scarce any knowledge of moral duties? If they can repeat the ten commands, how comes it that they know little or nothing even of the external practice of moral duties? Whence is it that there is profane and obscene language among our youth and children in the streets, and an open profanation of God's sabbath and holy ordinances? Whence comes the great irreverence towards superiors, the quarrels, the lascivious words and behavior, the stealing, the lying, and other notorious practices among children, if we are faithful in the education of our families? Doubtless the great defect in family education lies at the bottom of all this mischief. If all heads of families were faithful in the education of their children and servants—if they did their parts to bring their households to all that is implied and contained in the knowledge of Christ, we might, at least, expect to find a great increase of doctrinal knowledge, and a great reformation of manners among the rising generation.

AND further; let parents and masters, especially those of them that are under covenant engagements, consider what apology they can make before the awful tribunal of God, another day, if they should neglect

to inculcate upon their children and servants the sin of their nature, and the sins of their life, the nature and evil of all sin, the dreadfulneſs of the wrath of God, and their danger of hell fire! What apology they can make, if they neglect to reſtrain them, or if they ſet bad examples before them—if they do not inculcate upon them the neceſſity of the ſaving knowledge of Chriſt in his true character. When we apply ourſelves in general to parents and maſters of families, they find ſome ſhelter to hide themſelves from the awful ruin that is threatned to the guilty. But in the caſe of thoſe that are included under this reflection, one would imagine, that a little attention might be ſufficient to determine them guilty.

O that conſcience might ſay, whether I am uncharitable, when I take it for granted, that many heads of families are very negligent of their duty to their children and ſervants. If you have gone ſo far, have you not contented yourſelves with teaching your children to read, and ſetting them to learn a prayer, and ſay their catechiſm? Let me appeal to conſcience, whether ever you ſet in good earneſt to teach them their undone ſtate by nature, and the only method of recovery by Jeſus Chriſt? Whether you have inculcated upon them the ſolemnities

of death and judgment, urging the present necessity of preparation for their great and last change? Where is the place, when was the time that can witness to your wrestling with God in prayer for them, that he would convince them of guilt and danger, make them sensible of the necessity of a perfect righteousness to justify them before God, and of the holy spirit to renew them into the image of his holiness? If you are deeply guilty of neglecting these things, I would ask you, why have you neglected? How will you bear to meet your children at the righteous tribunal of God, whom you have never urged to flee from the wrath to come, never carried to the throne of grace for covenant blessings, and perhaps, never set good examples before them? You can watch and labor, rise up early, and sit up late, can eat the bread of carefulness to support their natural life and promote their temporal welfare: but where is parental affection, if you neglect their precious and immortal souls? And will God, think you, take no notice of your amazing carelessness about their souls? Will not the blood of those children or servants that perish thro' your carelessness, be required at your hands? Will not their blood be charged upon you in the day of your account? Had you taken due pains for their souls, they might not have lived in wickedness, despising

spising the word of God, and the precious blood of his Son Jesus; yea, for ought appears, their damnation might be prevented.

III. LEARN hence, the great importance of a clear and special knowledge of Christ and divine things. It is, indeed, a very rational mean of good, to be trained up in the doctrinal knowledge of Christ and christianity. And this should be a powerful motive with us, to gain and communicate this knowledge, more and more, especially as it is a prescribed mean of saving knowledge. But, after the highest attainments in doctrinal knowledge, persons will be entirely destitute of the essentials of a true christian, unless they have the assured, experimental knowledge of a crucified Christ. For, besides what has been observed in the first use, there are several things essential to a christian, which arise from the special knowledge of Christ, that cannot be found with those that are destitute of it. I shall mention two.

1. WITHOUT the special knowledge of Christ, they never receive nor rest upon Christ alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel. It is the character of the true christian, not only that he knows, but received Christ, which is, to acknowledge what his great name imports, and to acquiesce in it that he should be so to us, to receive him as the gift of

God, to receive his offers as kind and good, the image of his grace, and the impressions of his love, as the governing principle of our actions, and expect the promised salvation for his sake. § Now, the common or doctrinal knowledge of a crucified Christ will never produce these properties of faith in Christ: No person can receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, unless he knows his person and character in an assuring light, and with an experimental knowledge. Without this knowledge he will have no perception of the moral glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. All the knowledge, which is attained by study, education and human industry, cannot give any man a perception of the gloriousness of God in Christ. And unless he perceives the reality and excellency of the object, he cannot, will not receive and rest upon him. Natural men, after their utmost attainments, are in perfect darkness with respect to the excellency and glory of the divine perfections, though they may have a great measure of common knowledge; and no person will receive Christ into his heart, and rest upon him alone for salvation, unless he perceives such an excellency as captivates his heart. Before such a perception, tho' he had the clearest common

§ *John* i. 12. *Acts* x. 43. *Pf.* ii. 12, and xviii. 30.
John vi. 37.

insight

insight into all the sublime, difficult, and important points of the gospel revelation, and had the greatest compass of all knowledge, human and divine, that ever any man attained to, yet without the knowledge which is represented by tasting and seeing, touching and handling the word of life, * he never would receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation. It is nothing short of divine glory arising in the heart, and divine light darted into the understanding, that will give any man a real perception of the glory and excellency of the bright and Morning Star.

2. WITHOUT the special knowledge of Christ, they cannot be established in grace. The same kind of knowledge that first turns the heart to God in Christ, is absolutely necessary for growth in grace. He that would grow in grace, and the evidences of it, must grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. || An increase of this kind of knowledge will make a person more like Christ, and increase his desire after him. Every new and special discovery of Christ and divine things, makes him forget the things that are behind, so as not to be content with present measures of grace, but he is reaching after more, *pressing towards the mark, for*

* 2 Cor. ii. 14.
2 Cor. iii. 18.

Pf. xxxiv. 8.
|| 2 Pet. iii. 18.

John i. 14.

the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But if men do not increase in this divine knowledge, they cannot increase, but will decline in grace. None can grow stronger in faith and love, and more confident in gospel hope, if they do not live beholding the glory of God in Christ. It is by this spiritual knowledge, that christians have their hope more established, and their minds and hearts more fortified; it fixes better hold in the anchor-ground of hope, that they may ride the safer in the wildest storms, and the most tempestuous weather. But if you should build your faith or hope upon any thing besides Christ, known in the special manner described, no wonder that you are frequently alarmed, especially if you build upon frames, or sudden, flashy affections. Some persons that feel a strong impression upon their minds, from a text of scripture coming with great power, make that feeling the ground of their hope. And when these warm impressions return upon them, their hopes run high, and seem to be strong for a season. But they can give no scripture ground of either faith or hope, no special knowledge of a crucified Christ, that has attracted their hearts, and engaged their whole souls to follow him and obey his will. Hence when these impressions fail them, their faith and hope, and hearts fail them together. I will not say that all such persons

persons are entirely destitute of any saving grace, for if their hearts and lives are purified by divine faith, if a work of sanctification is begun, and carried on in a way of believing, whatever excentric impressions they may have, which warp them off from the point, they are true christians. But, as long as they are driven about by such wild enthusiasm, they are continually exposed to a returning gloom; for when the flashes are gone, when the land-flood, that carried all before it, is over, a scene of darkness and drought ensues, they having very confused and indistinct apprehensions of Christ and the gospel.

IV. THESE things will account for the spirit of heroism and bravery with which some christians have borne up under great sufferings.

We are surrounded with authentic records of vast multitudes of believers, who unite in their testimony for, and strict adherence to Christ, in the greatest sufferings. The apostle mentions several instances, from the fall of man to Noah, from Noah to Moses, from Moses to the end of the old Testament dispensation.* And since the christian dispensation took place, many have been persecuted by cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and impri-

* *Heb. i. 4.*—39

sonment. The malice of wicked men is so inveterate against Christ and his followers, that, when it has been in their power, they have invented and exercised a variety of cruelties. How did malice and pride bring the apostles and first christians before councils, who, against the convictions of conscience beat and scourged them as malefactors. And after the apostles, Clemens of Rome, Simon of Jerusalem, Ignatius of Antioch, were persecuted by cruel sufferings, and at last by cruel and ignominious death, under Trajan, besides many others in his empire, for the persecution raged through all his dominions. And when Severus got into the throne, christians were treated with all imaginable cruelty, forbidding any, under the severest penalties, to profess the christian religion, and after various torments inflicted upon those that would cleave to Christ, multitudes were committed to the flames. And, to pass by several centuries, if we consider Wickliff of England, John Hufs, and Jerome of Prague, and many godly people, ministers, nobles and commons in Bohemia, suffered most cruel persecutions for Christ and his cause. About the same time, Luther in Germany, and many who embraced the gospel, through his writings, were imprisoned, some beheaded, some scourged, some grievously fined, some deprived of their priviledges, some banished, and
others

others went into voluntary exile. But what shall I more say? for time would fail me. It is vain to attempt to exhaust this subject; it would be almost endless to recite, and enlarge upon many others that might be named; in the several periods of the christian church, such as have been stedfast in the faith.

AND truly, their courage and presence of mind have been surprising. They bore all their sufferings with invincible chearfulness. Instead of being ashamed of Christ, under the most infamous punishment they underwent, they reckoned themselves honored in being dishonored for Christ, and rejoiced when men reviled them, and persecuted them, and said all manner of evil against them falsely. Never were any poor sufferers so truly chearful, nor so far from laying their hard usage to heart as they. Paul and Silas could pray together, and sing praises to God that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. God bore them up in their sufferings, and they felt sweet and divine consolations in their souls. And so afterwards—the fortitude and constancy of suffering believers is truly surprising. They would suffer death with a constant mind, and go joyfully to the fire, to the gallows, or the scaffold, without the least heaviness or discontent. One could say, “I have God’s favor so, that no fear of death can trouble

ble me." Another, holding out his bible said, "behold my paradise! It never yielded me so much ambrosia and nectar as now." And on the scaffold, stroking his beard, he said, "behold what honor remains to you, that you should be crowned with martyrdom!" Another, "this death indeed is disgraceful in the eyes of men, but glorious in the sight of God." Another could say, "thanks be to my God, by whom I have overcome all temptations, to him I have lived, for him I will die! For my Saviour has therefore lived and died, and risen again, that he might be Lord both of the living and of the dead. I know that my soul shall live, and my body shall be raised like to his glorious body." Another could say, "now I fear death no longer, I will die with joy! I am sure that Christ Jesus will meet my soul with his Angels, that he may bring it to an everlasting marriage, when I shall drink of a new cup, a cup of joy for ever: this death, I know, will not separate me from him." Another; "we are as corn, sown in the field of the church; and, that we may be for our master's use, we are now to suffer death; but be of good cheer, God is able to raise up a thousand worshippers of himself, out of every drop of our blood; for tho' truth now suffers violence, yet Christ reigns, and no man shall cast him down from his throne. I come
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in the name of my God, neither am I ashamed to suffer these things for his glory, for I know whom I have believed—I have fought the good fight of faith, and finished my course.”

Now, what is it that gives christians such an holy bravery and fortitude of soul, under the greatest sufferings of this present life, and in the prospect of an ignominious and violent death? Truly, this must arise from the special knowledge which they have of Christ in his true character and all-sufficiency. Trembling fears and cowardise are the effects of ignorance, and where men are ignorant of Christ, though they may praise the fortitude of many worthies, they dare not undergo what others have undergone for Christ. It is the spiritual knowledge of a crucified Redeemer that upholds the suffering christian under, and raises him above the power of that low spirit which sinks under reproach and necessities. It is indeed, ridiculous and sinful for any christian to expose himself to needless sufferings of any kind; especially, christians are not bound to expose themselves to persecutions which may be avoided, but being persecuted in one city, they may flee to another. They should not invite men to persecute them by imprudent and unreasonable expressions of zeal for the truth. But there may be an

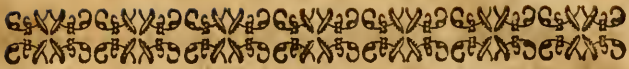
evident call, for the glory of God and the good of others, to make a bold and open profession of the truth, let the consequence be ever so shocking. And in this case, we must never be ashamed to own Christ, nor refuse any kind of sufferings that God may suffer a malicious world to load upon us. Paul knew the power of Christ to subdue all things to himself, and was persuaded that those who unrighteously persecuted him for his godly zeal, and strict adherence to the truth, could not hold up their heads in the day of judgment; but, however secure they seemed to be, they would at last be clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. He expected persecutions and sufferings for his fidelity to Christ; but, having the special knowledge of Christ, he went on with holy courage and resolution in his work, in an holy contempt of life itself. And so it is with true christians in all ages; the saving knowledge of a crucified Christ inspires them with holy courage and fortitude of soul, to endure the cross, and despise the shame of it.

BUT then, we should consider, it is a knowledge that is accompanied with holiness of heart and life. The knowledge, which is assuring and experimental, is wrought into their very souls, and they feel the renewing, sanctifying, and supporting effects of
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the truth in their hearts; and these work out and are put forth in their practice. Gospel truth being understood, and the excellency of it perceived, becomes a relief and spiritual nourishment to their souls, and so it gives them inward strength for service and suffering. But what will those professors do, when they and their religion are attacked, who do not treasure up and grow rich in the divine knowledge of a crucified Christ? Many that are called christians, are perfectly ignorant of the glory of Christ; never had any true perceptions of the excellency of his true character. Nay, are not many so careless, as they never lay up divine gospel truths when they are opened before them with the plainest evidences, and enforced upon them by the strongest motives? And how can such bear up against the reproaches of those that apostatize from the truth? How could they, if called upon, give a good account why they are christians, and not deists; or why they hope to be saved by Christ, and not by some other? They could say little or nothing to the purpose, if they were called to give a reason of their hope, or if scoffers and persecutors should threaten them. But they believe this and that doctrine because they were educated in that way, and other people believe so. O how will such persons

persons stand against the assaults of the adversary in an evil day? We can reasonably expect no other, but, if persecution should arise for the gospel, they would make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience!

SERMON



SERMON VIII.

The knowledge of Christ improv'd.

I CORINTHIANS II. 2.

For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.



HE delightful subject, Christ crucified, is the joy of gracious souls, and the foundation of all true happiness. We need not think it strange that so much time has been taken in discoursing upon it. If we should be so happy as to get well to heaven, the immediate views of the glory of his person, and a clear insight into his glorious undertaking, will constitute the felicity of that place. And while we are
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in this world, it is the discovery of Christ crucified that carries us from strength to strength, until we appear in Zion before God. Hence

V. WHAT reason have we to adore the good providence of God, that we enjoy this knowledge in great abundance. Ignorance is the support of that religion which is composed of superstition and idolatrous worship. The fundamental maxim of the romish religion is, that "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," And they are so far in the right, that what they call devotion can be maintained by nothing but the most stupid ignorance. The spirit, principles, and practice of that antichristian church, could not prevail, if the light of the gospel of Christ shone clearly among them. Where this light has broken in, there superstitions and idolatries have been thrown off with abhorrence. The increase of knowledge discovers their forgeries, and puts an end to the craft of their priests. The more men know of Christ and his gospel, the more will they abhor the corruptions of religion; the more will they detest the impieties established in, and propagated from Rome, instead of the true worship of God, and the simplicity of the gospel.

AND the same cause will produce the same effect at any time, and in any place. Though a people
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are ever so learned in other things, if they are ignorant of Christ and his gospel, they will run into most extravagant notions about religion. Hence arises the arian, the arminian, the antinomian, and other heresies that have been propagated in England and America. Our land, with all its light and learning, abounds with gross absurdities in the doctrines of religion. And if the children of families are trained up in ignorance of Christ, they are prepared to become a prey to those that creep into houses; such as with a show of innocence and extraordinary holiness, wind themselves into such families as they can get an interest in, or hopes of any advantage by. It is surprising to observe, how some weak and ignorant people have their hearts and affections ensnared, how easily they are imposed upon, and misled by every plausible pretence that flatters their pride. But so it is; if they are not well instructed in the truth, the hypocritical pretences of zeal for God, may easily lead them to embrace the most corrupt principles, and bring them to account dissolute manners a part of true religion.

BUT, by the unmerited grace of God, we enjoy the key of knowledge, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. The bible is every way sufficient, in the nature of means, and will be effectual, through the at-

tending light and influence of the blessed spirit, to make us wise toward God, and for our own souls. Those sacred writings have been given to us, and the free liberty of looking into them is, by many wonderful steps of divine providence, yet preserved from falling as a prey, into the hands of those that would rejoice to swallow them up in darkness and superstition. What would not many of our poor protestant brethren abroad, be willing to part with, for the superior priviledges which we enjoy? Popish emissaries, who hate the light, and hate us because we are favored with it, have been, from time to time, using all the arts that malice could devise, to extinguish it from among us. Yea, this has been attempted by reproach and scandal, and by deceitful insinuations very near us. But blessed be the Lord our God, their counsel has hitherto been turned into foolishness, and we still hope to see our desire upon those that hate the light. We hope in God, that he will make the endeavors of those, who darken counsel by words without knowledge, the means of our better establishment. However, the present aspect calls upon us to *serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling*. Every one that wishes well to the progress of christian knowledge, and to the progress of religion in this place, will be solicitous to improve

prove the means of saving knowledge, and will be instant in prayer for divine influence to attend them.

VI. OF exhortation in three branches.

I. LET all that are spiritually ignorant of Christ strive earnestly, in God's appointed way, for the saving knowledge of him. God has appointed outward means, by which he ordinarily brings sinners to the knowledge of the truth. Indeed, he has not limited himself, yet he seldom proceeds in any other way for conviction and conversion, than the way of his appointed means. His ordinances, in opposition to the institutions of men—his word written and preached, his sacraments and prayer, are means ordained for saving good to precious souls. And these means must be attended with diligence, with the mind and thoughts fixed upon the business, resisting drowsiness of body, and a strict guard upon the senses.

Now, if you consider that Christ crucified is the most excellent object, both in his personal character, and office; if you consider that the spiritual knowledge of him is the most necessary knowledge, the most gratifying, useful, and comprehensive; how can you be indifferent in the use of means, to obtain it?

What pains will you take, how much time will you spend, to gain the knowledge of some art or trade? And yet, if you have attained to the greatest skill, you will meet with disappointments, and if you gained the whole, what is it, to the saving knowledge of Christ and him crucified?——But for further motive consider,

1. To continue ignorant under the means of knowledge, is a great and aggravated sin. It is a great sin in itself; for it is a contempt of a great and glorious Saviour, a practical declaration that he is without form or comeliness, and not worth knowing. If you really believed God in what is written of his character, you would certainly desire the knowledge of him, and earnestly seek after it. Therefore if you do not strive, in the use of appointed means, after this knowledge, you despise the object worthy your highest esteem and warmest pursuit. And what can be more gratifying to Satan than this? He is the implacable enemy to Jesus Christ, and improves all his power and art to keep him from being known in the world. He uses his malignant influence to increase the blindness and stupidity of your minds. By allurements and terrors, and by every false suggestion and delusion, he leads you into wrong notions about God and Christ,

and

and your eternal interest; and so, for fear of losing you, he does all he can to keep you under the power of darkness, lest the conspicuous discovery of the glory of Christ in the gospel, should shine into your hearts. If therefore you content yourselves, without the knowledge of Christ, you cannot gratify the devil more; for hereby you abide in his interest, and are led captive by him to do his will. Besides, it is a great sin, as you neglect the great salvation. There is no salvation to be compared with the gospel salvation; it is so great, that none can fully express nor yet conceive how great it is. But none of this salvation is to be had, only through Jesus Christ; *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* You may be saved by his name, though you are ready to perish; but without the spiritual knowledge of him, and faith in him, you cannot be saved. If you are careless about this knowledge, you are careless about the great salvation that is offered to the self-ruined, and the helpless. And is not this a great sin against God and your own immortal souls? Are not despisers of this salvation condemned already, under an arrest, and in the hands of justice?

AGAIN; to continue ignorant of a crucified Christ, is a sin greatly aggravated under gospel light:

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There is a more aggravated curse and condemnation due to all those that despise the grace of God in Christ, revealed unto them. There are no outward means wanting to bring us to the knowledge of Christ and salvation by him. This is one of the great priviledges granted to the visible church on earth. Nor is it the only priviledge; for he walks in the midst of his golden candlesticks, by his holy spirit, and makes outward means effectual. Hence you enjoy very great and distinguishing priviledges to be acquainted with Christ. God has not been wanting in point of outward means; every thing that is necessary for you to know of the person, mission, and qualifications of Christ, is revealed in the gospel. Your need of him, as undone, helpless sinners, is fully set forth in the word of God. You live in the visible church, where Jesus Christ is always present by his holy spirit, with his efficacious and saving influences. Hence, you must needs be, either carelessly, or wilfully ignorant of Jesus Christ. Now, is not this a great aggravation of your sin and guilt? Had you never enjoyed the means of grace, never lived as members of the visible church with which Christ is always present by his holy spirit, your ignorance of Christ could not have been a sin of so deep a dye. By external means, and by the presence of his spirit with his
church

church, Christ has courted you to be acquainted with him; were it not for this, your ignorance of Christ could not have been so aggravated, but you have no cloak for your sins. You are altogether inexcusable, and will be speechless in the day of judgment. Whether those who do not enjoy the gospel, or those out of the visible church shall be condemned for the sin of unbelief, is not the question. You enjoy those privileges of which the greatest part of the world are denied. God has set you apart for himself, taken you under his special protection, kept you night and day under his eye, given you his holy ordinances, gathered you where he has promised to meet his people, and where he gives them the tokens of his presence. God has not dealt so with heathen nations, with mahometans, no, not with the Jewish nation that is now cast off from being the covenant people of God. Hence, your ignorance of Christ crucified is a sin against distinguishing mercy and goodness. If your privileges had been common to the whole world, your sin would, in that regard, have been of no deeper a dye than theirs; but, as you are distinguished by many and great privileges, your continuing ignorant of Christ is the more aggravated guilt.

2. CONSIDER the tormenting consequence of continuing spiritually ignorant of a crucified Christ.

If ignorance of Christ, under the means of knowledge, and in the church where Christ is always present by his holy spirit, is a great and very aggravated sin, the condemnation must be proportionably great too. For, the aggravation of sin by the glorious dispensation of mercy and grace, must be the aggravation of misery. Christ opens his character to you in the gospel: he continues his presence with the church of which you are members: he continues offering you the knowledge of himself; and therefore your despising him will bring the more awful condemnation upon you.

As the judgment of the great day is committed to Christ, he will come in the clouds of heaven; the clouds will be his chariot: he will come with power and great glory, agreeably to the dignity of his person, and the purposes of his coming. He will be seen with the bodily eyes, that sinners thereby may be the more confounded. O the amazing, tormenting sight! "Is this he (says the Christ despiser) whom I have slighted and rejected? Is this he whom I crucified to myself afresh? He, who might have been my Saviour, but is my Judge, and will be my enemy for ever?" O what a confounding, overwhelming sight of Jesus Christ will this be to you, if you continue to live in ignorance of him

him! When you look upon him in his chariot, cloathed with authority and majesty; when you behold his royal state, and are sensible that you cannot escape from his power, how will conscience reproach you for your chosen ignorance of him, in a state of probation!—Especially, when the holy angels, his ministers in that day, shall gather, out of every tribe and nation, all the chosen and called of God, and shall leave you to be consumed with his vengeance. It will be a disgrace and torment to be on the left hand of Christ, but that will not be the worst of it. His voice will be like the sound of Sinai's trumpet, waxing louder and louder: every accent will be more and more fearful to you. After all your opportunities to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, how will you bear to hear him say, *depart from me, I know you not?* In this world you have been called and invited to the knowledge of Christ, but you say, *depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* But you have turned a deaf ear to these calls; justly therefore he may bid you depart from him, who is the fountain of all good, and the Saviour of them that believe. You have chosen to be ignorant of him, and would not believe in him that you might inherit the blessing; but how will you bear to depart from him under the burden of a curse? Yet, go you must:

Christ will reject all those that have lived ignorant of him; he will cast them at an everlasting distance from him, to welter under the eternal wrath of God, fastening upon their guilty consciences. Then, then, if you are of the number, while he says to those that have had the spiritual knowledge of him, *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*; he will say to you, *go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Upon this tremendous sentence, he will make known his power and indignation upon all those that have continued to choote darkness rather than light, in their eternal damnation: And, if you are found among them, you will not only be separated from Christ, but his wrath will eternally wax hot against you. Now, he is concealed, out of sight, but then he will be revealed and made manifest: he will come in all the pomp and power of the upper world: the mighty angels will attend him to grace the solemnity. He will come *in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Then every one shall receive according to his works: those that have rebelled against divine revelation, especially, against gospel light, will have the more terrible doom.

ARE there any poor, perishing souls in this assembly, that will stir up their solemn attention to these things? Will you consider your sin and danger, under the power of spiritual blindness? Will you be excited, by these hints, to great diligence in the use of appointed means of the knowledge of Christ crucified? If you will hearken to the exhortation, then carry home, and observe the following rules, viz.

I. GET a due and heart affecting sense of your ignorance of Christ, and of your need of him. Such is the blindness of man, by nature, that he sees not his ignorance. He thinks that he knows abundance about Jesus Christ, and about himself too: But if you had a clear and assuring knowledge of yourselves, you could not be careless about an escape from the wrath that is to come. And if you had the spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified, you could not despise him. Now it is of very great importance to be thoroughly convinced of your ignorance respecting these things; for a sense of ignorance is one step towards knowledge: A main cause of persons continuing in their ignorance of Christ, under gospel light, is a vain conceit that they know enough of him already. And if you will entertain such an imagination in your

heart, you will not be in good earnest in seeking after the knowledge of him, and so will continue your ignorance. But if you are properly sensible of your sottish blindness, it will tend to make you bewail it before God, and to excite the greater earnestness after spiritual knowledge.

2. **STUDY** the word and works of God. The works of creation bear witness to several excellencies and perfections of the divine Being, such as his almighty power, which he has eternally and unchangeably in himself, and his supreme divinity, whereby he necessarily, everlastingly, and perfectly exists: these, together with his transcendent wisdom and goodness, are sensibly displayed in their effects, and have been impressed in legible characters on the works of creation. Nor is his providential government less of a display of adorable perfections and excellencies. But the bible gives us the fullest and clearest discoveries of the glory of God in Christ. There his glory shines in the brightest lustre, while he reveals a method to make men happy, and glorify his great name, in the highest way. If then, you would know a crucified Christ savingly, search the scriptures. Look after, and ponder upon the character given of Christ in them: consider the evidence God has given to the truth of his character.

Listen

Listen to the gracious discoveries of divine glory and grace in and through him.

3. **BEG** earnestly that he might be revealed in you, as he is revealed in the word. The spiritual knowledge of a crucified Christ is not to be gained, as man may gain the knowledge of arts. It is God alone that gives this knowledge, as his special gift, to whomsoever he will. By his grace he creates such a light in the soul, as gives men the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence, if you would know Christ, plead earnestly that promise, *I will give them an heart to know me.* It is in the way of prayer you may hope for it, for he has this grace to give, and gives liberally. You must therefore become beggars at the throne of grace, if you would be spiritually wise; *cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding: seek her, as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures.*

4. **LET** all, in their several places and relations, endeavor to spread the glory and favor of this knowledge to others. Professors of all denominations, degrees, conditions and orders, stand to the open view of the world, exposed to every eye, their doctrines, their virtues, and vices are observed by others. Their doctrines and practice had need to
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be holy, for neither can be hid, any more than a city upon a hill, which is obvious to every eye. And we ought also to consider the end why Christ has communicated his light unto us: it is not merely for our own use, but for the use of others. We are to communicate our light to others, both by instruction, and an holy conversation. Therefore our Saviour plainly exhorts us, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* And the apostle Peter to the same purpose, *Having our conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* q. d. Our whole behavior towards, and under the observation of others, had need to be decent and honorable, and commendable for its amiable beauty, ever worthy our holy profession, for the unconverted are seeking occasions to reproach Christ, by every blot in our character: they would represent us as a useless and mischievous sort of people. As therefore we tender the honor of Christ and the good of souls, we should endeavor to confute them by a regular, blameless, holy, benevolent, and amiable deportment in every relation of life. This is an adapted mean to induce them to think well, not only of us, but of our religion, and the Saviour we profess.

profess to believe in. This would tend to bring them to glorify God, by admiring his grace in us, and by imitating our good conversation in Christ, when they come narrowly to look into it, and when Christ shall look upon them and visit them with his mercy, and shall set his gospel home with light and power upon their hearts, and so render it effectual to their salvation, to the glory of God.

IN vain do we profess the saving knowledge of Christ, if we are indifferent about recommending him and his gospel to others. How can we be probable instruments of spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ among those that are ignorant of him, unless we commend his doctrines, and his religion, by our own holy practice? He that would be successful in convincing the ignorant, and reforming the vicious, must certainly be careful not to bring a stain upon his profession.

5. LET all real christians learn more of Christ daily. This will be the way to wax stronger and stronger, and to have sin and satan grow weaker and weaker by degrees. In this way, indwelling sin and all your spiritual enemies will have less and less power, *by the spirit of Christ's mouth, until at last they are wholly destroyed by the brightness of his appearing.*

Sin

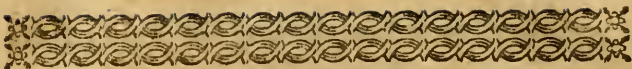
Sin and Satan seem to be invincibly strong, in the first beginnings of the christian warfare, but if you look daily, to Christ crucified, they grow weaker and weaker. The better God is known, the more he is trusted, and the more he is trusted, the less you will be deserted by him. *They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that trust in thee.* The grace of God is the same in all saints, and his favor the same towards them. If you know him to be a God of truth, and of almighty power, you will rest upon his inviolable word of promise, though the performance is deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. But if you do know God in Christ, do not think you know enough of him: be not content to be always babes in Christ, poor, feeble, fearful creatures; but you should think no pains too much to acquire and increase in divine knowledge, and to improve in its gracious effects. To this end, be always very conversant with the holy scriptures, and the best books of useful knowledge. Let your hearts be excited in gratitude when ministers feed you with knowledge, and insist fully and freely upon the doctrines of christianity, for these are the foundation of your faith, and the pillars and ground, the strength and foundation of all christian hope and peace. It was
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the special knowledge of Christ crucified, that carried the apostle Paul to that extacy of joy, as to say, in his epistle to the Philippians, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* And the more you grow in the spiritual knowledge of Christ crucified, the less you will esteem other things, and be the more ready to cast them all away for Christ.

FINALLY; if the knowledge of Christ crucified is so excellent as has been represented, what will heaven be? Surely the prospect of it must be very entertaining to those that have the saving knowledge of him. For, in that world of glory, Christ will make himself known, in his person and all his gospel characters, in a manner, and to a degree, that he cannot be known in this world. In the bright regions above, millions of holy souls that have known Christ in successive ages, will at once appear before him, and have as certain, immediate, and familiar knowledge of him, as any of our most intimate friends have of us, and therefore esteem and love, admire and adore him beyond all we do, in proportion to their brighter views of him. O let us all the days of our appointed time wait, with longing expectation, until heaven opens upon us. The appointed time is just at hand, when Christ will come,

as Mediator and Judge, to distribute rewards of grace to the righteous. *Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him!* He will come with great power and glory, *in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels!* In his humbled state, he appeared with all the mean circumstances, and sinless infirmities of human nature, but then he shall appear as the Son of God, in the form of God, shining in all the divine glory with the Father, and attended with a grand retinue of holy angels, to execute his commands and celebrate his praise, and so, to finish his commission. He is now ascended far above all heavens, and your faith is to descry him, and rejoice to see the day. It is but a little while before he will call his saints, who have believed to the salvation of their souls, to his right hand, and cause them to see as they are seen, and to know as they are known. Then, if we have the spiritual knowledge of Christ, we shall drop all our infirmities, and break through our remaining darkness, into the meridian light of glory. O the unknown pleasures of that happy day! Faith is sometimes astonished at the delightful prospect, at a distance, and longs to have it open.

SERMON



S E R M O N IX.

Confession of sin after forgiveness.

MATTHEW XV. 27.

— *Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Masters table.*

WHEN Jesus Christ began to appear among men in his mediatorial character, and the glory and suitableness of it shined, with evidence, in the consciences of a few, the Jews did generally reject him as an impostor. The scribes and Pharisees, who should have led the people to Christ, as the Messiah that was prophesied of, and promised to redeem his people, generally rejected him. Hence, after Christ had vindicated his disciples, and reprov'd the Pharisees for transgressing the commands of God, he

departed and went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. The glad tidings of salvation were first proclaimed in the various towns and villages through the country of Judea, to shew the hearty good will of Christ to his kinsmen according to the flesh. But when they rejected him, he turned to the gentiles; & shew them it was their indispensable duty and interest to change their minds, to be convinced of their sin and danger, and to embrace the gospel.

THE first account of his works of mercy among the gentiles, is a surprizing instance of a woman of Canaan, who, having heard of the merciful cures Christ wrought, came from some part of the country, and earnestly cried after him, *saying, have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.* But Jesus, for the trial of her faith, seemed to take no notice of her, until his disciples desired him to grant her request, or at least send her away with some answer or other. But he told them that the commission he had received of the Father was not designed for the immediate benefit of the gentiles, but for God's covenant people, the Israelites, who were gone astray, like lost sheep. The woman, notwithstanding this discouragement, drew near to Christ, fell at his feet and worshipped him, saying, with great earnestness, *Lord, help me.* But that he might further try and
humble

humble her, he seemed to refuse and reproach her, saying, *it is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it to dogs.*

To this she replied, *truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* q. d. I own myself as vile and worthless as a dog, and do not deserve any mercy at thine hands, and yet wretched outcasts may be allowed some favor, for even dogs are suffered to pick up crumbs under their masters table. O let me have one crumb of mercy for myself and child.

THE strength of this woman's faith, and her readiness to confess her sinfulness and unworthiness, together with the treatment she met with, gives opportunity to observe, that real christians will confess their sins, with a sense of sorrow for them, though God has forgiven them, and that Christ Jesus treats believers very differently in this life; and that the meanest things of Christ are incomparably to be desired before any other thing whatever.

I. REAL christians will confess their sins, with a sense of, and sorrow for them, though God has forgiven them. Some have supposed that it is a work of the flesh in real saints to confess sin and ask forgiveness

giveness, because say they, all their sins past, present and to come, are forgiven, and in Christ taken away as if they never had been. But as the opinion is dangerous, I shall endeavor to prove my proposition which contradicts it, and then show what is included in confessing sin, with godly sorrow for it—and then improve it.

I. LET us attend to some evidence of the truth of our assertion. It is apprehended that scripture, precept, example and promise, is clear to establish what we have laid down, viz. that real christians will confess their sins, with a sense of sorrow for them, though they are forgiven.

THIS must be true, or else they reject the command of God. Moses was ordered to command the children of Israel, when they had committed any trespass against the Lord, *to confess their sin which they had done.* ¶ And Joshua said unto Achan, *give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him.** And so believers in common, are enjoined to confess their sins. § Free and humble confession of sin is the duty of all, not only the unconverted, but the converted: it is their duty by the divine command; not only confession to men,

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¶ *Numb.* v. 7. * *Josh.* vii. 19. § *James* v. 16.

but to God. And indeed the command is implied in that part of the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts*: and in Hosea xiv. 2.

AGAIN; the example of the godly proves the point. Ezra fell on his knees and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, and said, *O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto thee, my God, for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is gone up to the heavens.* † And so all Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins. ‡ And David said, *I have sinned against the Lord.* ¶ And Daniel, chap. ix. 4, 5, 6. And the church, Isa. lxiv. 5, 6: ch. lix. ver. 12. So holy Job, *I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men.* I could multiply examples of believers, who have confessed their sins with shame and blushing, as an evidence of the truth of my proposition: but these are sufficient for that purpose.

It is also evident from those promises that are connected with confessing and mourning for sin. See to this effect, in Prov. xxviii. 13. And David took this course and found relief: *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I*

said

† Ezra ix. 6. Nehem. ix. 2. ¶ 2 Sam. xii. 13.

said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. || This shows God's readiness to pardon sin, upon right confession. And so the apostle John assures us, that if under a humbling sense of our many failures, we acknowledge our transgressions unto the Lord, with penitential shame and contrition, God has promised forgiveness, 1 John, i, 9. Besides, the grace of confession and holy mourning is promised as the effect of faith, Zec. xii. 10, 11. Those for whom the comforts of a pardon are reserved, are mourners in Zion; not legal mourners: there is no promise of pardon to such mourners as Cain and Judas were. Men may be overwhelmed with insupportable anguish and despair for what they are guilty of, and never have their sins forgiven them. But it is a sign that conscience does its proper office, when it is afflicted for the least sin, as such. There is no scripture evidence of justifying faith, where there is no free confession of sin, and abhorrence of it.

THESE things are sufficient to prove the proposition: but you will, perhaps, enquire why real christians go confessing their sins, and mourning on their journey to the world of blessedness?

ANS.

|| Pf. xxxii. 5.

ANS. It is not because God is not able to free real christians from all moral defilement, and make them perfect in holiness, at the instant of their conversion. He is able, if he had been pleased to do it, perfectly to purge out all the principles of sin, and leave nothing but holy dispositions, in a moment: but it is his pleasure to take time for it. Our Lord Jesus Christ took about thirty years upon earth, for the work of redeeming souls: he took three days to lie in the grave, and he has been more than seventeen hundred years in preparing a place for his followers. And if God pleases, he will take a month, or a year, or seven years, or but one day, in applying the work of redemption to a soul: and if it pleases him, who shall say what doest thou? Who shall controul him, or call him to an account for any of his operations? It is the part of infinite wisdom so to work, that men should not, at present, know the particular reasons of his proceedings; it is time enough to know hereafter. We are to wait with patience until we have perfect deliverance from all indwelling sin: though we groan, being burdened with the working of corruption, as it is dishonorable to God, and interrupts us in his service, yet we cannot be entirely quit of it, until we put off these tabernacles of flesh.

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YET some reasons why it is so, may be suggested. One may be this, viz. *For our instruction*. The manner of God's working to destroy sin by little and little, in the present state, seems to be suited to the nature of the patient. It gives opportunity to see and feel something of every part of the adorning with the righteousness and image of Christ, before they partake of the blessings of his kingdom and glory. The falls of christians by sin, and their rising by repentance, in their journey toward heaven, raises a greater relish for Christ, and gives them a sweeter favor for his name. Travellers are apt to talk of, and praise their guide and kind helper, that has carried them through difficult and dirty roads. Soldiers that have been wounded, extol the valor and skill of their leader, when the battle is over. So when christians are discharged from this warfare, they will carry abundance of experience with them. The review of free grace in their way to heaven, will lead them to speak with praise and admiration of their leader and guide in the way. And the name of Christ will be to much the more precious.

YEA, the way itself, is, in some respects, the sweeter. Not that sin, any sin is sweet to christians, but in this state of imperfection, free grace appears the more wonderful to them, by reason of the sin that dwells

dwells in them. Every day we are groaning under the body of death; and is it not very wonderful to consider that the fountain is still open to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness? That the innumerable iniquities which encompass us about, should cause the virtue of Christ's blood, peace, pardon, and reconciliation, to rise higher and higher in our esteem? If a rebel be taken from under the ax, or from the gallows, every day, by the grace and favor of the prince, it would greatly enhance the goodness of the prince in the esteem of the condemned rebel. O how wonderful are the multiplied pardons and reprieves of divine grace in Christ! We defile our souls and forfeit our lives every hour, but Jesus Christ washes and pardons them! We fall seven times in a day, but free grace raises us up! We expose ourselves to the avenging justice of God, but mercy interposes, and Christ procures a pardon. We have our sins, and the various aggravations of them, set in order before us, and view all the pardons of free grace written in the Lamb's book of life, how large and long, and full, must the account of free grace in Christ appear to be! But

2. WE ought to consider, what is included in confessing our sins with a becoming sense of, and sorrow for them?

I answer; right confession of sin is a religious penitential representation of our sins before God, arising from a sense of their infinite evil as they are against him, and our desert of the curse threatened in his law. The apostle Paul tells us, *by the law is the knowledge of sin.* And a clear conviction of the rectitude of the divine law, christians are constrained to cry with David, *who can understand his errors.* From the extent, strictness, and spiritual nature of the holy, just, and good law of God, we perceive our sins are so many that we cannot understand the number of them, and so exceeding sinful, that we cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. And therefore when we have been never so particular in the confession of sin, we should conclude that there are many others which through carelessness and partiality to ourselves we are not aware of: many that we have been guilty of, we have forgotten; so that we shall confess, not only particular sins which we know, but in general, those that are unknown, that in many things we all offend, and who can tell how often?

THIS confession of real christians, is a confession of their own sins: their want of original righteousness, the corruption of their whole nature, their natural aversion to that which is spiritually good,
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and their inclination to moral evil : also, their actual sins, of omission and commission ; the matter, the manner, and principle from whence they come, the guilt and many aggravations of them.

THEY will confess the various kinds and degrees of their sins ; the sins of thought, word and deed ; sins that are secret from the eyes of men, as well as those that are open to human observation ; sins of ignorance, and sins against knowledge ; yea, the sins of others, to which they have been any way accessory.

THE confession is free and deliberate, arising from a conviction of the infinite evil and malignity of sin. It will be attended with hard thoughts of themselves : they do not rest in a superficial displeasure against themselves, but are deeply humbled, and greatly afflicted in their souls for the workings and out-breakings of pride, passion, peevishness, discontent, unbelief, and all other out-breakings of corruption. They mourn for their sins as heartily, as ever they did for any outward afflictions, and are in bitterness as for an only son, or a first-born. They abhor themselves, as by sin they have rendered themselves odious to the holy and pure nature of God ; and the more they see of the glory of the divine character

character, the more odious sin will appear to be. This agrees to Job's confession of sin, chap. xlii. 5, 6. This also agrees with the remnant of Israel that should be saved, Ezek. vi. 9. and with Isaiah's account of himself, chap. vi. 5. In right confession christians charge sin home upon themselves, and have that repentance which is unto life eternal, never to be repented of. Their minds, hearts and lives, are thoroughly changed with regard to sin and duty.

AND such a confession as this, is a necessary concomitant of saving faith. Vital union with Christ, and evangelical repentance, are companions; and there is no evangelical repentance discovered, without this confession. Sin must be seen in its vileness, or it will not be repented of. If it is discovered as it is against the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, and God is seen in the gloriousness of his true character, it must necessarily be abhorred and bewailed, and men will judge and condemn themselves for it.

BESIDES; they will never have a due sense of the free and rich grace of God in forgiving sin, unless they are brought to such confession of sin. The free and unmerited grace of God is the original mo-

ver in our salvation. The work of the Spirit, in renewing souls, enlightening the mind to see the glory and amiableness of divine things, and in bringing them to Christ for a whole salvation; all these things are merely of grace. But we shall never duly acknowledge the riches of this grace, unless we are so convinced of sin and vileness, as to make such confession. We shall not come upon the bended knees of our souls, humbly begging a free pardon, merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered, unless we see sin as it is, and groan after deliverance.

USE I. Learn hence, that a satisfactory evidence of pardon and peace with God, is consistent with the deepest sense of the evil of sin, and self-condemnation for it. He that believes he is without sin, believes a lie; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and there is no man that lives but he commits sin. The very nature of the gospel supposes us to be guilty every day, and is designed to bring us to an humble, penitent confession of sin, and to faith in the blood of Christ, not only for pardon, but for victory, until compleat deliverance: and he that covers his sin, or endeavors to extenuate it before God, instead of mourning for it, and groaning under it, can have no gospel evidence

dence of pardon and acceptance in Christ. A conscience divested of a sense of the evil and demerit of sin, is a conscience past feeling: they have contracted an habit of ignorance, error, and hardness of heart, so as to be void of uneasy reflections upon their multiplied and gross iniquities. But the gospel describes real christians as hearty mourners for sin; yea, it exhorts and commands them to flee to Christ for actual pardon and cleansing, with holy indignation against themselves, with ardent desires of soul to have a gospel peace restored and confirmed, with an increasing zeal for God, and abhorrence of all sin. And, in this sense, it is blasphemy to say that the scripture evidence of saving grace takes away the sense of sin. True christians may have the satisfactory evidence of peace and pardon, and yet be greatly disturbed in their consciences by reason of sin: i. e. They may be satisfied, upon scripture evidence, that they are forgiven and accepted of God, and not forgive themselves for the sin of affronting redeeming love. They may be satisfied that they are delivered from eternal wrath, and not forgive themselves, but mourn that they have sinned against redeeming love. They may have a just sense of pardon, and yet a great disquietude and mourning for their ingratitude: Therefore that dangerous opinion of peace of conscience,

with

with great assurance of going to heaven, is to be exploded. It is a mere cheat without any scripture foundation. Under such a kind of assurance, men may easily bolster themselves up, and never be burdened with indwelling sin, nor have any tenderness of conscience as to a close walk with God. This false confidence tends to eat out the bowels of conscience, and the vitals of true religion. It is an opinion got into the minds of some, but it overthrows the mortification of sin, and an holy walk with God. It is quite of another nature from that of Paul's, for his faith produced triumph in Christ, and many thanksgivings to God, while he confessed himself worse than a dog, and less than the least of all saints. He mourned under a sense of his vileness, and yet he was persuaded that if his earthly house should be dissolved, he should have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And by how much the more sure he was of his interest, by so much the more he was burdened with sin; not with the fears of everlasting destruction, but with a sense of the vile nature and real desert of sin, Rom. vii. 14, 15. 23.—25.

2. LET real christians be excited to make penitent confession of all their sins, under a sense of their vileness, This use should be listened to by all

the members of the visible church, especially by those who hope to eat of the bread and drink of the cup at the communion table the next Lord's day. The plain institution of Christ, is to declare and avow to God, to your own consciences, and to the world, the death of your Lord and Saviour, as that which you depend upon alone for pardon and reconciliation, and for a gracious performance of all the promises of the covenant of grace. You will declare, by that communion, that you are not ashamed of, but glory in a crucified Jesus, how much soever he is despised by others. But there are some professed christians that seem to lie under guilt; they "cover their sin, until their moisture is turned into the drought of summer;" they stifle their convictions, and divert their minds to something else. They do not so much as groan under a sense of vileness. Such as these would hide themselves and excuse their guilt, rather than confess and mourn for sin. Perhaps they hope to make up all by their reformati-
ons, which is an evidence that they do not take the whole blame to themselves: they are not duly convinced and ashamed of themselves; they do not duly justify God in his law, nor submit to sovereign mercy: they do not resolve all their hopes into the mere grace of God.

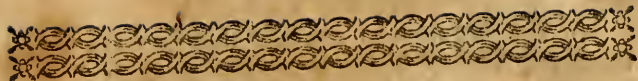
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Now, if you would sanctify yourselves, and come to the Lord's supper, with hope of acceptance, you must consider yourselves as poor, mean, and unworthy creatures, no way fit in yourselves to sit with the King at his table. You ought to have a deep sense of sin in its nature as well as its consequences, in order to exercise gospel repentance. And the only way to enjoy holy peace, and to be duly prepared for that solemnity, is to be sensible that you are naked and deformed creatures in yourselves, and to look unto Christ for righteousness to justify and sanctify you. As there is a body of sin and death that we groan under, we are to call ourselves to an account, and bring all our sins and lay them open before God without reserve. We must be serious and earnest with God for sin-subduing, and strengthening grace. Bewail all our past carelessness and unwatchfulness; Examine our former pretences, and wait upon God for the testimony of the Spirit.

THESE exercises, my brethren, are adapted means to bring us to holy mourning before the Lord, and consequently to true peace and comfort. I do not wish you nor myself, those consolations that are not accompanied with mourning for sin, and the abhorrence of it, but pray that God would give us a gospel sense of peace in that way.

It is now, and will then be, a proper season to consider of the blessedness of a pardoned condition. If a prince should take a malefactor that was condemned to exquisite torture for only forty years, and discharge him from all his pains, would it not be esteemed an instance of wonderful grace? But suppose this prince, by an act of grace, should pardon a man, who was condemned to be tormented a thousand years, and give him a life in perfect health and ease, with all the honors and acclamations of men and angels? Yet, even all this would be but the shadow of grace, compared with the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus, in the free pardon and acceptance of a miserable and self-ruined sinner; for in justification he is not only freed from the condemning guilt of all his sins, but shall, at last, stand up in heaven acquitted by divine justice, for ever! O how infinitely desirable is it, to be delivered from an eternal debt, and entitled to an eternal kingdom of blessedness! And if we had now, or should have on the communion sabbath, a just sense of the blessedness of such a state, we should say, *truth Lord*, with full and frank confession, holy mourning, and abhorrence of all our sins, and should ripen for that state and world where there is no sin nor sorrow for evermore.

SERMON




S E R M O N X.

*Christ's different Treatment of
different Believers.*

MATTHEW XV. 27.

— *Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of
the crumbs which fall from their
Masters table.*

 **U** P O N these words I have already pro-
ved that real christians will confess their
sins, with a sense of, and sorrow for
them, though God has forgiven them.

I have also observed what is included in the confessi-
on of sin, in the sense of the proposition, and con-
sidered some reasons why real christians are not per-
fectly freed from all sin in this life,

II. WE are now to consider that God treats real christians very differently in their pilgrimage thro' this world. It is very true, the master of the house owns them all as members of the family: he bears a most endearing and entire affection to them. His love to them will awaken care, call forth power, engage wisdom, and stick at no pains, nor expence, because they are precious in his sight. He exercises a special providence over them, and is as tender of them as the apple of his eye.

NEVERTHELESS, there is a great difference in his dispensations towards them in this world. He has a table spread and furnished with bread and wine, where some are fed like so many young princes at a king's table, and the King of kings serves them, and bids them welcome. And there are crumbs which fall from the table, for dogs. Some are cloathed in scarlet, as it were, with rich ardoornings, and sit with Christ at his royal table: Christ sits with them, to see that nothing be wanting; sits and bids them welcome; sits and receives their petitions, while his spikenard sends forth the smell thereof; their hearts are broken, their love and desire enflamed, and Christ esteems himself honored thereby. But others that are at the feet of Christ, under the table, waiting in an humble manner, to receive

ceive a drop of honey, or one crumb of the bread of life. Both are at the table of ordinances; they are diligently attending all instituted means, through which Christ communicates the special benefits of redemption. They are at the table, ready to receive any favor that the Master of the feast will be pleased to give them.

O that we may follow hard after Christ in all his holy institutions! If we follow him, his grace will fall upon us: if we lift up our hands in his name, if we truly regard Christ in his word, his ordinances and providences; our souls shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. There is that in a glorious Christ, and communion with him, which gives a abundant satisfaction, though real christians may be very differently treated. Different treatment is to be expected: there are fathers and children, young men and babes in Christ, and he has some portion, some blessing for each of them according as he sees best, either on the table or under it. There be stars of the first and second magnitude in the christian hemisphere: There be vessels small and great, cups and flagons in God's house, but all are fastened as with a nail in a sure place. All are in the way to heaven: they are planted in the vineyard, and the seed of grace is planted in them: the plants are
growing

growing towards a ripeness, but one is like a rose scarcely blown, and another is like a tall cedar of Lebanon. It is but the breaking of the day with one, while it is the shining of the meridian Sun with another. Abraham, who was strong in faith, and staggered not at the promise of God, was once but a child, and of a fearful spirit. Divine manifestations are to some, but as a drop of dew from the womb of the morning, whilst they are to others, like a sea that swells and overflows the banks. One is wrestling with God in prayer for a crumb that falls from the table, and another is upon the mount, admiring and praising God; but the former importuning for mercy, like the woman in our text, is represented as overcoming at last, Cant. iv. 9.

HENCE, the spiritual kingdom of Christ is upon the increase. His happy government shall be enlarged without end, Isa. ix. 7. His kingdom shall grow in heaven itself: glory and peace will ascend in continuance, and never come to its full height. Our glorious Head will always be drawing his living members nearer and nearer to him. He has by his death, ever since his ascension to the right hand of power, been drawing souls to himself. The saints at Rome, the saints at Corinth, the saints at Ephesus, the saints at Philippi, the saints in Asia,
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the saints in Europe, the saints in America, the saints of one particular church and another, are, in unknown thousands, gone up above the stars, and are shining in robes of light and glory before the throne. Our glorified head will never sleep, before his Father's house is filled; never cease drawing souls to himself, until all his numerous offspring are up under one roof. Heaven is a growing family. The Lord of the harvest has been gathering in his sheaves, from the field of the church, into the paradise above, ever since the death of Abel.

III. THE least favors from Christ, in a way of special love, are incomparably more to be desired than any other thing whatever. The woman not only confessed that she was as vile and worthless as a dog, but discovered her great esteem and regard to the least things that Jesus Christ bestows as pledges of his love. The very crumbs which fall from his table, are more to be desired than any creature enjoyment without his blessing. Observe here.

I. ANY thing that has respect to Jesus Christ, is desirable. Any thing that seems to belong to his friends, real christians are in love with. They are not in love with the sins that cleave to them, and are a dead weight upon them, but they love every

thing that is properly theirs. They are ready to take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, as a little child lays hold of its mother's skirt to go with her, under an apprehension that God is with them: So when the ordinances of God are at the lowest, and least set by, and the house and worship of God seems the most neglected and despised by the world, even then they are truly amiable in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified. The disadvantages of worldly contempt makes the holy institutions not at all the less amiable. If the church is in the most afflicted state, and the discipline of it is going to ruins, yet they take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof: They are so affectionately concerned for her, as to *wait for the salvation of the Lord*. The very rubbish of Zion is dear to them; it is not like common earth; not because the dust is holy, as the papists foolishly imagine, but because he dwells there, who *loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*. The Israelites carried their harps with them when they were carried away captives into Babylon, being in hopes they might again have occasion to use them in the worship of God, as they had been wont to use them in tuning the songs of Zion. God's people carried Joseph's bones from Egypt to Canaan, not because there was any peculiar virtue in them, as some of the de-
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luded papists conceit there is in the bones of some of the saints, but because Canaan was the land of promise, the place which God had chosen for his special residence. Real christians would love the ground that Christ treads on, not because the ground is really holy, as if its nature were altered, but because of the excellency of the person that had been upon it. And any thing that has the least respect to the Lord Jesus Christ is, for that reason, desireable.

2: THE meanest offices done to Christ, they prefer to the most honorable offices done to any creature. The woman that had been a notorious sinner, when she was brought to Christ lavingly, thought it was incomparably more desirable to bestow the best she had upon him, and to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head, than any office she could do to the greatest worldly monarch, Luke, vii. 37, 38. Real christians esteem the most costly things laid out for Christ well bestowed. A due sense of unworthiness and sorrow of heart for sin, their high esteem of, and love to Christ, and desire of his favor, will incline them to do their utmost to honor and serve him. The woman that had been diseased with a preternatural effusion of blood for twelve years, really thought it more desirable to touch his cloaths, than

to be clothed with embroidered raiment, and sit in kings palaces, Mat. ix. 21. Mary Magdalene, who saw and conferrèd with two angels, who appeared in white robes, had such an affection for Christ, that she could not be content unless she might embrace his dead body in her arms, John xx. 15. Even the company of holy angels will not satisfy nor refresh real christians when they are seeking after Christ. They will stoop low, even to the meanest, if they may get a sight of him, or be furthered to do him any service. The winding-sheet and torn body of Christ, were so dear to Joseph of Arimathea, that he provided fine linen and spices, embalmed his body, and laid it in his own new sepulchre, John xix. 38—42. Self-denying affection unto Christ, will quit any thing to him, that he calls for, or needs, as Joseph quitted his own grave to him.

3. THE rebukes of Christ are preferable to the applause of the world. Christ sometimes deeply wounds the consciences of Christians, and sorely afflicts them other ways; but these wounds are productive of real good and inward comfort. His agency, by his word and providence, are sometimes as sharp as a sword thrust into the body: it reaches unto the sensitive and intellectual soul. But when the hearts of Christians are properly broken

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ken and humbled; when they accept the punishment of their iniquity, he speaks peace. What a wonderful expression is that concerning Ephraim, when he was to bewail his folly, Jer. xxxi. 20. When Christ is said to speak against his people, the meaning is, that he threatens and rebukes them, yet even then his love and tenderness is the same as at other times: he retains the affection of a father and a friend. And you will find him sorely afflicting them for their declensions, and yet see how his compassions wrought for them, Hos. xi. 7, 8. His mercy interposes, and his heart is turned from wrath to kindness. He is more ready to be reconciled than we are; more ready to give peace, and the tokens of his favor, than christians are to receive them.

4. THE cross of Christ is more desirable than the crowns and kingdoms of this world. It is true, the cross of Christ, many afflictions and sufferings which christians undergo in the service of Christ, are very bitter to the taste, but they leave a blessed sweetness in the heart, which is like oyl to a lock, and makes things go easy. The bitterest cross sweats out a precious and fragrant smell, which causes true christians to rejoice in tribulation, yea, to count it all joy when they fall into diverse temptations. Saints taste heaven in the cross. Though there is no affliction

affliction joyous in itself, yet, if Christ be seen in it, we should rejoice in the midst of riving and plunder. A dejected spirit is beneath christian principles: Paul in his worst outward condition, *rejoiced exceedingly*. A true christian is the world's wonder: They are dead to worldly allurements and interests, to worldly terrors and reproaches, and therefore can say with the apostle, Gal. vi. 14. Yea, the very worst cross of Christ; the shame and reproach of Christ is sweeter than the honors and riches of the world, or the glories of a kingdom, Heb. xi. 24. 27. Real christians will endure hardships and disgrace, and the most calamitous circumstances for Christ, rather than gratify the flesh with an enjoyment of all the grandeur, affluence, and sensual pleasures of a pompous court. They are like racers that look forward, look off from sin, and self, and worldly allurements and terrors, and from every thing that would pull them back, and look unto Jesus, the suffering Saviour, for grace and strength to follow his example. And they find as much solid pleasure in suffering for Christ, as persecutors feel of pain in persecuting them. Nebuchadnezzar had much more torment in persecuting the three children, than they had in the fiery furnace. There is great pain in persecuting: the pride of persecutors hearts makes their indignation boil over; it chang-

es the form of their visage: but there is joy unspeakable and full of glory in being persecuted for Christ and righteousness sake.

5. THE very desertions of Christ are preferable to the presence of this world. The hidings of God's face, indeed, is a sore trial to a christian. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,* says the Psalmist: When the sun sets, night certainly follows, and the moon, and all the stars cannot make it day. God often takes away bolster and pillow, whereon christians have lain down and gone to sleep. He withdraws a sweet sense of his special presence. Hence they are sorely troubled, and wither like a flower that has lost its sap. Yet, at the same time, being sensible of desertion, they have a good sort of communion with God. *I cried to thee, O Lord: and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Lord, have mercy upon me; Lord, be thou mine helper:* When God in wisdom and righteousness turns from them, they will pray with the more earnestness. Desertion is like a file to rub off the rust, and rouse them from a state of indolence. This will excite them to call themselves to an account, and to lay themselves at God's foot as humble supplicants

licants. They will argue the case, and plead with God for their lives. They will wait for an answer of peace, and rely upon the mercy of God in Christ. Now, if we rightly consider, we must conclude that under sensible desertion, christians have sensible communion with God. Christ esteems it so, and therefore he calls them to come boldly to the throne of grace, Cant. ii. 14. Desertion is exceeding bitter to real christians. *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he gave me no answer.* They have bitter reflections for stifling divine impressions, and are ready to die with sorrow: yet, even that death, for the absence of Christ has comfort in it. They have communion with Christ in felt desertions. They may ask the watchmen after Christ, and charge the daughters of Jerusalem to commend them to God in their prayers. They may be sick of love for Christ, and describe him as having the concurrence of every thing in him as Mediator, to make him truly amiable in the eyes of those that are truly enlightened.

USE I. Learn hence, the least measure of saving grace, has the nature of grace in it. The crumbs which fall from the master's table have the nature
of

of bread. The least discovery of friendship and favor with God; the least crumb of special love, is however special love. Some dejected christians may be ready to say, "alas! I have not the heart of Christ, like David; nor the strong faith of Abraham, to offer up my son at the call of God. I have not the burning zeal of Moses, to wish my name blotted out of the book of life, that God might be glorified. I have not the fervent love of Paul: I find myself easily beset and entangled with the lusts of the flesh, of the eye, or of the pride of life." But suppose Jesus Christ should feast some of the children of God at his table this day, and treat them as the children of the great King? Will it not be well done? May he not treat his own sons and daughters very differently without offence? And if you lie at his foot to pick up the least crumb of special mercy, while some are feasted, will not all be well? The lowest room in heaven; the lowest measure of saving grace, is grace: the least divine manifestation, is a manifestation: the least drop of rain is as truly water, as the whole ocean. One ray of the sun is light, and of the same nature with the light of noon day. So the least stirring of grace in the heart is grace, as well as the stronger exercises of it. The love of God shed abroad in the heart under an ordinance upon earth, is of the same

nature with gracious exercises in heaven. *Charity, or disinterested love, never faileth. Now we know but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.* Jesus Christ gives no ground of discouragement under your weaknels and wounds: rely upon that word of his and plead it, Mat. xii. 20. Christ will not crush, but strengthen and bind you up. If you have but little light, life, and fervor, and this attended with the sad remains of offensive infirmities, and just ready to expire, Christ will not extinguish, but cherish and kindle it into a flame, and perfect it in glory. He, with the tenderest compassions, will stoop down, and with his arms of love clasp you round, and keep you from sinking into the pit of utter despair. He will *heal the broken in heart, and bind up their wounds.* Heaven is to be inhabited by those that have the smallest beginning of grace upon earth. Humble, wounded hearts, shall be healed by the consolations of the holy spirit. Christ will gather his banished ones in his arms, and like a skilful, faithful Surgeon, put the broken bones in their proper places, and bind them up. Little children are easily frightened; and some christians are often distressed with fear, at the sudden noise of war, and sometimes are frightened by that which is ground of encouragement. But Christ puts no weak christians

Christians

flians out of their wits with the shout of armies. He neither sets up nor manages his kingdom in the soul, with violence nor outward pomp, but with meekness and love. O what bowels, what strivings of heart, touched with the sorrows of weak believers, are in our Lord Jesus Christ! His pity is moved toward them, Mat. ix. 36. He shows a most wonderful concern for them, that they may not be misled, nor exposed to danger. He will not see a christian sweat and wrestle under heavy burdens, and crying for help, without having his bowels turned within him. The heart of Jesus Christ is infinitely more tender and ready to help, than the tenderest mother is to help a drowning child.

2. **LEARN** hence, none should despise the day of small things. The beginning of the second temple was small and mean in appearance, which made many undervalue it, though the glory of it far exceeded that of the first when the work was finished. When the success appeared in finishing the temple, then it was acknowledged an admirable work of divine wisdom and goodness. Great and glorious events often fall out from small beginnings. The indignation that a poor woman once shew against idolatrous worship, soon grew up into armies and garments rolled in blood. The glory of the church

which is yet to come, will arise from small beginnings; perhaps like the attempt of some poor woman. Could we see but only a few so self-denied as to quite give up worldly prospects for reforming the government, doctrine and worship of the church in New-England, it would give ground of hope that some great and good things would soon follow: This might be as a barrier to our new settlements, against the many errors and corruptions that are come in like a flood upon us already. A few wisely and heartily engaged to revive christian discipline, might soon make the wilderness blossom as a rose, and become a fruitful field, and a pleasant land. The great Mediator, who is exalted head over all things to the church, may derive a world of glorious events from as small beginnings as the blowing of a ram's horn, or the jaw-bone of an ass. Christ can put forth his power, when some few christians will give up name and all for his cause, and work by them until he has established his house in the top of the mountains, and exalted it above the hills.

So God works upon particular souls, from small beginnings, and brings about a train of gracious events in their favor. A grain of mustard-seed may become a great tree, of many branches. The least degree of saving grace will rise up to everlasting
life

life. A crumb of divine love picked up under the table, may be a mean of preventing or delivering from many fore temptations: it may be followed with a long train of rich and soul-reviving comforts: it may lay the foundation for new and soul-ravishing prospects: it may prove, in its consequences, more establishing and strengthening, than many other seasons; when persons sit like the children of princes at the king's table.

3. If the least favors from Christ are preferable to all other things, then what must Christ himself be? Has he made every thing desirable that comes from his hand, to real christians? Surely then, he must be a wonderful person: there must be two distinct natures united in one person, and his true character must be superlatively excellent; otherwise he could not have had such merit in his obedience and sufferings, as to render every thing desirable that comes from him. And truly there is such an excellency in his complex character, that, had the damned in hell a favory knowledge of it, they could not but esteem and love it. It is for want of a nature suited to so glorious an object, and spiritual discerning of its real excellencies that keeps them from being ravished into love. He could lead captive all in hell, with the loveliness of his person and countenance

tenance, had they eyes to see him. For *he is white and ruddy*; there is in him the sum and essence of all beauty and majesty. He is white in the spotless innocence of his life, and ruddy in the bloody sufferings he went through at his death; white in his glory, as God, and ruddy in his assuming the nature of man; white in his tenderness towards his people, and ruddy in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies.

How amiable therefore is the Lord Jesus Christ in his person and properties! Well might the apostle, after many years acquaintance with him, cry out, *yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* If the gospel, which proclaims peace and pardon by grace, is *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, then how unsearchable, rich and glorious must Christ himself be, who is the great subject of the gospel? His excellency transcends the conceptions of angels: it is boundless and infinite. It is the excellency of an immense Being, united with the most excellent creature that ever God made. No man can fully know and teach his excellencies. *What is his name, if thou canst tell?* Who can find him out unto perfection? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: we must therefore adore and acquiesce in what we cannot comprehend

comprehend. It is an awful and delightful, an amazing, boundless, and bottomless subject! Who is able fully to declare his natures, perfections, and union? And what astonishing grace is this! May such poor, self-ruined, unworthy creatures as we, lie at his feet, and pick up crumbs which fall from his table? O what condescension, that he gives us leave to trust in, and to love him! What a favor! That such an excellent person, such an infinite lover, should come within the circle of our love! His love and goodness must necessarily transcend the narrow comprehension of creature knowledge! It is much to be desired that poor sinners would seek after the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. If it were supposeable that a person should have regenerating grace, and yet be destitute of the knowledge of Christ, he must be miserable. Were any in heaven without the knowledge of Christ, or destitute of love to him in his true character, heaven would be hell to them. Heaven, the heaven of glorified saints and holy angels, is the open vision and compleat fruition of God in Christ. And what an inexhaustible fountain of light, life, and love, must Christ be, since he fills all heaven with the light of his glory! Suppose, in a dying hour, all the men in the world, and the angels in heaven were in a capacity to love us, and let out the
fulness

fulness of their love upon us; yet this were nothing, compared to the love of him who is altogether lovely; in all respects, and in all places lovely: lovely in a manger, lovely in the garden, lovely in his bloody sweat, lovely on the cross between two thieves, lovely in the grave, lovely in his resurrection and ascension, lovely at the right hand of the majesty on high; lovely in his second appearing in his own and his Father's glory with the holy angels; lovely in all his holy ordinances, lovely in all the dispensations of providence, lovely at the communion table, and will appear so if he should bid us go under the table and pick up the crumbs. Yea, he is *altogether lovely*. His gospel and government have the favor of heaven. O the sin, the infinite vileness of unbelief, as it arises from a low esteem of Christ!

LET us all take shame to ourselves, that we value Christ so little, when any thing, even the meanest thing of his, is incomparably more to be desired, than the greatest worldly good. Would you, communicants, come to his table, *not as fools, but as wise*? Remember, he is a wise man, who makes a wise choice. Esau is called a prophane person, because he had not wisdom to discern the difference between the excellency of his birth-right, and a morsel of bread. He that does not esteem and love
Christ

Christ above all the creatures, is a prophane, wicked person.


O that under, and after this administration, our esteem of, and love to Christ, may be pure and spiritual! O that the highest ground of our esteem and love, may be because he is Christ, and not because of benefits; not because of comforts, but because he is Lord God, Redeemer, and Mediator. The workings of the heart are most pure when they are carried towards its object without any self ends, from a conviction of its intrinsic worth.

LET us charge ourselves to take heed of mistakes. Some think they esteem and love Christ above all, when they see no form nor comeliness in his true character, but are chiefly taken up with his benefits, which is nothing but self-love. We do not truly love Christ, if we do not esteem his person, from the savory knowledge of his true character. Love is a great favorite, and much at court: it dwells constantly with the king. To be much with Christ, much in his special presence, beholding his beauty, whether sitting at his table, or lying under it, whether in the closet or family, whether early or late, to give much time in pleasing meditation upon Christ, and sensible communion with him, is a sign of much love. The sacred flame of love to Christ enkindled in our souls, will have a sweet and

powerful influence to excite, incline, and oblige us, to do all we can in imitation of, and obedience to him. Love to Christ is of the same dimensions and extent with saving grace. To have strong faith and but little love, is a contradiction.

Now, my brethren, if you have got divine discoveries of Christ to day, you will sensibly love him above all, and count all things but loss, of no worth, compared with the surprising excellency of the experimental knowledge of Christ, in his person and offices. Let him appear unto your souls, as *the pearl of great price*, and you will prove yourselves noble bidders: you will out bid all the men of the world, all carnal professors, that will not let all go for Christ; but all things will be as nothing to Christ in your account. All things make the greatest account that can be cast up: it includes all prices, all sums, all the vast and spacious globe and capacious world: all nations, all angels and men, all gold and precious stones, all honors and sensual pleasures, and all things else: this great all, you will esteem as dross, dung, nothing to Christ.

Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. A M E N.




S E R M O N XI.

*Souls flying to Christ a glorious
fight.*

I S A I A H LX. 8.

*Who are these that fly as a
cloud, and as the doves to their
windows ?*

 H A P P Y, beyond expression or thought
happy, will be the day when *the Redeemer*
shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn
from transgression in Jacob! To see Christ triumph-
ing over all his enemies; his kingdom of grace ri-
sing all the world over; to see the breaches of Da-
vid's tabernacle closed up; to see many nations joi-
ned to the Lord in one day, and strong nations seek-

ing the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, will be the delight and surprize of true christians, and the satisfaction of their glorified Head in future time, when the prophecies and promises have their full accomplishment. Yea, some small preludes of that approaching season encouraged our hopes, and may well serve to strengthen the faith, and excite the prayers of all that expect such light and glory to arise and shine through this dark world. The prospect of the rising glory of the church drew forth the prophet's admiration and love, when he saw the certainty of it by faith, many thousands of years before the accomplishment, and therefore he calls upon the church to look up, and behold the gathering multitudes coming in, the desolate places repairing, and the land of former desolations too narrow by reason of new inhabitants.

It is the view of these glorious days that made this eloquent prophet cry, *who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?* And may we not suppose that the gracious prophecy referred to, is accomplishing every day in some measure; sometimes very slowly, and, at other times very swiftly, by the out-pouring of the spirit, and additions to the church by such as shall be saved?

IN discoursing upon the words, I propose to consider the import of the metaphors; and then to observe, that it is just matter of sacred wonder and delight, to see the accomplishment of prophesy in the great in-gathering of souls to Christ.

I. LET us consider the import of the metaphors used in my text. It was the vision of the glory of the church, that caused the prophet to cry, *who are these that fly, &c.* He admired the great in-gathering of souls to Christ. The form of Godliness without the power, could not be worthy of such wonder and joy. Nothing short of the gospel's coming in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, could be the ground of this joyful transport. In this view we shall consider the text, and explain the metaphors.

1. WHO are these that fly as a cloud? This metaphor has very different notations in scripture, as clouds have different properties. Sometimes they signify calamities, because they deprive men of the light of the sun, and the firmament of heaven. Hence that, Lam, ii. 1. *How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger?* Sometimes for men of unstable minds, that are fluctuating in their opinions. So that 2. Pet. ii. 17. *Clouds*
that

that are carried away with a tempest. And again Jude v. 12. *Clouds without water.* But no such clouds as these are referred to in our text. We may doubtless say it imports

THE accession of multitudes unto Christ. How often do we see a cloud rise out of the sea like a man's hand for smallness in the beginning, presently cover these aspectable heavens, and pour down a great rain, when the earth has been exceeding dry? And so it has been, and will be more abundantly with the church. After a great drought, God has raised a small cloud out of the boundless ocean of his grace, which has spread abroad and watered multitudes; and brought in multitudes, as *a cloud of witnesses*, a numerous company of holy souls, who by their example testify for Christ.

AGAIN; the metaphor denotes the swiftness of in-gathering to Christ. We often see clouds carried with great speed, as if they flew upon the wings of the impetuous wind. And so God, when he comes to put an end to prevailing formality and wickedness, and to revive his work, is said to *make the clouds the dust of his feet, and ride upon the wings of the wind.* He rides upon a swift cloud, and comes suddenly to his temple. He gathers in
great

great numbers to himself in a short time; not here and there one, but they fly in armies; people in general, almost every one in a place or country, striving to enter in at the straight gate. The North wind awakes, and the South wind comes up, and these blow them together. We may resemble them to a flock of sheep; when one or two sheep lead the way through a difficult passage, the rest eagerly follow after. And so it has been, and will be more eminently: when one or two in a place have broken through the impediments, others have followed, and would not give themselves to rest until Christ was formed in them. O what a crowding will there be at the gates of the temple, when the God of heaven shall break in pieces and consume the kingdoms of antichrist, and set up a kingdom, that shall never be destroyed!

AGAIN; The metaphor may import the open profession of Christ that christians will make in that day. Clouds fly in the open heavens, and converts are not ashamed of Christ and his gospel, not ashamed to own it when applied, as the power of God to salvation, especially in times of great and speedy in-gathering of souls to Christ. Grace is communicative: charity is no churl: christians will call in their fellows. In such a day, *the inhabitants of one city*

city will go to another, and say, *come, let us go speedily.* There will be great light, godly zeal, sweet assemblies; whole towns and villages will flock together, and be open and forward to confess Christ, and seek the Lord of Hosts. They will not be night disciples, as the teacher of Israel was, but will come in, and witness a good confession before many witnesses. Let what dangers will threaten them, they will readily say, as Latimer said to Ridley when they were going to the stake, "I move after, as fast as my old legs can carry me." Some are hindered through fear, in a declining time of religion, and so they think it will do the turn to own Christ privately. But when conversions are greatly multiplied, and christians gather strength, they fly to Christ and confess him in open day. They stem the current and surmount the greatest difficulties, and shew themselves on Christ's side, in the face of all dangers. They dare tell the scoffing world that they are the Lord's, and are determined to follow him. They will confess Christ, though they should suffer reproach and death for it. They readily declare what doctrines they adhere to, what ground they venture their souls upon, and invite others to venture upon the same bottom. They count nothing dear to them, no, not their own lives, if so be they may finish well. God forbid, in such a day especially

ally, that they should glory in any thing, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom they are crucified to the world: and here they will glory if they were to be offered a sacrifice in defence of the faith.

2. WHO are these that fly *as doves to their windows*? This metaphor also denotes different things in scripture. The prophet Hosea says, *Ephraim is a silly dove*: i. e. one that is easily enticed and drawn aside, like a silly dove that flies from the claws of the hawk; into the net of the fowler. But again; the turtle dove is to represent the true church. So the Psalmist prays, *O deliver not the soul of thy turtle dove unto the multitude of the wicked*. But, in our text may import

THE beauty put upon the new converts: for so Christ speaks of his church, *Behold thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair, thou hast doves eyes*. Men are not converted by dark sounds, but by divine light. Young christians, as well as others, have eyes, and their eyes are opened; light shines into their consciences, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and the divine change made in their conversion, puts a gracious beauty upon their hearts

and life. True christians have an amiable disposition; and lead an amiable life. Yea, they admire those objects the most, which are most amiable. Hear how they express themselves of their glorious head, *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters.* They admire Christ for his purity and holiness, as well as for his condescension and pity. And to Christ again, congratulates the church for the beauty put upon, or added to her, by great additions of true believers, Cant. i. 15. He encourages the graces of new comers, that are weak and imperfect, and thereby he cherishes and perfects his own work. He reflects comeliness and beauty upon them, by an increase of his own likeness.

AGAIN; it may import eminent fruitfulness in such a day of great grace: for doves are eminently fruitful. And all christians have the work of faith, the labor of love, and patience of hope. Faith is ever pregnant with good works, travelling with them, and bringing them forth on all occasions. But these are more eminent in times of great revival of religion. Hence the prophet Isaiah tells us, that in such a day, *God will fill Zion with Judgment and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times, and strength of salvation.* And the prophet Zechariah, speaking of such a day, says, *Holi-*

ness to the Lord shall be upon the bells of the horses; and the pots of the Lord's house, shall be like the bowls before the altar. i. e. All common things shall be applied to sacred uses, and sanctified to God's service. Holiness and righteousness shall run through the whole life, even ordinary actions will be performed from a right principle and to a right end. Then christians will have less of self in the use of creatures, and taste more of God in them all.

AGAIN; it may import more eminent degrees of love. Doves are remarked for love to their own mates: they never change until death gives them a bill of divorce. And where grace prevails in the heart, and religion revives and spreads, *the mountains bring forth peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.* Christians will live, and feed, and fly in companies. They can agree together in the same house, and will sweetly experience, *how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* Circumstantial differences will not break the harmony of affection; but, having one Lord, one faith, one hope, they will be of one heart, and of one soul. For this reason, perhaps, the Holy Ghost came down in the likeness of a dove, at the baptism of our Saviour.

IN one word; the metaphor imports innocence. Many other fowls have claws and bills to devour, like oppressors in the common wealth. But the dove has no such weapon to use, no such heart to use it. But who can say, *I have clean hands and a pure heart.* Surely, all true christians have these in part, though none perfectly in God's fight. Will not conscience witness for believers, so that after conversion, they can challenge all to accuse them, as Samuel did Israel, saying, *whose ox have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? Of whose hand have I received any bribe?* Yea, doubtless they find Job's resolution: *My heart shall not reproach me, of criminal carelessness, as long as I live. I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.*

O blessed day of the churches increase, when simplicity and uprightness become more general, and freer from carnal policy and corrupt mixtures! When they that have erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine! And this brings me to observe

II. IT is matter of sacred wonder and delight, to see the accomplishment of prophecy in the great in-gathering of souls to Jesus Christ. When the
gospel

gospel is spread abroad, and the kingdom of Christ is enlarged, it answers to what was written of it, by the holy prophets of old time. When the eyes of the blind are opened, the prisoners are brought from the prison, and those that sit in darkness, out of the prison house, when the glory of the Lord rises upon the church, and his glory is seen upon it; when the Gentiles come to its light, and savage sachems to the brightness of its rising; when the abundance of the sea shall be converted to God, and the Isles shall wait for his law; these events will prove the truth of the prophecies. For, then, through all the changes that have happened in the kingdoms of the earth, from the first to the latest prophecies, we may see that nothing could prevent the accomplishment of God's word. And who can bring more authentic credentials of his coming from God, than those wonderful prophecies of the glory of the church, when they are accomplished? The more we consider and understand them, and the more we observe their growing accomplishment, in the conversion of numbers, the more we shall be convinced that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Now, a partial accomplishment of such prophecies, especially if it is very considerable, by multitudes

tudes flying to Christ, as a cloud driven by the wind, is matter of holy wonder and pleasure. For

I. SUCH great in-gathering of souls to Christ, shows the faithfulness of God. Faithfulness is a name frequently given to God in his word. *Great is thy faithfulness*, says Jeremiah. And Paul says, *God is faithful*. And when christians see the church filling up with true converts, agreeably to what was written by the prophets of old time, they see that God is mindful of his covenant, that *he is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* When they see men crowding the temple gate, and consider the prophecies and promises respecting *the cloud of witnesses* that are to rise up for Christ in the latter day, they are persuaded that God remembers the word he has spoken, and does not change his mind. Hence, they will be led to magnify the Lord for his faithfulness, and praise him for the performance of his promises. God makes all his name some way serviceable to strengthen our faith, as to his faithfulness: and when prophecy is fulfilling, by great numbers flying to Christ, God's name is exalted, in such an increase of the Redeemer's kingdom. This surely, is ground of holy joy. Will not holy souls
be

be excited to rejoice when God speaks in his holiness, that he will not lie unto David? Faithfulness is a branch of holiness, and therefore when he pawns his truth upon accomplishing some great work in behalf of the church, he swears by his holiness. q. d. If I do not make good my promise, do not believe I am an holy God. But when the event proves his faithfulness, it also shows that he is holy. Yea, the accomplishment teaches us that the blessings promised, he knows how to bestow, and his love engages him to make them good. Therefore it is matter of holy joy to christians when God fulfils his word respecting the increase of Christ's kingdom, as it is a display of divine faithfulness.

2. GREAT in-gathering of souls to Christ is pleasing to God the Father. That which is pleasing to God our heavenly Father, is matter of holy joy to believers; and therefore if they are not delighted in beholding souls flying to Christ, and flocking into the church as doves to their windows, what should they be pleased with? God the Father is well-pleased in beholding the fruits of his Son's death and righteousness, because all the holy perfections of the Deity are honored thereby. What is more reasonable therefore, than to view with delight and wonder, a great in-gathering of souls to Christ,

as

as it is pleasing to God? In such a prospect of the increase of his kingdom, *it pleased the Father to bruise him*; not only to permit him to be bruised, and to suffer upon the cross, but to awake his sword against him. Hence, Jesus Christ was esteemed smitten of God, for some very great crime of his own, but it was not for his own sins, but the sins of the elect. The Lord did not spare him, but delivered him up for them all. He put the bitter cup into his hands, and obliged him to drink it: and it pleased him to do it. It was the result of his eternal counsel, and he delighted in it, as it was the only method to bring about the destruction of satan's kingdom, and the setting up and increase of the kingdom of God. Who then cannot see that it is matter of wonder and joy to see satan raging and Christ triumphing, in the accession of great numbers to the church, of such as shall be saved? Is it not truly wonderful that the Father should take such a method to save millions and secure his own glory, and bring down a proud world into an obedience to himself?

3. Such great in-gatherings to Christ, adds peculiar glories to Christ in his exalted state. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ by his humiliation, purchased some peculiar glories for himself: *Being found in*

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the fashion of a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. And indeed, the graces he confers upon particular souls, in the right of his sufferings, are not the least of his glories. He consented that the Father should deliver him up for the sins of the elect, and in consideration hereof, the Father promised to glorify him, not only with the glory he had with the Father before the world began, but with all the glories of the Mediator. Particularly

CHRIST had the promise of being honored with the character of everlasting Father. This was the character he bore when he came into the world, and he cannot fail of answering the title now he is gone out of the world; for he is the Father of the universal church, and with him, and in him with all his spiritual seed, is the covenant of grace made. In this covenant the Father has promised that Christ should have a seed to serve him, to bear up his name. Now, all true christians are his seed; the Father has given them to him: he suffered and died for them; the incorruptible seed of which they are born, is his word; the Spirit, the great author of regeneration, is his spirit, and it is his image that is formed in them. Every true christian is his seed: all christians

istians have one living Father, and because Christ lives they shall live also, for he is their life. He has not left believers like fatherless children in the world, but has taken effectual care to secure them his spirit, and the blessings and inheritance of sons. He shall see his seed, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered. And he shall also take a fatherly care of them. In the days of revival, especially when the gospel comes with the holy Ghost and much assurance, upon nations or countries at once, and a nation is born in a day; though his family is ever so numerous, he will not commit the care of them to another, but will be the life and defence of the whole. And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. God's purposes shall have their effect; none of them shall fall to the ground. The work of redemption is in the hand of Christ, and that is the best hand; best for the whole church, and best for us, best for all the elect, seeing he is able to save to the uttermost. And whenever Zion arises and shines, whenever satan's empire falls, and the gospel has free course, and there is a cloud of new witnesses rises up in the church, it honors Christ in his exalted state. It is a fresh testimony to the fulness of redemption which he has wrought out, and yields him abundant satisfaction in success. He views it now, and will see it
in

in every period of the church; he observes with pleasure, the cloud of witnesses to his all-fulness, that spreads over provinces, and shall see it forever. And it is a divine satisfaction to him, as Mediator, to see the travail of his soul. In his exalted state he sees whenever souls are flying to him, that the exquisite pains he underwent are not like to be lost. The fruit of his cross appears in the addition of many converts to his church, and in the salvation of those that the Father has given him. And as this adds new glories to his crown, so it must be matter of wonder and holy delight to all good christians, to see Christ has not labored in vain.

ESPECIALLY, if they consider that Christ has the glory of all the victories of his grace. To this end, and as the reward of his sufferings, he is said to *judge many people, and rebuke strong nations*. God the Father has *divided him a portion with the great, and he divideth the spoil with the strong*. Like a victorious general, who obtains great spoil, and divides it among his soldiers. Remarkable times of revival are preludes to his victory over all his enemies; openings to that glorious æra when he shall spoil principalities and powers, and make a shew of them more openly. And who can see numbers, great numbers of souls flying to Christ, and flocking into

the church like doves to their windows, without a pleasurable view of the reward of Christ? Here is a glorious evidence that the Father has honored him with unquestionable victory, and a plain testimony of his universal dominion. He sits King over the great, and his name is above every name. Remarkable seasons of grace cannot but encourage our hope of the great good in the promise which is yet behind; that *the heathen will soon be his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth his possession.* Surely that is matter of sacred wonder and joy to believers, which is the ground of the peculiar glories of Christ in his exalted state: for they are true lovers of Christ in his person and all his characters, and therefore have a peculiar pleasure in his exaltation. It must be the joy of their hearts, that he has distinguishing marks of glory put upon him, at every season of great in-gathering of souls. To see him exalted as head over all things; to see that he has a seed to serve him, and bear up his name; to see that he does not leave Zion to mourn because none come to the solemn feast; to see that he so orders as not to fail of success in his mediatorial work; to see that he is pleased with the covenant he made with the Father; to see that the Father has secured him the glory of his purchase; to see that the kingdom is his, and that he rules among men of all colours

colours and nations; to see that he is set up for an ensign to the people, and his rest shall be glorious: I say, to view this glory of Christ can be no small thing in the eyes of believers, since they are the peculiar glories which he has purchased, and the Father has bestowed upon him, as a reward of his humiliation.

USE I. Let these things serve deeply to humble us, that Christ is so little honored and admired by the most among us, and that the faithfulness of God and love of the Father are so little thought of, even in a day when there are great in-gatherings unto Christ.

WHAT can be cause of humiliation, equal to a criminal blindness in a time of great light, and stupidity in a day of great awakenings? Many seem reconciled to their lusts, now thousands are pressing into the kingdom of God, and are as secure as if the spirit of all grace was obliged to wait their leisure. Many are at ease in Zion, after all the means that God has sent to awaken them. God has tried them with undeserved, yea, unexpected mercies, but this sunshine has been improved to hardening, rather than flying from the wrath to come. And now God is tempting and alluring them, by a great in-gathering

gathering of souls in several parts of the land, and even before their eyes, and yet they will not be persuaded. Sodom and Gomorrah would have condemned such stupid souls, had those places been trusted with their opportunities: for if such miracles of grace which have been doubtless wrought in our land and before our eyes of late, had been wrought before theirs, they would have fled for refuge. What day since the apostles, can shew an instance of hardening, equal to that of the careless and secure in these days of gracious visitation? As if the free course of the gospel, and the abounding of means, and the variety of gifts sent among us, had extinguished natural conscience, and rendered many among us more regardless than the poor savages of the wilderness! Every thing seems to harden them, they grow worse by those means that recover others.

AND shall we sit and look on, as idle spectators, as if it were needless, or hopeless, to pity and help, in such a case as this? Many, indeed, seem convinced they ought to fly to Christ for safety, and some have a sort of resolution about it; but how abortive does all prove? The love of carnal things in some, and the pride and self-righteousness of others, baffle their resolutions, and satan triumphs over the vanity of their purposes. Methinks they must be

a wonder to themselves, when a drowsy mind allows them to entertain any serious considerations. Surely, you that have lately fled to Christ, and taken shelter under him, must be deeply affected with their awful case. They have a mean esteem of Christ your Savior, who is the perfection of beauty. They despise your heavenly Father, who is the object of your love and worship. They disbelieve the promise of God, who is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. While there has been a great harvest, and many have been gathered to Christ, and added to his crown; and when you are of the happy number, they take their repose, and have withstood all means to this day! O that you were deeply affected at their sad negligence, and at the dangerous consequences of their stupidity! Who will mourn over them, or mourn before the Lord for them, if you will not? And what if the holy Spirit should withdraw his gracious influences from among us, and from our land, and be gone from among us, where are they then! O then you might call to mind what a precious opportunity your poor hardened acquaintance and friends have had, but the summer is ended, and they are yet in their sins! O will you not cry after them, and call upon God for them! O that the Lord would make haste, and come and save them

them ; that he would come with speed, come with power, come upon the wing, for the help of the self-ruined and miserable !

II. LET us, on this occasion, be excited to admire the grace of God, and the love of his Son Jesus, that there has been so great a gathering to Christ of late in our land, and among ourselves. I am not now to give you the history of the grace of God that has appeared in many places, and does yet appear. But what our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, gives us reason to think that it is grace exceeding, abundant. We are therefore to call upon ourselves, as the psalmist did ; *awake psaltery and harp ; let my soul awake right early.* It is certainly very pleasant to see the cloud rising among us, to hear of its spreading in the western and southern hemisphere. It is also very grateful to the hearts of all that are true christians, to see young doves hovering at the windows of the church. And it would increase our pleasure, to see those that hang back, come forward, and add to the number daily. The numbers of true converts are the glory of Christ, and the delight of his heart : it is our glory and delight also ; it raises our spirits, and makes the way to heaven the more cheerful. Ministers and private christians, rejoice when they see the travail
of

of Christ's soul; and his kingdom rising. Yea, we doubt not to say, that the in-gathering of souls to Christ and his church, which we have lately seen in this place, and now see in this house, is pleasing to the heart of Christ, and the joy of his holy angels. Angels see how Christ is pleased, and how pleasing it is to God and our Father; and this cannot but fill them with joy upon that account. All intelligent worlds are gratified, on such glorious occasions, hell only excepted, and those that hate the Son of God. Surely, our pleasure may justly rise on a communion day, when we view the new converts, as so many diamonds in the crown of our glorified Redeemer. Yea, it may rise, as it is a token of God's favor to us in time yet to come. Is not the language of it, *here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Here will I make the horn of David to bud, and ordain a lamp for mine anointed!* We have been ready to say, *The glory is departed from the Temple, and gone to the threshold of the house.* Blind eyes grow blinder, and hard hearts harder——But the Lord has seen our sins, and come to save us.

YOUNG believers; we bid you welcome to the communion table; Christ bids you welcome. We rejoice to see so much of the travail of Christ's soul among us. We love to see the crown shining

brighter and brighter on the Redeemer's head. We look upon it a promising prelude to the greater glory of his kingdom, yet to come. It also quickens our pace, and makes the way through this wilderness so much the more comfortable. But, although you are admitted into the family, remember you are but children—babes in Christ Jesus. You have, indeed, the essentials of men and women in Christ; but you are but babes. Take heed that you do not think more highly of your attainments than you ought to think. You are to consider yourselves as weak in spiritual knowledge, and in all grace. O keep an humble and humbling sense of this always upon your spirits; and take heed, lest because God has not given you so much as those that were converted many years ago, you should slight what God has done for your soul. Follow on to know the Lord, that you might grow faster in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, than those that fled to him before you. Never absent yourselves from the means of grace, the ordinances of God's house, nor give occasion of stumbling to others.

AND let us all sit down together, admiring that grace of God, and love of Christ Jesus, that has gathered in so many souls, and brought them as a flock of doves to their windows. What a wonderful

ful and pleasing sight have we? O grace, grace, rich and sovereign grace, that is building up the kingdom of our Lord, on the ruins of satan's kingdom. What a wonderful thing is it, that where sin has abounded, grace should much more abound! O shall we not, with one heart, celebrate the power and grace of God, at the communion table. What a spiritual empire has Christ gained among us, and that against all the enmity and reluctance of the heart. You cannot wonder at the apostle in calling it, *the exceeding greatness of his power to them-ward that believe.* O be encouraged to pray without fainting for yet great accessions, to increase the crown on the Redeemer's head, and to excite your praise; that thousands, and ten thousands, and thousands of thousands, even multitudes from every nation, and kindred, and people, might come in, and be clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N XII.

*Christ all in all to the true
Christian.*

COLOSSIANS III. II.

— *But Christ is all, and in all.*

G R E A T and glorious things are spoken
of Christ, both by prophets and apostles,
particularly by the prophet Isaiah, and
the apostle Paul. When either of these enter upon
the subject, especially when Paul treats of the per-
son, character, and benefits of Christ, he seems to
be lost in wonder, and in a strait for words to ex-
press himself. Let what will be the subject he is
writing upon and enforcing, Christ is brought in,
and recommended to the esteem and love of his
people.

IN

IN this chapter he exhorts believers to lead an heavenly life; to mortify the old man, and to be renewed in knowledge after the image of Christ. And where there is this renovation, there is no difference of nations, *neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Sythian, bond nor free: But Christ is all, and in all.* Whatever the Jews boasted of their priviledges as the covenant people of God, or whatever the Greeks boasted of their philosophy, or whatever the great ones of the earth boasted of their wealth or honor, all was nothing with christian converts; but Christ is all in all. They had more in Christ than in all things, and Christ in all things. He is all, in all the great affairs of salvation.

UPON the words we may consider in what respects Christ is all in all; and consider why he is esteemed so by a believer:

I. IN what respects is Christ all in all?

ANS. He is all, as the whole business of salvation is committed to him. The whole mediatory work is summed up in Christ. It is in his person, as God-man, that the parties at variance are reconciled: God the Father has committed the whole
business

business to Christ; or the whole of it is comprised in him. Particularly

1. HE is the root from whence all the salvation springs up. The blessings take their rise and being from Christ. *The Root of David hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.* He was the ancient foundation of the grace of God, which was revealed from the beginning of the world; and therefore, upon the fall of man, the whole of his recovery was laid upon the seed of the woman. And when this salvation was made known to Abraham, it was *in his seed that all the families of the earth should be blessed.* He was the foundation upon which the blessings were laid in the decree of election before the world began: Hence the apostle Paul says that those whom God loves, and calls with an holy calling, he loves, and calls *according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began:*

2. HE is the chief blessing promised. There is not another such blessing as Christ promised in the whole gospel. And therefore he is represented as the transcendent gift of God, the matchless effect of his love. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should*

not perish, but have everlasting life. This gift, and an interest in it, manifests more love, and is a greater blessing than any other, yea, than all other blessings that a person can receive. And therefore the apostle John says, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* Christ then is the precious stone, the chief corner stone; the pearl of great price. All other things; all other blessings, such as peace, pardon, adoption, life, &c. are but the garnish of some rich dish at the table. Every lineament and branch of the excellent beauty of Christ, surpasses all other beauties. He is the sum and essence of all beauty and glory, above all others; *the chief among ten thousand; and altogether lovely.* The whole cluster of gospel promises, does not afford any thing equal with Christ. *My beloved* says the church, *is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.* Upon this vine grows all saving mercy and grace, all true joy and comfort. Golgotha was a richer soil than En-gedi; and the cross pours forth a more sovereign electuary than all her vineyards. Well may he be resembled to the bright and morning star; for he is the ornament of the whole church in heaven and earth; he is an extraordinary prophet and law-giver, a merciful and faithful high priest, King of kings

kings, mighty in all his works, mighty in all his deliverances, the builder of a spiritual house and a glorious church, which he has purchased with his own blood. He is a none-such for excellency; none like him; none to compare with him. He has a more excellent name than any of the principalities or powers in heaven or earth. He is the fairest tree in God's garden, like the tree of life in the garden of Eden. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.* As much as the apple tree, laden with delicate fruit, exceeds the barren trees of the wilderness, so much, and much more, does Christ transcend all other blessings. He is summarily all that is promised. In his person, as Mediator, there is the sum of all the blessings.

Particularly,

HAS God said, *I will walk among you and be your God, and ye shall be my people?* And is not Christ the sum of this comprehensive blessing? It is in Christ that the relation between God and his people is constituted: God owns believers for his people, and his people own him for their God in Christ, and in him alone. There is no other person in heaven or earth who is able to bear the relation of God towards the people, or of the people towards God, but Christ Jesus: no other that partakes of two na-
tures

tures; no other *Immanuel, God with us*. It is in Christ that God and the people are united; in him, and him alone, they own one another. It is he that represents God to us as ours, and presents us to God as his. Though Christ is not the cause of electing love, yet he is the effect of it, and the cause of those effects and acts of love which flow down to us. It is Christ that laid the foundation of that relation which is between God and his people, by whom he communicates of his grace and influence unto them. So Paul teaches us, *he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself*. And again. *God has appointed us to salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ*. The decree of salvation is executed in Christ. He has taken a new relation to God, as his God and Father, in the covenant of grace, and so laid the foundation on which the church is built, and of God's being our God, and we being his people. Had it not been Christ's covenant-right, we could never have stood in such a relation. It is in and through Christ that we have access into this grace, to have God to be our God. He is ours in Christ, and we are his through Christ, and no other way. Without union to Christ, God is not ours, nor we his, but we are

strangers to the covenants of promise, and without God in the world. Spiritual relations, as well as blessings, come by Christ. We come to God in Christ, and he comes to us, owns and blesses us in Christ; *for God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and he is able to save to the utter most, all them that come to God by him.*

AGAIN; the mutual agreement between God and christians, is in Christ. Christ obtains the consent of both parties, and receives the amen to the blessed sanction of friendship and union; the consent of friendship and union; the consent of the one before the foundation of the world, and the consent of the other upon believing he has fulfilled both sides of the covenant: on God's side, he has performed all that God promised to his people: on our part, he is the person on whom our help was laid. Yea, Christ is strictly the very thing agreed to on both sides: God gives Christ to us, and we give back Christ to God for all that is required of us. *He is made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* And we agree to be found in him, *not having on our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* It is the nature of the agreement: it calls for conditions and duties

duties from us, and we give them up to Christ: we answer the demands by Christ, or they can never be answered at all.

AGAIN: Christ is the sum of all the promises. The first promise of grace to lost sinners, was the seed of the woman, which was Christ. And so the promise to Abraham, that *in him all the families of the earth should be blessed*, was a promise of Christ to all that should believe, of every nation and people. Christ was *the sure mercies of David, given for a witness to the people*. And hence his coming is reckoned to be the performance of the old testament promises, as the Holy Ghost tells us by the evangelist Luke. *The Lord God of Israel hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David: as he spake by the mouth of the holy prophets; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham.*

AND so if we consider the virtues or qualities which shew forth the transaction, these are also in Christ. Is the grace promised, free grace? And is not Christ freely given to the people? Is it not in and for Christ that grace is free? The same righteousness, life, peace, pardon, and other blessings,

which are promised in the gospel, were purchased by Christ: he made satisfaction to the justice of God for them. And because he paid the full price of them, they became free gifts to us. And are these mercies promised, everlasting mercies? They could not have been so, were they not comprised in Christ: he was set up from everlasting, and continues to be an everlasting Mediator. Had there not been an everlasting party for the everlasting Father to deal with, the mercies promised could not have been from everlasting; neither could they reach to everlasting, were not Christ the foundation of them. And it is in and for him, that the promises of grace are everlasting promises. Yea, it is for and in Christ, that they are sure and stable. The whole order and disposal of the blessings promised, are ordered in him, for him, and by him. And hence they are sure mercies, because *he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.* And *all the promises of God are in him yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us.* Christ is in the promises, as a nail in a sure place, and as a sure foundation and corner stone, which can never be moved: and *therefore he is, for a glorious throne to his Father's house.* That is the reason that God says by his servant David, that though he will visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes: *Nevertheless, his loving kindness*
will

will be not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. His covenant will be not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Besides, are the promises perfect? It is because they are comprised in Christ: for it is in him that all fulness dwells: and we are compleat in him, who is head of all principalities and powers. The best are empty of any thing that is good of their own; but a fulness of grace and righteousness is treasured up in Christ. In him is a fulness of divine perfections; a fulness of gifts and graces, a fulness of the spirit without measure. And it is from this fulness in Christ that the promises are compleat, and replete. If Christ had not been in them, perfection could not be in them; nor could believers in Christ ever be the better and more perfect by the covenant of grace, than by the covenant of works, were it not for Christ. Further; do we find the promises soul satisfying? They could not be so, were it not that Christ was in them. *This*, says David, *is all my salvation and all my desire.* And again; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I desire besides thee.* What satisfaction could a christian find in the promises of the gospel, if he could not see Christ the foundation of them? O it is in and for Christ that the promises are refreshing. It is because of this, christians can say, *the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*

BUT if Christ is all in all, where shall we end the flowing numbers of his endearing character? We do but cloud his excellencies in the attempt. He is the marrow, the fatness of all, of every promise in the whole gospel. *If thou knewest the gift of God, said Christ, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked him, and he would have given thee living water.—But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but it shall be in him as a well of water springing up unto eternal life.* All the blessings of grace and glory are treasured up in this store-house; and where God gives him, all other blessings follow him; for with him, and where he is given, God freely gives us all things.

USE I. Hence, how much to blame are sinners, who will not have Christ! Precious souls: a number of you are seeking; but what are you seeking? Your searches are after something below Christ. But if Christ is all in all; *wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why do you compass yourselves about with sparks of your own kindling? Why do you walk in the light of your own fire?* You will, you must fail of happiness at last, if you will not believe in him who is all, in all the happiness that

that can be enjoyed. You practically say that there is not a full blessing in Christ: Christ alone, will not content you. Some of you must have the world with Christ: others must present their own righteousness to God, with the righteousness of Christ, though besides Christ, all things are vanity and a lie. How vain is your pursuit, while you live without Christ. Suppose you could have a created heaven without Christ; would this satisfy you? O then you have no Christ, and if you die so, you will have no heaven at last. Alas! How many sit down with a short allowance! They seek not all in Christ, and through Christ, and from Christ—they know not what to do—they think of building tabernacles in the mount, and forget that Christ is all, in all. O why will you deprive yourselves of the blessing in a sealing time? Why will you rather seek for comfort from a frame, than from Christ, the sure foundation of comfort?

II. Is Christ all in all? O let him be recommended to all our hearts! It is necessary for us to have an in-being in Christ, for without this, we can have no interest in the promised blessings. Were it possible for you to receive all that is in the offer of the gospel, without receiving Christ, you would still be an alien, and without God in the world. It is not
enough

enough that you come to God, and bring Christ with you, but you must come and have Christ in you: Christ and you must be one mystical person. And will you not make Christ your own, to day? O believe the divine record concerning him: O receive him as he is offered, and you shall have all the blessings which he has purchased. Take Christ for all, and make use of him for all. Go to him to fulfil all the promises of the gospel for you. Look to him to work that in you which he requires of you. He can give you faith: he can make you willing, in the day of his power. O it is a blessed day, a sealing day! Make sure of Christ therefore to day, and you shall be sealed with an earnest of the spirit in your hearts. He shall shed abroad his love in your hearts. Particularly

LET communicants make sure of Christ, on this day of the gospel feast. You are this day, communicants, called to renew your covenant with God, and one with another. But, unless you put his name into the covenant, by faith, how can you renew the covenant yourselves? You will not speed in the communion engagements, unless you take Christ with you. There is no establishment in grace and true comfort, if Christ is not taken into the account, in covenanting at his table. How can you engage yourselves

yourselves to be the Lord's for ever, if you do not take in Christ to be your surety? Here are good tidings for broken, self-despairing sinners, who cannot answer the charge of the law themselves: Christ has undertaken the debt, and stands ready to discharge it. He has borne the wrath of God, which is due to you; and he has fulfilled the law which you have broke. And God has testified that he approves his work, by raising him up from the dead. O that, while you take the bread, you might admire the love which inclined Christ to undertake for you. Admire the love that caused him to stand on your side. Read the demonstration of his love, in every thing he did and suffered; in every state wherein he carried your condition, and in every action wherein he acted your part. Is it not strange, that those who seek for evidences of his love, should neglect the greatest evidence of it, viz. When we had no credit with God, he became a party with us, by which our state might be repaired. What a sweet remembrance should we have of this, upon such a communicating season. O surprising! That his suretyship reaches to every condition, to every command, and to every promise in the gospel; to pay all our debts, to perform all our duty, to work all our work, and to undergo all our punishment! The thought forces my text upon me: *But Christ is all, and in all.*

AND has Christ bound himself to do all for believers, and to do all to them and in them? Then, while you take the cup, you should consider that you are more in debt to Christ than you can conceive. It will be your work to all eternity, to reckon up the sum of the debt of grace that you are under. You will never be able to requite it—you will, to eternity, remain debtors to Christ, for his undertaking the engagements for you—for his discharging your debt, and for his reporting his Father's discharge of it to you. You are in his debt for undertaking your debt unasked; that he consented to put his name in the bond, and subscribe a satisfaction to the violated law. You are in his debt for your acquittance and discharge, which he has obtained and received for you. And when you have the cup of the new testament in your hand; consider, you are in debt for all he has wrought in you, from the time you first believed to this moment; for all the fruit you have brought forth to God; for every duty you ever performed, and for all the influences of his spirit that you were ever favored with. *Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus—you must draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water.*

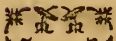
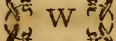
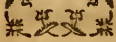


SERMON XIII.

Why Christ is all in all to the true christian.

COLOSSIANS III. II.

— *But Christ is all, and in all.*

 E did, on our last communion sabbath;
 W propose to consider in what respects Christ
 is all in all; and then, why he is esteem-
ed so to be by every true christian.

As to the first of these heads, we observed that he may be considered in the character given him in our text, as he is the root from whence all salvation springs up; the foundation of the grace of God, which has been revealed; and as he is the chief blessing promised, and the sum and complement of

all the promises of the covenant of grace. And having considered several particulars under these heads, we closed the discourse with a short address to those that do not receive Christ as their all; and to communicants. We come now

II. To consider why Christ is esteemed all in all by true christians? For the apostle speaking of Christ as the root of salvation, and the complement of all the promises in the covenant of grace, doth in effect say that all true christians find good reason to esteem Christ all in all to them. Now, out of many, I shall give two or three reasons why real christians do esteem and prize him as their all in those respects which have been mentioned. And

1. IN general, it is because they desire the great designs of electing love should be effected in the best way. Jesus Christ is head of all the elect of God, and therefore they are said to be *chosen in him*. They were given to Christ, in the covenant of grace, before the world began: they are given to him in trust, and he is accountable for them. Now, true christians esteem and prize him as their all, because they see the grand designs of electing love could not be displayed in their glory and beauty any way but by his being the root and sum of the whole scheme

scheme. Will you ask what these great designs of electing love were? I answer, they are those very things for which christians do esteem and prize Jesus Christ as all in all. The great ends and designs of election are, the praise and glory of free grace, the honor and glory of the Son of God, and the holiness and happiness of the elect: and the reasons why they esteem him to is, because Jesus Christ is all in all to effect these ends. Particularly

(I.) BECAUSE Christ is all in the manifestation of the glory of free grace in election. The last end of God's choosing some to be heirs of grace and glory, was to shew forth the gloriousness of divine grace. The goodness of God is his greatest glory, especially when it is communicated with the greatest sovereignty. And Paul expressly assures us that he appointed some to glory, to shew forth the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. And the great misery that man had hurried himself into by the fall, made way for the illustration of divine mercy in redemption. Now, Jesus Christ, as Mediator, undertook for the elect, and satisfied the justice of God that stood armed with vengeance against them, as well as others, as surety and representative of all the elect. And it is through Christ alone that the glory of free grace can possibly shine. He, and he only

only, could secure the honor of the glorious perfections of God, and magnify divine mercy and grace above all his name: And this must needs render Christ high in the esteem of all true christians.

(2) BECAUSE it is for the glory of Christ to be all in all. The highest end of election and salvation, next to the glory of God, is the glory of his Son. The Father is glorified in the Son, and the Son is glorified in christians, and will finally be admired in all them that believe. And that Jesus Christ might be the root and sum of all grace and glory to the elect, God the Father has communicated himself to him in the fullest manner, and in the highest way of delight, intending to glorify him by making him the fountain of all that goodness and glory he designed to confer upon his creatures, suitable to their necessity and condition, whatever it be.

Now, seeing the redemption of the soul was so precious that it could not possibly be effected in any way consistent with the glory of God, but by Jesus Christ; and seeing the Father designed to honor his Son, who bore the curse of the law, and made perfect satisfaction since, I say, this is the case, it will follow that christians look upon Christ as their all, in this regard, with the highest esteem and pleasure.

It is a peculiar pleasure to them, that the Father has, and does, and will honor his Son, as the all in all of the covenant in this regard. Since God is of purer eyes than to suffer sin, which is an infinite evil, to go unpunished; since it was impossible for God to take a creature into his bosom immediately, unless his justice was satisfied, and since the Son of God undertook and made full satisfaction, and is peculiarly honored on that account, he must consequently be highly esteemed by all true christians, and they have a peculiar pleasure in reflecting upon the rewards of glory and honor put upon him. Even the present happiness of christians consists very much in viewing and contemplating upon the glory of Christ. Faith pries more, much more into the glory of his undertaking, and the glory that is given him as Mediator, than into our own interest. It is a peculiar satisfaction to their souls that he is *highly exalted* as the all of the covenant; that his whole person, his human nature, as well as the divine, is raised to an exceeding height: that the divine nature, which had been under a veil, has its rights recognized, and its glory displayed; and that the human nature, in conjunction with the divine, is highly exalted to a title of dignity above all the creatures; and that the whole creation is in subjection to him: *things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,*
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the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the living and the dead, are at his command. It renders a great delight to their souls that Christ should be honored with a universal empire in heaven and earth, and over all the creatures in each, to the glory of God the Father.

(3.) BECAUSE their righteousness and holiness is laid up in him. Christ is their common head, a public person for them, and in him, all the righteousness and grace of the new covenant is deposited. As God condemns man by the imputation of another's sin, so he justifies man by the imputation of another's righteousness. † And it must needs be that Christ should be highly prized by christians, as all their righteousness is laid up in him. Especially considering, that in Christ they have a perfect righteousness: it is a righteousness which makes full satisfaction, not only for a few, but for all the elect, under the ancient and present dispensation of grace. There was such a dignity and worth in his person, beyond all the persons he represented, that his righteousness could not but answer to every case. When they view the worth of his person, they see it is far above all saints, and infinitely beyond theirs in value: and as he stands in their stead, he must
make

† *Rom. iv. 5—11.*

make amends to God, being himself God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever : for all his sufferings and obedience, were the sufferings and obedience of him who was God and man. The righteousness that was wrought in his human nature, unto which the Godhead gave an efficacy and excellency, makes him a full and perfect fountain of righteousness. || As the Son is the fountain of light to the world, so is his righteousness to all the elect of God ; * a righteous Savior to justify the ungodly. Again ; considering his righteousness is everlasting. † When the righteousness of the first covenant was broken, the covenant itself was made void : and such a righteousness could not be laid up in a mere creature, which is subject to change, as would answer to an everlasting covenant. Therefore when God might justly have made an end of sin, by making an end of the sinner, Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from death, by providing a righteousness for him. And this is an everlasting righteousness, because it is the righteousness of the everlasting Father and friend of God's elect. As it was everlasting in the counsels of it, so it will be everlasting in the virtue and consequences of it. Again ; considering the merit of this righteousness : It must

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|| 2. Cor. v. 21. * Mal. iv. 2. † Dan. ix. 24.

be a righteousness that has merit in it, or else it will never answer God's end, nor our necessity; for if Christ had only paid the old debt, and so restored man to his primitive state, this could not have answered the riches of divine grace, nor man's extremity. Therefore Christ paid not only the price of redemption, † whereby he redeemed from sin and guilt, but he also purchased an inheritance, a glory to be bestowed upon them. Now, must not Christ be greatly esteemed and prized by true christians on these accounts? What could have been done without this righteousness? How could a righteousness be found that should make amends to injured justice, and honor the divine perfections in the justification of the ungodly, had not Christ interposed? Surely, the righteousness of a mere creature that is subject to change, could not be answerable to the everlasting covenant. Nor could any mere creature purchase heaven, for they are all bound under the law, and if they had perfectly kept every command, they were unprofitable servants; it was no more than a due debt: and then, they had no righteousness to spare to another; and if they had, it could not give a legal merit. Merit can be from him
only

† *APOLUTROSIS* signifies a full and perfect deliverance; a redemption which is every way absolute and compleat. And this word Paul uses *Eph. i. 14.*

only, the excellency of whose person does exempt him from the law, and by whose voluntary subjection to the law, the law is more magnified than ever it was debased by all the transgressions of the creature.

BUT not only the righteousness, but the holiness of the elect is laid up in Christ; and on that account christians highly prize him. God will not deal with a sinner immediately in any thing: the grace, as well as the righteousness, must be laid up in Christ, as a middle person, by whom all must be bestowed. And therefore Paul, shewing what Christ is as Mediator, says, *it pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell in him*: not only a fulness of righteousness and merit, but a fulness of strength and grace. And it is of his fulness that all the elect receive the first grace, and *grace for grace*. The best and greatest christians cannot live graciously, no not for one moment without him, and the weakest may have enough from his fulness. The gifts and graces of the spirit are poured out upon the man Christ Jesus, that, as Mediator, he might be the universal head of the church, and the store-house of all grace to the elect: and therefore the life of grace, as well as glory, is communicated to us from him. And christians can receive grace from no other; it can be derived by no other. The

fulness which they receive is dispensed by daily and continued supplies from him. Whatever turns to their growth and comfort, is by *the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*. † Who can dispense grace unto us, to mortify lust, to excite vigilance, love, meekness, humility, or to support us and comfort us under trials, but he that hath the knowledge and wisdom of a God, and power to do exceeding, abundant, above what we can ask or think? But Christ can and does give out of his fulness, suitable and seasonable supplies; and in him is our *fruit found*. † From him we receive grace and strength to do any duty, or undergo any trial.

Now, if we duly consider of these things: if we find that Christ's being all in all, as to the root and complement of all blessings, renders him dear to our hearts, because God is glorified in the highest way in his adorable perfections; and because Christ is crowned and gloriously rewarded for his undertaking and finishing the work of redemption in such a glorious manner; and because he is all our righteousness unto justification, and all our grace and holiness is in him, and dispensed by him: if, I say, we duly consider of these things, and Christ is really esteemed and highly prized on these accounts, we
may

† *Phil.* i. 19.‡ *Hos.* xiv. 8.

may humbly hope that he is all in all to us, and is ready to give us the earnest of the inheritance.

USE I. Learn hence, the free and rich grace of God in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ. The prophet *Isaiah* does exalt this grace, that Christ should be given as a Mediator, and that all the grace and blessings should be summed up in him ; * that the ancient of days should take flesh upon him, and the everlasting Father should be a Son given, to purchase a pardon, and procure all blessings for the elect of God. And truly the gift itself was the highest honor, and the greatest gift that could be bestowed ; but if we duly consider the ends for which he is given, and the glorious retinue of all grace that follows him, which have been mentioned, it will greatly heighten the gift in our esteem.

Especially if we reflect

THAT the gift was entirely free. God did not owe unto any man such a Christ as he is ; it was all free grace that inclined him to enter upon the plan of redemption, when man had broken the first covenant, and was perfidious before God. And even then, there was no price to purchase this grace ;
though

* *Isa.* xlii. 6.

though Christ has purchased all the grace and blessings of the covenant, yet the covenant itself is grounded on the free grace of God, and the approbation and acceptation of all that Christ did and suffered, is grounded on free grace in that agreement which was between the Lord Jesus Christ and his Father. Neither was there any thing foreseen that we could possibly do, that could be the ground of this contrivance, for if it had been so, the reward must have been reckon'd of debt, and not of grace.

THAT the love of God in this gift is immeasurably great. The grace that Christ has purchased, flows from God's electing love. He observes the same order in blessing that he does in electing. *According as he has chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* ¶ Election is the secret spring out of which all this grace flows. And this magnifies the love of God in giving Christ, the blessing of all blessings, to an high degree. The gift of Christ is in pursuance of his eternal purpose in bestowing righteousness holiness & heaven upon his people, in a way everlastingly honorary

to his own name, and his Son's name. And the more difficulties love breaks through, the stronger and the greater it is. His love was jealous of every thing that stood in the way of its operation; it was the flame of the Lord, and broke through death itself to accomplish its designs. Our sins, the breaches of covenant, one would think, would keep this love from working; yet the greatness of this love is manifest in the duration of it: it is everlasting love, not only an ancient love, but a love that shall never fail; from everlasting in the counsels of it, and to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it.

AGAIN; reflect that man's necessity was exceeding great. We were all under a broken covenant, and therefore under the curse of it. It was a covenant without a Mediator, and therefore we had to answer for the breach in our own persons: a covenant that promises no repentance, nor any mercy or acceptance upon repentance: and therefore we must have been left in a remediless condition, bound over to chains of darkness, were it not for this love: It is the free favor and good will of God, and not any merit or desert of ours, that appeared in our extremity, and has brought salvation.

II. LEARN hence, to admire and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts and lives. Was it not the wonder of holy angels that he should condescend to be all in all unto the self-ruined and hell-deserving? He was equal with the Father, and thought it no robbery to be so; and therefore he could not come under an act of God's will, but by his own consent. Hence, that Christ should freely offer himself to be all-in all for the elect, does exceedingly exalt him, and render him wonderful in the eyes of all true christians. It was great condescension in God the Father, that he should bind himself to man by covenant before the fall. What then is the condescension of the Son of God, that he should bind himself to obey and suffer the whole law! His obedience and sufferings honor God more than the obedience of all the creatures in heaven and earth. This puts more honor upon the law than any thing else, that he who is law-giver should be made under the law, and that he who was equal with God in nature, should come under the counsels of his will.

SURELY, this condescension of Christ should excite admiration and love, especially as we enjoy the benefit of it. For the whole transaction had a reference to them that should believe, and will be matter of wonder and praise to them that shall hereafter

hereafter believe. As the root and sum of all grace, he came into the world, and therefore he says, *lo I come to do thy will*, unto which he was appointed before the world began. And, on this account, every true christian, and every one that shall be so, is a part of his care: he bore them in his bosom, and had their names written in his book before the foundation of the world. And to effect their salvation, he was, in the fulness of time, *made under the law*. He bore the curse, was reputed a sinner by men, and had sin imputed to him by God, and the iniquities of all the elect did meet upon him. O the condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ! Had he been only an intercessor in behalf of the self-ruined, it had been a great mercy, a wonderful act of love: but for him to become a surety, to pay our debt, and engage unto God a righteousness that should justify us consistent with the honor of the divine character, and holiness that should qualify us for the service and work and enjoyments of heaven. O what condescension is this! O how astonishing that he should cancel the hand-writing that was against us, and nail it to his cross! How wonderful that he should engage to work all our works in us, and for us; that though the duty is ours, the efficacy is his, and from him alone we receive a supply of the spirit which enables us to bring forth fruit unto God.

III. Is Christ the root and sum of all blessings ? Then those must needs be miserable, who are strangers to him. Many that live under gospel light and grace, are, in their hearts, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no good hope, and without God in the world. Though they are the visible people of God, and enjoy very great external privileges as such, yet they are in a Christless, and therefore in a hopeless condition, for Christ is the all in the covenant of grace, and therefore all the ground and foundation of all christian hope. Yet this, I fear, is the case of many present on this occasion. You will not believe he is all in all, and will not receive him as he is held forth in the gospel. You are whole, and do not see your need of such a physician as he is. If you were sensible of your guilt and danger, you would improve every occasion of Christ's passing this way ; at least, if you have a measure of conviction, it is evident that the apprehensions of your guilt and danger are very contracted. You are like the pharisee, laboring under the complaint of, *what lack I yet ?* and not like the publican, at your wits ends, seeing nothing about you but what constitutes you sinners, and exposes you to the wrath that is to come. You may indeed undergo much disquiet, repining at your deficiencies, and be very earnest for some assistance to support

port you; but still this thought lurks at the bottom in your minds, that you have, or should have some principle, which, if properly assisted, might give you relief. Hence your minds are quite estranged from Christ, who alone can relieve you, because he has already done all that is necessary for your relief. Therefore, in faithfulness, I must tell you, that you are enemies to God, and enemies to Christ; and though you are sensible of weakness, you are not sensible that you are without strength. And will you pretend that you would have Christ for all, when you do not believe you extremely need him for all? No, no; the world and the enjoyments of it, or your own duties, mar your concern about Christ. Therefore communion seasons are either quite neglected, or formally attended by you. You may, it is true, come before God as his people do, and shew much outward regard, but your hearts are not weaned from all your idols.

BUT let me tell you, unless you give up all, unless you take Christ for all, you are undone; for there is no promise, no grace, no righteousness, that belongs to any but those that are in Christ. Though your outward privileges are very great, yet if you have not Christ in ordinances, the seals of the covenant can do you no good. Why then should you

take up with means? Why should your hearts be so obstinately set against Christ? Have you such ungodly hearts, that you cannot bear God should have so much honor as he would have in your salvation by Christ? Or have you such a hatred of the terms upon which you must receive Christ, that you cannot give up all to him? O piteous case; sin is sweet, self is dear, the great god of this world is worshipped still! Now Christ comes and compassionately knocks at the door of your hearts, you bar the door against him.

IV. LET Christians take the comfort that is to be had in Christ. Some persons comfort themselves by thinking that they have undergone a saving change, and are proud of their own sanctity: but this is utterly wrong; it is trying to live upon self, and will sadly corrupt experiences if they have any that are genuine. Your comfort must come from considering of what is absent from you, of what is in heaven, even the free mercy of God in Christ; for when you look into God's perfect law, and see your own infidels, you find yourselves more the objects of mercy, and a discovery of the mercy of God in Christ will make you more happy. All true comfort springs from the mercy of God in Christ, and the more of Christ is seen under any ordinance

dinance, the more true consolation. It is because consolation comes from the open vision of Christ in glory, that makes heaven infinitely sweet to the glorified saints. And if, under ordinances, you fetch your comforts from Christ as the root and sum of all the promises, they will prove the greater cordials, and the more reviving.

COMMUNICANTS particularly, ought to meet Christ at his table, and comfort themselves in him and with him : for Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the matter and ground of it. Wait therefore, under this ordinance, for the consolation of Israel : he is worth waiting for, and will be welcome to those who have waited for him, and continue waiting. And if you meet Christ here, you may see good reason to be comforted on several accounts; Particularly

1. You may see your standing before God. It is the glory and triumph of saints to appear before God in the righteousness of Christ, agreeable to the vision of John : *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.* If you take a view of your cloathing, the white robe of Christ's righteousness in which all
true

true christians stand before God, your hearts and hopes will rise above the world, and the doctrines of the gospel will be a crown of glory to you. If you have this righteousness applied to you, by the imputation of the Father, you will see good reason of glorying in that, because it is the righteousness of God; the righteousness of his ordaining, appointing, and accepting. The righteousness of him, who has infinitely more worth in him, than all the souls he has redeemed, than all the glory he has purchased.

2. **HERE** you may see your strength. It is the common affliction of christians, that they live too little to him who died for them. They find that they can do no duty by the power of inherent grace: the corrupt and sinful inclinations that remain in them; controul and check them, and drive on a contrary interest to that of christians. And their graces are so very weak, that, although they approve of the precepts and prohibitions of the word, they can not reach that perfection in holiness they breathe after. But if you meet Christ, you may see that your strength to do any duty, and to deny yourselves of any thing forbidden, is laid up in Christ; for he is not only a surety to pay the debt you owe to the first covenant, but to perform
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the duty required of you under the second, and better covenant. You will fail before, if you go about any duty in your own strength; but his grace is sufficient for you. And when you find yourselves weak in yourselves, you may find the strength of divine grace coming from Christ into your souls: And though your graces be ever so imperfect, yet he will present you to the Father without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Here he will strengthen and uphold you, and carry you along in your journey, and in heaven, at the right hand of the Father, he will not only present your persons, but your weak services, with the much incense of his own merits, upon the golden altar of his divine nature.

3. **HERE** you may see your own establishment. Christians often turn aside from the holy commandment, and thereby they grieve the holy spirit, and lose the light of God's countenance. Then all former experiences can yield them no comfort, but will rather serve to promote their fear, and increase their pain. Though they have all the reason in the world to rely upon the faithfulness of God in his promises, yet they say in their hearts, as David did, *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul* † But
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† 1. Sam. xxvii. 1.

if you meet Christ, at his table, you may see your standing is not in yourselves, and be established in your perseverance. You may then see that your perseverance depends upon the faithfulness of God, the obedience and prevailing intercession of Christ, and the oath that God has made to Christ. Is not Jesus Christ the Mediator of the new testament to redeem his people, and qualify them to receive the promise of the eternal inheritance? * And has not the Father promised, as his reward, that *he shall see the travail of his soul?* † Well, though he died, he is risen again, and has not left his children orphans. Only meet him, and you shall see that you have a living Father, and because he lives, you shall live also, for he is your life, and will take effectual care to secure you the inheritance of children. *Though the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yet his loving kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on you.*

4. HERE you may see something of the glory of heaven. If you find yourselves accepted in the beloved, and should have some comfortable sense of your immoveable foundation, heaven will come down into your hearts. Christ will be more wonderfully

* *Heb. ix. 15, 16.*

† *Isa. liii. 11.*

derfully your all in all. You may have the eye of faith so strengthened, as to see God upon his throne, and that throne high and lifted up beyond all competition: Perhaps your harps have been hung upon the willows by the rivers of Babylon; but there the heavens may open, and you may see the visions of God, the darkness and distance that hindered may be conquered, and you may be let into the light of the glories of the upper world. Some have had such a clear perception of glory, by faith, as to overwhelm their spirits, and leave their bodies in a manner lifeless and spiritless. I believe it was next to death to see that glimpse of glory which Daniel saw. And should you, at the table, be led into heaven, and behold the Lamb of God there upon his throne, though perhaps you would not fall dead at his feet, yet you might know what heaven means: heaven would come into your hearts, and raise up spiritual actions of grace. Holy affection might rise so high, that you may be ready to faint under the weight of the discovery, and cry with the church, *slay me with flaggons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.* † This would be almost entering into your Master's joy; next to being dissolved and being with Christ, where you hope to be exalted,

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† *Cant.* ii. 5.

when you have done with ordinances, and to sit with him on his throne in glory for ever.

O when, when shall that happy time come, promised the church in the latter day, when she shall call her walls salvation, and her gates praise! When all true believers shall have so much of heaven, that the sun shall no more be their light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto them; but the Lord shall be unto them an everlasting light, and their God their glory:



SERMON XIV.

Christ the Root of David.

R E V. XXII. 16.

—*I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.*

✻✻✻✻ I T has pleased God, in infinite condescension to human weakness, to convey the knowledge of divine truths by metaphors and similitudes borrowed from material things: We have three striking metaphors in my text, by which the Lord Jesus represents several of his true characters as the true Messiah.

I am the Root and Offspring of David. Christ put a difficult question to the Pharisees, upon their saying,

saying that the true Messiah whom they expected, would be *the son of David*. If, said he, *David then call him Lord, how is he is son?* David called the Messiah his Lord, Ps. cx. 1. And in this sense he is the ROOT of David : he from whom David's life sprung ; for the root of a plant conveys life to the plant. The same word John uses in his sermon in the wilderness, Mat. iii. 10. And our Saviour, Mat. xiii. 6. So that, by the ROOT of David, we must understand Christ to mean the Lord and source of David's family and kingdom : Christ gave him his existence ; he maintained, promoted, and succeeded him and his. And yet, the faithful and true witness, who testifies this truth by his angel, says also, that *he is the Offspring of David*. i. e. in his human nature he sprung from David's loins. And therefore the prophet Zech. vi. 12. calls the Messiah *the man whose name is the Branch*, that should grow up out of Bethlehem the city of David. Nevertheless, though he is a root out of the dry ground, and David's Son, yet he calls himself *the Bright and Morning Star*. The morning star exceeds all others in brightness, and metaphorically signifies sometimes the shining light of the path of the just, and sometimes spiritual illumination, because of its clearness and certainty, and sometimes the glorious light of eternity, because the glorious

Lamb

Lamb of God cloathed with human nature, is the clear medium of the light of heavenly Jerusalem. But in my text, I apprehend Christ means that he is come to scatter the darknes of ignorance and error; and, as the morning star is the harbinger of the rising sun, so Christ Jesus is come to usher in light, purity and joy, with unclouded glory.

BUT, further to improve the words, I design, with divine leave, to consider in what respects Christ may be said to be the Root of David; what is signified by his being called David's offspring, and why he calls himself the bright and Morning Star?

I. IN what respect our Lord Jesus Christ may be called the Root of David?

To this I answer in general: Doubtless the metaphor is to point out his divinity; all his uncreated excellencies and perfections. It is not, (as some have groundlessly suggested) to teach us that he sprung from David, but that David sprung from him. He is the original, and bears up the family of David, and all the families of the whole earth. Especially, he is the foundation of all God's spiritual house, the church; its life and strength. The whole church is like a tree, with many branches,
bearing

bearing fruit. It grows up out of, or springs from Christ the Root, and derives all its nourishment and life from him. David, from whom Christ came according to the flesh, though a great man, and a king, acknowledged that he had all from Christ. And so his immediate mother called him her Saviour; even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones. By him David, and other kings and princes reign and decree justice; to him they owe their life, breath, being, grandeur and glory; and good kings, as David, yield him cheerful obedience and subjection. And so the whole church, and every member in it derive their all from Christ. Particularly

I. ALL true christians spring from Christ. There is infinite virtue in the divine nature of Christ: he is the fountain of Being; the treasures of his communicable goodness, are unspeakable and inexhaustible. *It hath pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell*; not only a fulness of abundance for himself, but a fulness of merit and righteousness, strength and grace. He is the source from whence the very being of christians springs; the original of all the grace that they have, or can ever enjoy, John xv. 5. They are as dependent upon him for all spiritual and divine life, as we are upon the providence of our Creator for our natural life

life and motion. Their very being is in Christ, as the tree is in the root, or the branches are in the vine, or the vine in the root. Indeed the union of believers with Christ cannot be seen with the bodily eyes, and therefore it seems mysterious how they should have their very life, as christians, in him. And so it is mysterious how trees should have their being and life from the root under ground, and thereby be preserved alive in the coldest winter season. But this is true of the latter; and it is as true of the former; their spiritual life is begun and carried on, by virtue of their mystical union with Christ their head. The union is out of sight, being hid, as much as Christ is, from an eye of sense, and from the conceptions of a carnal mind; but being a divine person, the Father has granted to him, as the Messiah, that he shall have life in himself, and authority to communicate life to others. No particular church, none of the members in it could have had spiritual life, without union with Christ, and so deriving it from Christ the root, any more than trees could have vegetative life without deriving it from the root. We could as well have given ourselves natural life when we were in a state of non-entity, as we could give ourselves spiritual life, or oblige him to give it.

2. ALL true christians are supported by Christ: Were the roots of a tree cut off, a little wind would bring it to the ground; and if it were not that the roots held it up, it must be torn down by a tempest. So the church and particular christians could not stand were they severed from Christ; but, like a tree planted in good soil, they are rooted in Christ, fastened on him, to keep them immoveable by any wind of doctrine, and stedfast in the tempest of persecution. Those that are planted and grow up from the old root of the first Adam, and have their religion spring from the root of self-righteousness and hypocrisy, will be easily driven from side to side, or blown down by the wind of severe temptation in a day of great trial. And if true christians were not borne up by Jesus Christ, they would be overthrown by any blast from hell: but the Root of David upholds the church and all true christians in it, under all the assaults of temptations that beset them; being rooted and grounded in Christ, they have stedfast provision against the fatality of every storm. For the encouragement of the humble and self-diffident, and for such as place their entire trust in Christ, and the grace of God through him, God has made many great and precious promises of all seasonable supports to his people; and he has pawned his truth and faithfulness to perform them,

1 Cor. x. 13. He knows the infirmity of his people, and will graciously open a way for their support or deliverance, in the most stormy season he may call them to encounter. Those storms usually exterminate false-hearted professors; but such as are truly rooted in Christ, shall bear up their heads when storms beat the heaviest upon them. With what holy bravery have christians despised the honors of the world, when offered them, and submitted to hardships and disgrace for Christ's sake, and the gospel's? With what generous disdain have they renounced the tempting allurements of flesh and sense, rather choosing to undergo the severest sufferings and troubles, than to enjoy all worldly grandeur and sensual pleasure? Not to mention Gideon and Barak, Samson and Jephtha, David, Samuel and the prophets, which were recorded in the writings of the old testament; not, I say, to mention these, many christians have given clear evidences of the truth of the promise, and the power of faith, by their steadfastness in the greatest sufferings. They have been enabled to endure the greatest tortures with exemplary patience, for the sake of a good conscience. How many noble martyrs have endured the most exquisite torments, to the loss of life itself, and borne up with heroic courage and patience under them, rather choosing to submit to the worst of

them all, than to attempt a release from them upon any dishonorable terms. Yea, Christ has often, and in many instances, used gibbets, the stake, the scaffold, and the gallows, as a mean to show christians the root from whence they sprung, and which bore them up, and to assure their hearts that they were so rooted in him that they should never be moved. They have found Christ such a sure foundation that no threatenings nor tortures could overthrow them. He is a root that cannot decay nor fail; and consequently the branches must endure any blasts from the world and the devil.

3. ALL true christians derive their nourishment from Christ. In this respect there is a great likeness between Christ and the root of a tree; for the latter communicates life and nourishment to the body and branches; and even in the winter season there is life and sap in the body and branches derived from the root. And is not the spiritual life of every true christian in the root of David? From him is conveyed sap and nourishment to their souls. Hence Christ is said to live in believers, Gal. ii. 20. He lives in them as the head of influence, by virtue of their union with him. To outward appearance, they live as other people do; their natural life is supported as others are, but yet they have a higher and nobler

nobler principle that supports and actuates them. Many times indeed, christians seem like the branches of a tree in the winter, when its verdure disappears, and the sap returns into the root ; but even then they have nourishment from Christ, sufficient to support spiritual life in their souls. And if they stir up the grace of faith, and thereby fetch down the warm influences of the son of righteousness, and the dews of divine grace, the sap will ascend from the root, that though they live in the flesh, they will not live after the flesh, but through the spirit mortify the deeds of the body. By faith they fetch in those supplies for their various spiritual wants which can be had no where but in Christ. Hypocrites that make a plausible profession, and seem to flourish a while, yet wither and come to nothing, like the barren fig tree which was cursed ; but those that are rooted in Christ he will nourish, and they shall bring forth fruit:

4. ALL christians have their necessary dependence upon Christ for help. Some imagine if they are once in Christ, they can put forth that grace into action at their own pleasure, by virtue of the principle already wrought ; but they might as well suppose that a tree and its branches might flourish and bear fruit, without sap conveyed from the root.

Yet we are sure, if any obstructions hinder this conveyance, it will not put forth and bear fruit, though the sun shine, and it is ever so well watered. Neither can christians do any thing that is spiritually good, without deriving strength of grace from Christ. Hence, when in any way they obstruct divine influence, either by sloth or inactivity in their christian profession, or by letting down their watch, they become unprofitable, and, like barren trees, destitute of holy fruits. Whatever true christian is so remarkably deficient in gracious exercises, as to lose a sense of them, must impute it to some obstruction he has laid in the way, which hinders the sap from springing up from the root into his soul: and we should always bear it upon our hearts, that if we are left to ourselves, we, like other men, are utterly incapable of so much as thinking one truly good and spiritual thought, but all our sufficiency is entirely and alone from Christ, by the operation of his spirit in us, 2. Cor. iii. 5. Men may call themselves christians, and, like some trees, make a great shew, and bear no good fruit at all; and the reason is because they have no true union with, nor communication from Christ. These may grow up in hypocrisy higher and higher, but are like clouds without water, driven about by tempestuous winds. We may expect as little benefit from such, as from
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from trees whose fruit is blighted, withers, rots, and comes to nothing before it is ripe, like the immature fruit that drops off in autumn ; like planets, which in themselves are dark bodies, and continually shifting their places ; or like shining meteors which are called falling stars. They make a sudden blaze, and soon expire in darkness, and run from place to place to spread their wicked principles, temper and practices. But true christians are, like trees planted by rivers of water, fruitful in holy practice. Being placed under the means of grace, those rivers which make glad the city of God ; they receive supplies of strength and vigor, in secret undiscerned ways. But then, as they would grow in grace under holy ordinances, they must live sensible of their dependance, and repair to Christ daily for renewed supplies ; for without Christ, ordinances and ministers will not profit them. Without the special presence of Christ, they can do nothing that is pleasing to God : without his presence they cannot pray, preach, administer, hear, communicate in a manner that is acceptable in the sight of God.

5. ALL true christians partake of the same nature with Christ. As the root of a tree communicates the same kind of life and natural virtue to the
tree

tree and its branches, so Jesus Christ communicates the same kind of life and nature to all true believers with himself. Hence Peter tells us, by the application of the gospel, they are *partakers of the divine nature*, 2. Pet. i. 4. Not indeed of the divine essence, which is incommunicable to any creature, but by a divine impression of God's own holy image upon them, or by a holy principle infused into them, which introduces a contrary propensity and temper from that which they had before by the conception that is in the world through lust. These holy dispositions wrought in all true christians, express and resemble the divine perfections, and are called *his image*: Also *the new man, which after God*, i. e. according to his holy will, and after his own image, *is created in righteousness and true holiness*. Hence every christian has a principle and propensity of nature, disposing him to acts of righteousness and charity towards men, and purity and piety towards God; and this is real, internal and effectual, in opposition to all hypocrisy and deceit: He is also *renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*, i. e. the restoration of the divine likeness consists of spiritual light and knowledge in the renewing of the believer's mind, as well as of righteousness and holiness, in the renewing of his heart and life, according to the pure and spotless image

image of Christ. All this is effected by the indwelling of the holy spirit, who dwells in Christ and all christians. Hereby they are vitally united to Christ; and from this union, and the abiding residence and influence of the same spirit, they grow up as members of his mystical body.

Application of the first head.

USE I. Learn hence, all divine goodness that christians are possessed of, is derived. How little soever men are inclined to confess their pride, yet, it is really true, that the most who enjoy any thing valuable, sacrifice to themselves. Men of the highest spirit and most exalted genius feed upon it daily; brag of what they are, what they have done, and what they intend to do, at least, what an inclination they have to do good things. But were all the good which they imagine of themselves really true, there is no reasonable ground of boasting, for what have they that they havenot received? Christ is the Lord of the whole creation: he gives the common gifts of nature and providence; all the advantages and abilities that men enjoy, as it has pleased him. They all spring up from him as the root. And so with regard to the christian life: christians, as such, have their very being from him; their support, nourishment,
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and nature is from Christ. All their strength, comfort, peace, holy joy and rest; all their skill in the christian warfare, all their victories over sin, satan and the world, are from Christ. Self-conceit works strangely; it was the ground of that immoderate esteem which the Corinthians had of some ministers above others, and so of the schism in that church. And christians, in commending this and that teacher, and setting one up on the ruins of another, do but commend their own taste and judgment. But supposing they have a better taste than some of their neighbours, and are better christians than others, it is a very poor evidence of it, for them to boast of their own excellencies; for what has any christian to glory in, when all his peculiar gifts are from Christ? They have received this grace, and cannot glory in it as their own attainment, without injuring Christ. When a christian reflects upon any of his graces and comforts as the fruits of his own endeavors or worthiness, he feeds his vanity. All that we have, or are, or do, that is good, springs from the Root of David: there is nothing of this sort, that we can properly call our own; all is received from Christ, and therefore boasting is for ever excluded. It is foolish and injurious to boast of it; they that receive all should be proud of nothing. Hence, if we receive any measure of grace, let us
say

say with the Psalmist. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake.* Let us not imagine that we have any thing, or do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness, but all the good we do is done by the grace of Christ, and all the good we have is the gift of his love, therefore let him have the praise.

II. LEARN hence, that Christ should have all the glory : for if he is the Root of David, in the sense explained, he is truly God, and his great works do greatly magnify his glory. It is he that adopts, regenerates, enlivens the children of God, by his own blessed spirit in their hearts. It is therefore the Father's pleasure to have his Son honored ; and he requires the same adoration, obedience and worship to him, as we are obliged to pay to the Father himself : yea the Father so pre-emptorily insists upon it, that he accounts the person who does not honor the Son, does not truly honor the Father, who has sent him to exert the prerogatives of the Deity, that he might be owned and adored as a divine person, John v. 23. O what a divine and suitable Saviour is our blessed Lord, who is not only the offspring of David, but his Root also, and so, with an inconceivable peculiarity and dignity the Son of God, posses-

fed of the same nature and essential perfections, and undivided in operation with the Father.

III. LET us try our state by what has been offered upon the subject. We have heard that Christ is the foundation and common root of all true believers; but art thou cut off from the old root of the first Adam, and grafted into Christ? In other cases we are apt to try, because we would not be deceived. Let us then examine in this case, and be very critical in it, as it is of the greatest consequence, and there is that vanity in the heart, which disposes to think of safety without a trial. This has been the undoing of multitudes: the foolish virgins supposed that they were united to Christ, and should have gone into the marriage with Christ, as well as the wife. There is great deceit in arguing from false suppositions, for all the conclusions that are drawn therefrom must be unsound. Some, because they use ordinances, and are affected under them, will argue all their life that they are vitally united to Christ, and derive sap and nourishment from him, Mat vii. 22. Such as these flatter themselves with vain hopes, and are likely to the last, to betake themselves to false refuges. Satan beguiles men to reason falsely about their state, and that is a main ground of their aversion to examine themselves; and

and they have a greater aversion to examine their state than their actions. Many will make conscience to review their actions, that choose to go upon a supposition respecting their spiritual state, and are willing to take for granted, though it be the ground of all. Let none of us be found among the careless, but carefully examine

I. **WHETHER** we are rooted in Christ? for we can have no support nor spiritual nourishment from him, unless we are united to him. But how shall I know whether I have a vital union with Christ? Ans. If you are vitally united to Christ, you believe the record that God has given of him. You have an appetite to Christ, in his true character, his personal excellencies, and a delight in him and his salvation. The doctrine of Christ crucified is meat and drink to your souls. This I take to be the sense of our Saviour's words, John vi: 54. You consent to the truth upon the bare testimony of God, and receive Christ upon his own terms, not only with his righteousness, but Christ with his graces; not only for his benefits, but with his inconveniencies. You receive him in his whole character, in all his offices, and give your whole self up to him, so that you are no more your own, but you have put yourselves out of your own power for ever.

The relation is mutual : if Christ is your spiritual root, you are rooted and grounded in him, Cant. vi. 3. You have not only a title to him, but the possession of him : you partake of him, and have communion with him. You would have your happiness in him, and would enjoy nothing apart from him for ever. You would live in him, bear fruit in him, work for him, and be in him, and that to an endless eternity. Your heart is ready to say, as Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16. *Intreat me not to leave thee, or return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go : and where thou lodgest I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.* You are for taking up your abode with Christ, for being in the same interest, and of the same religion.

2. WHETHER our hearts are drawn out towards God? for there is an impression of the love of God in the heart, where a person is rooted in Christ, and this love will warm the heart with love to God in his true character. If Christ is your spiritual root, if you are in him, and vitally united with him, you have the same nature with him, a good work is begun, that you might glorify God in your hearts, and therefore such a working after God he will draw forth in you. You will admire that God the Father

ther so loved the world, as to give his Son, and that you should be called the Sons of God. You will admire that God the Son should lay down his life for you, and that God the holy Ghost should abide in you, enlighten your eyes, and renew you in the spirit of your mind. There will be such a spiritual warmth in your hearts towards God, because there is a principle of love to him inkindled in your souls.

3. WHETHER we give ourselves up to serve God? for a christian does as well give himself to the service of God, as he does receive an interest in his favor. David says, *O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant*: A christian chooses to live and die in the service of God. If you are rooted in Christ, you think it an honor to be a servant to the God of heaven. Let others serve what master they will, you have given yourselves up to the praise, and glory of God, to obey him. It is vain to think that you have an in-being in Christ, if you will not keep his commands, 1. John ii. 4. If you are in Christ, you see that God is worthy of the most entire and intense obedience. A disobedient life is the confutation and shame of pretended union with Christ; it shows that there is neither religion nor honesty in such persons. David thought it his honor that he could uprightly say, *I have done thy commandments*

commandments. Though you need daily pardon for the sins of infirmity, yet sin has no dominion over you, yet you do not make a practice of any known sin, but make conscience of serving God.

4. WHETHER we have communion with God? We read of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the holy Spirit. Now, if you have communion with God, he not only loves you, but you love him, 1. Pet. i 8. As free, distinguishing love is in the heart of God towards you, so you live under the power of a hearty love to him. Your heart is set upon him, and the going forth of your soul is to him. Love unlocks the heart, and calls it up to duty. You think nothing too much for God, when his love is shed abroad in your hearts; you would gladly speak for him, and act for him, and live to him, and die for him. You love to visit him, under his word and ordinances, and in your retirements. Not only your interest will carry you to God, but you desire to see God for himself. For this end you come to ordinances, *to see the beauty of the Lord.* For this end you retire into your closets, *to see his power and glory.* For this end you will come to the sacrament, not to see the ceremony of the table, but to see the glorious power, and the powerful glory of God; to
increase

increase your acquaintance with the divine perfections, and to have the agreeable impressions of them made upon your hearts. Yea, if you are rooted in Christ, you will keep nothing secret from God, but pour out your souls before the Lord, consecrate yourselves to his service, and subscribe with your hands to the Lord.

IV. LEARN hence, the happiness of true believers: for as they grow out of the root of David, so they shall derive sap and nourishment from him: he will continue the union, and their interest, John xiv. 19. He has life in himself, and lives for evermore; and the life of christians is bound up in the life of Christ, as sure, and as long as he lives and has wherewith to uphold and nourish them, they shall live also; live spiritually, a divine life of communion with God, and live eternally in the vision of his person, and endearments of his love.

LET us, communicants, sit at the Lord's table, meditating upon, and admiring the love of God in effecting such a union between christians and his Son Jesus Christ. Is it not truly astonishing that the Lord Jesus should come down from heaven, not only in his incarnation and abasement, but by his holy Spirit, and so cause christians, as
plants

plants, to spring out of the root ! Astonishing that he should have a body, consisting of myriads of members, all springing up out of him, all supported by him, all deriving nourishment from him, all depending upon him, all of the same nature with him, and all conversing with him at the same time ! How wonderfully is the love of God the Father, and of God the Son displayed, in the method taken to bring this great thing to pass ! The Father parted with his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, out of his bosom ; the Son, who is the Root, also became the offspring of David, and he communicates this grace by the Holy Ghost.

O let us dwell upon this surprizing theme, and so fetch down support and spiritual nourishment to all the faculties of our souls. If we receive of that fulness which is in Christ, while we sit together, we shall have a most delicious entertainment. Here is an object worthy and sufficient for the most noble understanding to contemplate, a subject with which the heavenly intelligences, and the infinite understanding of God himself is entertained. Here is an object suitable for the choice, the acquiescence, the love and joy of an immortal spirit. And here, at this table, the root of David offers himself to be chosen, to be rested in, to be loved, to be rejoiced

joiced in, and to be conversed with by us. Yea, Christ has made provision for us to commune with the great and glorious God in all his adorable perfections, to stand in the nearest relation, and in the clearest light; to be privy to his counsels, and to partake of his nature more and more. And hence, if we improve the hour of communion in the exercise of faith, we may derive strength and nourishment to persevere in grace and holiness to the end. We have a land of serpents to go through, and a narrow way to travel before we come to open vision. O let us by every ordinance, get the remainder of sin more and more rooted out of our hearts, that, when we shall have no use for ordinances, we may be perfectly qualified to enter upon the pleasures and enjoyments of the upper house.

S E R M O N

Q 9




S E R M O N XV.

Christ the Offspring of David.

R E V. XXII. 16.

— *I am the Root and the Offspring
of David, and the bright and morn-
ing Star.*

 H E Lord Jesus Christ sent his angel to
T testify the truths written in this verse un-
to the churches. He owns them to be
his, and therefore they are inexcusable, who believe
not their divine authority.

THE method proposed for improving the text,
was to consider in what sense Christ is the root, and
in what sense the offspring of David; and then to
consider why he is called the bright and morning
Star ?

WE have shewn in a former discourse, that by the root of David is to be understood that Jesus Christ was the Lord and source of David's family and kingdom. And further, that the whole church and every true member in it, springs from him, is supported by him, derives all spiritual nourishment from him, has a necessary dependance upon him for help, and partakes of the same nature with him.

Let us now consider

II. WHAT is signified by his calling himself David's offspring.

To this it is answered; he is David's offspring, according to his humanity. His being David's Root, signifies his Deity, and his calling himself David's offspring, holds forth his humanity, and teaches us the line of his descent according to the flesh. He is the person prophesied of, Isa. xi. 1. When David's family was cut down, and almost levelled with the ground, it was to sprout again, and grow out of his roots that were quite buried in the earth, and like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no stem appearing above ground.

AND since Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church and of all good hope of blessedness, it may

be serviceable to shew you that he really sprang from David's line. I am sensible that the different accounts given of the genealogy of Christ, by Matthew and Luke, have been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word. But the cavil has been sufficiently obviated by the learned; though they take different methods to account for it, yet they generally come to the same thing. I shall account for it thus: Matthew gives us Christ's legal and royal line from his father-in-law Joseph, who descended by his own father Jacob from Solomon, the son and successor of David to his throne. Luke gives us Christ's natural line from the seed of the woman, from his mother Mary, who was the daughter of Heli, and so descended from Nathan, another of the sons of David. But as the families of women were not enrolled under their names, so the account in Luke is copied out, according to the custom of the Jews, from one of their authentic genealogies, under the husband's name, which is the reason why Mary's name is not mentioned, though it was Christ's genealogy by her; for, as Joseph's natural father was Jacob, he was only Heli's son-in-law, Mary's father. This agrees with that (Luke iii. 23.) which is translated, *as was supposed*, † but rather signifies, was legally settled, or was found on record

† ENOMIZETO. *Vid. Guyse's Par.*

record. This short view of Christ's genealogy may suffice to remove the cavil, and satisfy us that he is, as he asserts himself to be, the offspring of David according to the flesh. Though many were prejudiced against him, and said he could not be the promised Messiah, if he had his birth in any part of Galilee, yet we are assured from express testimonies of scripture (Isa. xi. 1. Mat. v. 2.) that the Messiah was to spring from David, the son of Jesse, and to be born in the very town of Bethlehem, where David's own parents dwelt. Matthew and Luke prove this to be true, and the apostles argue from his descent from David, that he is the Son of God.

Now, if Christ is the offspring of David; if he was born of the virgin Mary, the daughter of Heli, and so, according to law, Joseph was his father, there are some things represented to us, by the metaphor that are useful, viz.

1. His being David's offspring teaches us that he had the same nature with David. Not that he had a depraved, polluted nature, but a real human nature; for, the offspring is of the same nature with the stock from whence it naturally proceeds. And Jesus Christ, according to the flesh, really descended from David, and therefore is really man.

Hence

Hence he is called *the seed of the woman*, and *the seed of Abraham*. Hence also the apostle says, Gal. iv. 4: He who was the Root of David, and so was truly God, in pursuance of the great design of his undertaking, submitted to be made of a woman, consented to come into a state of subjection, to raise fallen man to a state of hope, Héb. ii. 14. He did not lay hold of angels, but he laid hold of the seed of Abraham. The angels fell, and he let them go, and lie under the defilement and guilt of sin, without hope or help. But, resolving to raise up some of the ruined race of Adam from their fallen state, he took upon him the human nature from one descended from Abraham and David, that the same nature that sinned, might suffer, to restore all that accepted of mercy, to a state of favor and salvation.

2. THE metaphor imports that Christ was nourished up from one of David's descendants. The offspring partakes of nourishment from the root. Jesus Christ partook of nourishment from the virgin Mary, not only in the womb, but afterwards, Luke xi. 27. Hence David (Psal. xxii. 9) speaking as a prophet concerning the Messiah to come, says, *thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my*
mother's

mother's breasts. Divine providence watched with a peculiar care, when Christ was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and exposed to the shame and evils of poverty, and a despised birth and life : but the particular way of nourishing him up was at his mother's breast. Many women are grown too great to nourish their children at their own breasts. Tho' the blessings of the mothers breasts crown the blessings of the womb, yet pride and indolence can easily shift off the duty with any excuse ; but from the beginning it was not so. Before, our Lord Jesus Christ was nourished up by his mother. When the shepherds made a visit to the new-born Saviour, they found *Mary and Joseph, and the babe, lying in a manger.* The child was not put out to nurse, but brought up by his mother : She was his nurse, and is represented as being very happy in nursing him up at her breast.

3. THE metaphor imports that Christ is the glory of David. The offspring of parents is their glory : hence the Psalmist says, *they are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. And happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.* They are to be accounted blessings, and not burdens. It is said that Obed-edom had eight sons, *for the Lord blessed him,* 1. Chron. xxvi. 5. It is a
great

great honor to have many children, and should be the delight of parents to have an opportunity to give them to God, and to have them for a support and defence of the family. So Jesus Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh, is the glory of David's race, and of the whole church of God in general. As a divine person he was David's Lord: this must always be asserted and maintained, otherwise we run into inextricable difficulties; yet David had this honor, that Jesus Christ was his Son, as to human nature. And blessed is that person, blessed is that family, that church and people, that entertain Christ the Son of David in their hearts. When Paul made his appearance in a religious assembly of Jews at Antioch, he spake of it as their glory that Christ descended from David, Acts xiii. 22, 23. Yea, the holy angels glory in his descent from the house and lineage of David, Luke ii. 14. Though they are not immediately interested in the honors of his incarnation, yet they celebrate it to the honor of God. Surely then, those that are immediately concerned should admire and adore, that an incarnate God should redeem sinners, in a way that brings glory to God in the highest. If we keep this great mystery in proper view, with an internal sense of it upon our hearts, we may open the ark, and find the true manna, and the two tables: from
the

the one we may derive spiritual life and strength, and in the other we may see Jesus Christ fulfilling the law, as a covenant of works, and delivering from the curse of it, all that believe in his name.

USE I. From the doctrine of the root and offspring of David, we see the all-sufficiency of Christ to save sinners. Paul speaks of the mystery of the incarnation as a matter that challenges the obedience and adoration of faith, 1. Tim. iii. 16. And what is more astonishing than that David's Lord, the second person in the Godhead, should appear in our flesh and nature ! That the Creator of the world should become a creature, born of a poor virgin, of the seed of David ! Yet so it was prophesied above five hundred years before the Saviour was born, Isa. vii. 14. And therefore the prophet speaks of it as a thing already done, chap. ix. 6. The Son of God is also the Son of man, to bring about the purposes of divine grace.

ON this ground lies the whole doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, and our justification before God. As man, he was qualified to suffer, and his divinity gave a virtue and value to his sufferings, so that he is able to save to the uttermost. If it had not been that he was God and man in two distinct na-

tures, he could not be a sure refuge for sinners to fly to. For, how could he be a supply of our wants, a deliverance from all our fears, a defence against all our dangers, and a refuge in all our spiritual distresses, if he had not magnified the law, and satisfied the justice of God? And how could this be done, had he not been man to suffer, and God to merit? But he took our nature to be his own; that he might suffer and do what was to be done and suffered for the church, Heb. ii. 14, 15. The human and divine nature united, is a sufficient and just foundation of his suffering for us, and in our stead. We were all sinners in Adam, and have been, and are so in ourselves. But his being the root and offspring of David, in one person, made way to exalt the righteousness and truth of God on the one hand, and to justify the ungodly on the other. This seems so dark to many, that they stumble and fall, and perish for ever, Rom. x. 3, 4. But Jesus Christ, as the Root and offspring of David, makes a divine harmony between the righteousness of God, and the justification of sinners: God has laid the punishment of all our sins upon him, so that he might fully exalt the honor of his name in forgiveness. A most glorious resplendency of justice and mercy shine forth in the actings of the two natures in this one person. The appa-
rent.

rent inconsistency between the righteousness of God and the salvation of sinners, which is the rock on which many split, is taken away in this method of salvation : holiness and justice, grace and mercy are manifested to the uttermost. This is that testimony which persuades and ravishes the heart. And what can we desire more ; what is further needful unto the rest and acquiescence of our souls, than to see God well pleased in the declaration of his righteousness, and the exercise of his mercy, in a way which answers the whole demand of the law, as a covenant of works ? Paul has celebrated this great and wonderful work in a manner becoming the subject, Eph. iii. 9, 10. Had not the root been also the offspring of David, all would have been in darkness, as to the nature and operation of divine love, in the pardon of sin, and the acceptance of our persons before God.

II. Is the Son of God, the offspring of David ? Has he taken human nature into union with himself ? Learn hence the distinguishing grace and love of God to self-destroyed man. If it had pleased the Father that his Son should take another nature into union with himself, and become a Mediator, why not the nature of angels ? Their nature is more exalted than man's nature ; and millions of

angels had sinned and left their own habitations : they needed a Saviour as much as sinful man : why then are they reserved in safe custody, like condemned prisoners loaded with chains, unto the day of judgment, while the Son of God took hold of the seed of Abraham ? Was it because they sinned against greater light, or because they sinned without a tempter, or because they were first in the transgression ? We shall rather resolve it into the sovereignty of God's pleasure, who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. Angels are passed by, and look for their eternal torments with wild despair, while man is exalted above them, in the incarnation of the Son of God, and redemption thro' him. *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him ?* When we consider the glory of God in the upper world, we may well wonder he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man. What an amazing condescension is it, that he who presides over the bright world of glory, should humble himself to behold, and help self-ruined man ! How is it, that God should pass by sinning angels, and bestow this favor, and put this honor upon the human nature, as to have his Son become the offspring of David ! O the joy and holy triumph of saints, when they shall be with the Son of man in heaven,
and

and behold his glory! The glory of Christ is the brightness of heaven, that glory, before which angels cover their faces. With what astonishment and horror will apostate spirits appear at his bar, when he comes in his glory and calls them before him. O what surprize and sacred pleasure will it then be, if I should find myself rescued by the power of his grace and love, and redeemed by his blood, from the hands and rage of Devils!

III LET us view, admire and love the Lord Jesus Christ. God incarnate is the wonder and delight of angels. If we have right apprehensions of him, we cannot but love him. And besides; had he not taken the human nature into union with the divine, we must, of all creatures, have been the most miserable. It was in this way, and in this only, that he could give himself a ransom for many, and redeem the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. Being an incarnate God, there was room enough in his breast to receive the points of all the swords that were sharpened by the law against us. Had he not been man, he could not have suffered; had he not been God, he could not have availed either for himself or us. But being both God and man, the Root and offspring of David, he is a bottomless fountain of love and grace to all them that believe

believe. Surely, we owe him everlasting love, for the great love wherewith he has loved us. The day of our espousals was *the day of the gladness of his heart*; gladness, without mixture of sorrow. And every day since our vital union with him, he has *rejoiced over us with joy*, and has been pleased that he pitched upon such objects of his love, and has redeemed them. And shall not christians prize Christ above all things, since he deserves it, both for what he is in himself, and what he has been to us? Reason itself demands it of us, and we are none of his without it, Luke xiv. 26. Christ must be loved above all, or we love him not at all; less love he accounts and calls hatred.

IV. LET awakened sinners receive Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour. There can be no good reason given why he should be despised or rejected. It is folly and madness to refuse him, for they that do so, despite their own mercies. The terms of reconciliation are proposed, the condition of the covenant of grace is fulfilled by him, and him alone: His condescending to become the offspring of David, and his cloathing himself with our nature, qualified him to fulfil all righteousness, to purchase pardon, life, and all the blessings promised in the gospel. His taking flesh upon ~~his~~ tends to render
him

him familiar, and to draw the attention of a human mind to the proposals of pardon and blessedness. What an amazing piece of ingratitude, stupidity and obstinacy will it discover then, for sinners, self-destroyed sinners, to reject the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ? Had God sent the lowest angel in heaven to sinful, miserable men, with some encouragement of pardon and eternal life, upon their giving credit to the report concerning him, one would think an awakened sinner must listen with raptures of wonder. But he has sent his own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. He is God man, and therefore qualified to purchase relief for the helpless and guilty. He was incarnate for that end, and the Father has promised life and salvation to all them that believe in his name. To reject him therefore, is such a degree of baseness as no devil was ever guilty of. Let us suppose that we saw this glorious person coming down from heaven, veiling the glory of his divinity in flesh, springing up and nursed by a poor despised branch of David's family, and all this to procure pardon, and a crown of glory, for them that deserved to be banished from the presence of God, and to be sent down to hell-fire for ever: and yet, the Father promised that he should see his
seed

feed, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands, that he should save eternally, all those that gave credit to this report, from the authority of God. Suppose all this, and then would you reject the purchased mercy, and defy Almighty vengeance? Why, you are doing the same thing against the clearest external revelation of grace in Christ. You think that Christ sprang from David's loins, more than seventeen hundred and sixty six years ago, and that, being united to flesh, he became a Saviour, every way qualified to that office; and you have some sense of your sin and danger, and yet refuse deliverance by him. Yea, now he is gone back to heaven, actually united to our nature, and so is a prevailing Intercessor at the right hand of God, you have hitherto refused to look unto him for pardon, peace, and life. O stupendous madness and folly! Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! Let all nature stand astonished! The Son of God come down from heaven, and become the son of man: he, with human nature, is gone up to glory, and there he is pleading the merits of his obedience, and from thence is beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God; but they rebel, and continue to despise him!

V. LET real christians be much in meditation upon this great and glorious subject. Here is infinite

nite and finite, independence and sovereignty, dependance and subjection in one person. The nature of angels is infinitely inferior to the Son of God; yet, as the offspring of David, he has assumed a nature much inferior to angels. He who was possessed of divine glory, whom the angels in heaven adore, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, made himself of no reputation, was born of the poorest of the people, drew his first breath in a stable, and was laid in a manger. What a mystery of godliness is here! If we duly contemplate this great wonder, it will tend to prepare our hearts to sit under the shadow of holy ordinances with delight. We shall be more solicitous to have, and keep his company. It will be the sum of our study, that no sin or provocation happen that may occasion our Saviour to depart from us. We shall look about us, watch all temptations and ways whereby sin might approach to disturb us. Again, if we duly contemplate this great wonder, we shall ardently desire near communion with Christ, nearer and nearer, like the church, Cant. viii. 6. We shall ardently desire to be always fixed in his most dear and affectionate love, always to have an engraving, a mighty impression of love on his heart, and the manifestation of the hidden love and care

of his heart unto us. Hence, if we have not Christ in his ordinances, it will be as though we had nothing. If he withdraws, we shall be so far from confidence of his love, that we shall fear he does not love us at all, because we know that we do not deserve his love. We shall have no rest to our souls, if we do not find ourselves upon his heart and arm. Hence, when he hides himself, we shall presently enquire into the cause of it, call our souls to an account what we have done, how we have behaved ourselves, that it is not with us as in times past. We shall accomplish a diligent search: We shall re-consider his love and condescension, and assure ourselves that his departure is not without cause and provocation. We shall be driven to some issue, apply ourselves to the promises, consider one, and ponder another, to find him, to see his countenance and taste his love. If we find no Christ under ordinances; nothing but a mere carcase; if Christ is not in the word and sacraments perceptibly, it will amaze us, and we shall not know what to do. This will put us upon a more vigorous enquiry, make us more zealous to cast off sloth, more diligent to leave no means untried, whereby we may get near to him again.

AND

AND who can tell, but, if we duly contemplate this great truth, we should bring Christ into our mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived us, the next communion sabbath. Or if we wait for him in his ordinances, and he denies us there, he may meet with us out of them,

S E R M O N

S 1 2




SERMON XVI.

*Christ the Bright and Morning
Star.*

R E V. XXII. 16.

—*I am the Root and the Offspring
of David, and the bright and morn-
ing Star.*

 HE morning star, by which our Saviour represents himself in the latter part of the text, some think refers to the prophecy which Balaam delivered against his will, Numb: xxiv. 17: *I shall see him; but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seeth.* This perhaps, nextly referred to David, who

who was a star for light and influence, when king of Israel. For David smote Moab, and measured them with a line. The Moabites became David's servants, and the Edomites were brought into obedience to Israel. But it is apprehended that our Lord Jesus Christ is chiefly pointed at in the anti-type, and of him it is an illustrious prophecy. It reaches beyond David's time, to the prevailing of the christian religion over all anti-christian darkness, by the shining of that star which shall fill the world with it's brightness. Therefore

III. HAVING already considered what the two first metaphors suggest to us, let it be considered why Christ calls himself the bright and morning star?

AND here I would observe, that although there is a likeness, yet there is also a great disparity between the metaphor, and our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we consider those metaphors by which Christ is represented in the scriptures, we must never strain them to hold forth every thing that could possibly be spoken from them, for, if we should do so, we should speak contradictions, and derogate from his perfections and glory. The foregoing metaphors teach us that Christ is possessed of all
created

created and uncreated excellencies; and therefore we must not take in any thing from this, that would derogate from thence.

FOR instance; because the morning star is not self-existent, nor does it rule the other stars in the firmament of heaven, it will not do from thence to argue that Jesus Christ is not self-existent, in his divine nature and person, nor that he does not rule in the natural and moral world as mediator of the covenant of grace: for, he has a personal uncreated existence, and is Creator of all things. He gives the laws of motion, and all the periodical revolutions to sun, moon and stars: earth and heaven, the whole universe and its fulness, derive their being and motion from the Son of God, Col. i. 16. He is the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. The lights of heaven are set for times and seasons, for days and years; and he calls them forth, in their respective seasons, to serve us by their light and influences:

NOR can we say that, because the stars are inferior to the sun in their light and glory, therefore Christ is possessed of less glory than some other beings, for he is infinitely superior to the sun and stars of heaven, though he is represented by both.

Yea,

Yea, he is infinitely above men and angels in glory and excellency. The eternal, unmeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible God, one with God the Father, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. No similitude taken from the creatures is sufficient to illustrate, both the essential union, and personal distinction, of the Father and the Son: but this we can say, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells substantially in him. All his Father shines in him; he is perfectly like him, and makes a compleat representation of him: and as God incarnate, he exhibits such an accurate, substantial and visible representation of the Father, in his wisdom, power, grace and holiness, and every other perfection, that *he who hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father also*. As the Son of God, possessed of the divine nature and all its essential perfections, he did not think it any usurpation, to claim an equality of nature with God the Father, Phil. ii. 6:

NOR can we say, that because the stars give light to our bodily eyes only, that Jesus Christ does not illuminate the understanding; for he is a light to enlighten the gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel. He has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in himself, and came into the world to direct sinners into the way of life and salvation
by

by his word and spirit, and therefore when he went away to be enthron'd in his heavenly kingdom, he promised to send the holy spirit for a guide, advocate, and comforter, to answer all the great and glorious purposes for which his people should need him. Hence, as head and Saviour of the church, he communicates of his enlightening spirit in their hearts, illuminates the eyes of their minds in such a manner, as to be sanctifying, comforting, and confirming. He shews forth the all-conquering greatness of his power, in working faith, and infusing a vital principle into dead souls.

NOR may we argue that, because the morning star shines upon this visible world only, therefore the brightness and glory of Christ is confined to the benighted inhabitants of our globe, the earth. It is true, he shines in the hemisphere of his visible church, and will shine with greater brightness and glory in it than ever he has done. But his glorious light is not confined to his church below: in heaven there is no change, period, or allay of glory. The vision of glory there, makes eternal day, Isa. lx. 20. The city of the living God, the new Jerusalem, has no need of the light of the sun, nor of the stars to shine in it, for he that has purchased divine light, and shines in upon the hearts
of

of his church here below, shines with inconceivably greater glory in the world above.

YET, although we should take good heed, in opening metaphors respecting the Lord Jesus Christ, yet we do not apply them any way, so as to lessen the value of his person, or mediatorial character, there are some excellent and important truths held forth in this metaphor. Particularly

1. As he is a messenger come with good tidings. When the sun sets, the darknets of the night succeeds; which brings a gloom upon all nature. And sometimes the darkness of the night is spoken of to represent to us some sore affliction in providence. So Micah iii. 6. And sometimes it is to signify the reign and dominion of sin, 1. Thess. v. 7. Many vices choose the night to hide themselves from human eyes, and those that indulge them, involve their minds in darkness, and pick out a dark time of the night to commit them: So the approach of the morning, or the forerunner of the rising sun appearing, is put for the symptoms of the removal of the affliction, or the reformation of vices that have prevailed. When the morning star appears, we know it comes with the message of an

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approaching

approaching sun-rise. It brings good tidings to men that love the light.

So Jesus Christ, our Morning Star, was a Messenger of glad tidings when he first came into the world. The angel told the shepherds that they and all others would have good reason to welcome the message. It was, surely, very happy tidings, for it was the introduction of that gospel light which had been hid for ages, under the types and ceremonies of the mosaic dispensation. Hence the prophet Isaiah tells us, that when the Messiah should appear, it would be a prelude of great good to the borders of Zebulon and Naphtali; see chap. ix. 2, 3. The Jews indeed were not disposed, in general, to receive the good news, nor were they pleased that the gentiles had the offers of gospel light, but it was an evidence of their pride and ignorance, that they withstood the plain evidences of good times.

AND wherever this morning star arises and shines in his glory and the power of his grace, he is a messenger of good to that people. When he begins his reign in the hearts and consciences of men, by the commanding power of his truth, these are happy days, so far as his grace and government are submitted to. Upon such a prospect, David, in
his

his poetical strain, cries out, *let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the field be joyful, and all that dwell therein.* And we have reason to give joy to that soul, to that people where Christ is admitted, as it intimates the rising of the sun of righteousness with healing under his wings. When Samaria received the gospel, *there was great joy in that city.* What is greater ground of joy than the dawn of the kingdom of Christ in a place? *Hosanna! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David.* There is joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God on such an occasion. And all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ will offer praises when they see the beginnings of grace, as the preludes of greater light and glory.

NOR will it lessen the pleasure of christians to see those that love the works of darkness struck with terror. When the morning star appears, thieves and those that pursue secret wickedness, hide themselves, lest the rising sun should discover them; and this is some relief to those that are in danger by them. And it is not displeasing to christians to see the morning star strike a terror to such as hate him, and would willingly pluck him out of the firmament of the church. They know his coming

They know his coming

among

among them is the fore runner of day-light, which hypocrites cannot endure.

2. As Christ's coming among them is a great honor to the christian church, the rising of the morning star is an embellishment to these visible heavens: it discovers the beauty and order of the whole. The view of their splendor, it is supposed, was the occasion of the idolatry among many of the heathen; and Israel seems to have been in danger from the same striking prospect, Deut. iv. 19.

AND is not the Lord Jesus Christ the Star that shines with a divine glory in the hemisphere of the christian church? Moses was the greatest person, both for human accomplishments, and appearances of God in him, that was then in the world. He was the greatest honor and ornament to the church under that dispensation. But the dispensation of the covenant by Moses, was in a legal form, and he had legal shadows of those truths which are more fully revealed under the gospel. Jesus Christ, in his person and ministry was far more excellent than Moses. Never man spake like him: never any mere man had such extraordinary visions of God. The church never had such a shining light, such a support, nor such a ministry. Jesus Christ is actually

ally engaged in a far more excellent, honorable, and beneficial ministry, than all that ever was exercised before him under the old testament dispensation. He shines brighter in every character and office than Moses did; and has purchased those spiritual and eternal blessings for his church, by the sacrifice of himself, which were shadowed forth by Moses. He has secured the accomplishment of all the promises of the new covenant, and does enable his people to comply with the terms, and yield themselves to God according to it. He has established the covenant upon more spiritual, advantageous and heavenly, extensive and absolute promises, than what were contained in the legal administration. In these, and many other respects, he is the honor and ornament of the christian church. But this is not all; for he is the ornament of heaven itself. He embellishes that state and world. When he had finished the work, which was given him to do, he ascended into heaven *with the shout of a king*, a mighty conqueror, who had spoiled principalities and powers, and led captivity captive. He went up a Mediator and High Priest of the church. He ascended in his human nature, with the blood of his sacrifice, into heaven itself, Heb. ix. 24. And now in the heaven of heavens, in that holiest of all, he is fulfilling the remainder of his priestly office, by appearing in the
immediate

immediate presence of God's glory, to present before him the merit of his blood, in his *ever living and making intercession for all them that come unto God by him.* Well may the church visible and invisible, the church on earth and in heaven, cry, *sing praises to God, sing praises : sing praises to our king, sing praises.* For God is King of all the earth, *sing ye praises with understanding. God sitteth upon the throne of his boliness—he is greatly exalted.*

3. As his personal properties and character attract esteem and love. None of the stars in our visible heavens are so beautiful and engaging as the morning star. It is a star of the first magnitude and the greatest brightness. When we view it in all its lustre it produces esteem and delight, and tends to lead us to admire the Creator. Other stars have their glory; some shine by their own innate light, and others by reflected and borrowed light; bodies of very different splendor; but the morning star exceeds all others for brightness and glory.

AND is not the Lord Jesus Christ, in his personal properties and mediatorial character, most beautiful and attracting? Certainly he exceeds all mere men, and created angels, those stars of light, in the properties of his person, and in the offices of his
mediation

mediation. The created and uncreated excellencies and perfections which are united in his person, have something in them so engaging, that no soul, who clearly sees them in gospel light, can refrain to esteem, love, and admire him. There is a concurrence of every thing that is amiable and inviting in his person and character. Spotless innocence in his life, as man, infinite purity and glory as God. He has a more excellent name than angels, else he could not do a mediator's work, nor be fit to wear a mediator's crown. But by the glory of his personal properties, with the merit of his sufferings, he has a throne that abides for ever and ever. He is invested with all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah, and therefore is said to shine in greater glory than the holy angels, Heb. i. 4, 5, 6.

THERE are angels in churches, who come with glad tidings of peace and salvation. They are fixed stars in the hemisphere of the church, to give light by holy doctrine and conversation, Rev i. 20. The blessed angels also, those first-born of the Father of light, are called *morning stars*, Job xxxviii. 7. They shine in those services they do the churches, according to the appointment of Christ. But the comeliness and beauty of the one and the other, is nothing when compared with this bright and morning

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ing Star. He has a name far more excellent than any name that belongs, or ever was given with such peculiarity and eminence, to the stars in the visible church, or even to the highest angels. He is the essential Son of God, and his office corresponds to his original Sonship. God the Father treated him with the eminent tokens of his peculiar love, protection and care, and has exalted him to his kingdom. The angels of heaven are his servants, to execute his will and commands with strength, speed and activity, like the wind. Search the whole creation, and there is none like the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore the description which the church gives of him (Cant. v. 10) is just. There is beauty in all the lineaments and branches of his character; such attractives are without a parallel: white in his divinity, red in his humanity, white in his holiness, red in his sufferings, white in his immaculate purity and innocence, red in the imputation of our sins, which were like scarlet and crimson. And, if rightly apprehended and received, this description will suit our hearts: he will appear above all others, higher than the kings of the earth. David was accounted better than ten thousand of his people; but the Root and Offspring of David, is better than ten thousand of David. It is because men are spiritually blind to his personal excellencies and office, that they

they do not admire and love him. They see no more form or comeliness in him, than a blind man sees and admires the glory of the morning star. But if we have the saving knowledge of Christ, we shall esteem all things as nothing in comparison of him, as Paul did, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Hence it comes to pass that christians who know Christ in his true character, pant after him, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. They have vehement desires after nearness to him in his holy ordinances, and therefore they seek him early and earnestly above all other searches. The spiritual knowledge of Christ in his personal properties and office, will create that love, and those desires in the heart, that nothing will satisfy but the full enjoyment of him. *As for me,* says David, *I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* Here we look through a glass, and behold but little of that glory; but compleat satisfaction arises from the vision of God in glory.

4. As he is the cause of all that which renders souls truly amiable. It is an ancient observation that when the morning star has the ascendant over other stars, its influences produce comely features upon human bodies. And though we may think it whimsical, it is as accountable as many other known

facts; for it is a known fact, that objects may be so striking to the imagination as to cause uncomely features; and why they should not have an equal influence to produce the contrary, I believe none can tell.

THERE is an adorning which is proper to believers, a comeliness which Christ puts upon them. He is the procuring cause of all that splendor, all the personal qualifications and endowments of mind, the apparel curiously wrought, which are worthy of esteem, and render them amiable. Whatever comeliness they have, it is Christ that beautifies them with it, Ezek. xvi. 14. And those representations of their beauty given in scripture, refer to the cause. Particularly such as we find, Can. ii. 14. chap. iv. 3. and chap. vi. 4:

It is Christ that adorns them with a justifying righteousness; the garment of pure gold, that renders them acceptable to God. It is his righteousness imputed, that is the ground of their title to peace, pardon, and a whole salvation. They have no righteousness of their own, but what is as filthy rags: but Jesus Christ has brought in a new covenant righteousness, for the justification of all them that believe: And hence he is said to *be made righteous*

eousness to them; and is called *their righteousness**. Hence that of the apostle, Rom. v. 18. On this account it is said that we are *accepted in the beloved*. † Believers are so united to him, as to be looked upon and considered in him, on which account the Father is well pleased with them.

AGAIN; it is Christ that beautifies them with the graces of his holy spirit. This comeliness makes them glorious within: it falls not within the ken of a carnal eye, but is hid with Christ in God. Carnal men do not know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do know it, highly value it. It is a beauty that does not make a fair shew in the flesh, but is in *the hidden man of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* § Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great prophet in the covenant of grace, offers this grace to sinners by the ministry of his word, and makes it effectual, by the dispensation of the holy spirit. He causes the light of the glorious gospel to break into their minds and hearts, by the influences of the spirit opening their understandings. Hereby they are convinced of their sin and misery. Hereby he sets home the word of the gospel upon

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their

* Isa. xlv. 24. and 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Eph. i. 6.

§ Rom. ii. 29.

their hearts and consciences, and demonstrates to them, to be the infallible word of the eternal God. Hereby he manifests himself, and the Father to them: And as a king in Zion, he makes the ordinances of his kingdom effectual, to renew, subdue, and sanctify them. This is the day of his power, in which they are made willing to return from all sin to the living God. Thus he separates them from the world lying in wickedness, and constitutes them members of his invisible kingdom. Henceforth therefore, they are no more of the world, tho' they are in it: they are pilgrims and strangers in it, but true and lively members of his mystical body: In this way, Christ adorns his people with the fruits of the spirit, which are *love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* † These effects of divine influence, are the adorning of the inner man, which are a sweet favor to God, and a qualification for the inheritance of the saints in light. And in this way Christ beautifies their life and conversation. Hence christians are represented as wearing *chains of gold about their necks*, to the honor of Christ, and as an evidence of their christianity. These together, make out the garments of salvation, and the robe of righteousness, spoken of, Isa. lxi. 10. These are *the clean linen, which is the right-*

eousness

† Gal. v. 22. 23.

teousness of the Jaints. It is rich and splendid cloathing, like the priestly garments. The brightness of the sun is compared to them. Such is the beauty of all true christians, who are cloathed with the righteousness of Christ to recommend them to the favor of God, and are sanctified by his spirit, and have the image of God renewed in them.

5. As to his constancy in performing all his offices. The morning star is not only beautiful to behold, but performs a constant revolution in its own orbit. And, as Jesus Christ is the perfection of beauty, and the cause of all the beauty of the faints, so he is constant in the discharge of his several offices, without intermission, without interruption. True indeed his shining appearance in them, is sometimes obstructed by the clouds of ignorance and unbelief, by false teachers, and the powers of darkness. Satan and his army hate him, and his glorious appearance; but he maintains his government, in the kingdom of providence and grace, against all opposition: None can obstruct his motions and operations, nor put out the glorious splendor of his shining. He continues *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*: the same in his person, the same in his love, the same in his care, the same in his offices for his people throughout all generations,

nerations. Where he has undertaken to teach, as the great prophet of the church, he maintains the authority of a teacher, and will teach in the best way, and at the best time. Yea, the very means that Satan uses to darken the truth, he will improve to greater light. It often looks darkest just before day, but when the morning star shines, it lightens the whole heavens. So sometimes things appear dark in the church, but Christ in performing his constant revolutions, appears and scatters the darkness. So he did in the reformation from popery, by Luther and Calvin. So he has done in all revivals since, from time to time, and he is still in office, and will come again at the appointed time, the time which infinite wisdom has appointed. Eternal truth has fixed the time, and therefore it is a time that cannot be forgotten nor adjourned. And though clouds may intercept the light in one place, or to one person, the light may be seen at another place, or by another person; in the set time to favor Zion, the temple shall be built in the city of David. And, as Christ maintains his office as a prophet, so he is a priest forever. God the father has declared, in a way of divine testimony by the mouth of David, that he should be a priest immutably, in his own person, until all the ends of his acting in that character should be perfected, Heb. vii. 17. And

as Christ has an everlasting priesthood, he is a continual ground of hope : for, in this character he is a surety to God for us, to ratify the new covenant, and to take effectual care that all the requirements be answered. He never dies out of his office, as the priests under the law did, but abides forever in the execution of it ; and so he has a never-failing priesthood, which cannot pass away from him to another : but he continues to carry it on at his fathers right hand in heaven, by appearing before him as *a priest upon his throne*, Zech. vi. 13. There he ever lives to make intercession for us. Having made atonement by his sacrifice, he is exalted in his human nature, and perpetually abides in the highest dignity and authority for the compleating of his office.—Having purchased this right, he is King forever, and so will secure the application of the benefits of his purchase to all his people. For he sitteth King and head over all things for that end. He stands at the right hand of the father, ready to plead his righteous cause, and the cause of his church ; and is forever able and ready to subdue their spiritual enemies, to rule in them, and reign over them ; to restrain and conquer all his and their enemies.—These offices he will constantly exercise until the time of his kingdom and patience is over.

Herod and Pontius Pilate, arminians and antinomi-

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ans, may hate his character and operations in the church ; but they can never put out his light. If they should be permitted for a season, yet hereafter *he shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* The clouds will then be his chariot, his pavilion, and his throne. He will then come in a manner agreeably to the dignity of his person, and the purposes of his coming. And even until that time, the more his enemies fight, the more sensibly he will prevail.

USE I. Learn hence, the grace and kindness of God, manifested in the care he takes of his church. We are in a dark world, and surrounded with many difficulties and dangers ; we have abundance of darkness in our souls, and often know not what course to steer. But God has taken care of us, to give us the morning star to steer by. And the light of this star is sufficient to guide and encourage us, as a mean, to carry us along in this world of darkness and dangers. If we are bound heaven-ward, there is no steering the right course without him : but if we follow his guidance, we shall not abide in darkness. There is sufficient light in this morning star to steer by, to avoid rocks and quicksands : light enough to make us stedfast in the faith of the gospel ; light and grace enough to make us upright in heart, and stedfast in holy living.

II. LEARN hence, they are happy who follow the Lord Jesus Christ; for they follow the true light, the bright and morning star. He is the day-star from on high, and when he arises in their souls, and sends forth his light, it will dissipate all obscurity or doubt, so far as is necessary. When we follow Christ, we follow the true light: he came to be a light to the gentiles, and if we come to him, we may see the light: There is sufficient encouragement to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing light. To whom should we look but unto him? Which way should we turn our eyes but to the light? We partake of the sun's light, and see and admire the morning star; and so we may of the grace of Christ, without money, and without price. If we keep close to Christ, if we have our eye fixed on this Morning Star, and mind our duty, and his revealed will, we shall not stumble, but go on our way rejoicing. It is because men walk in the way of their own heart, and the sight of their own eyes, that they tremble and stumble:

III. THOSE justly and miserably perish for ever, who having the light of the morning star, will not follow him. It is a blessed and invaluable privilege to enjoy the light of the gospel, much greater

ter than the light of the sun and stars of heaven. The reality & excellency of divine things are brought from under the veil of Moses, and the mysteries of the gospel now lie open. But sinners most unworthily abuse and despise this benefit; they wander and stumble as in the dark, and are void of true peace; as men in a dark pit. The way they steer leads to utter darkness, and yet their case and misery is not known in its true colours. Though Christ offers them a remedy for all their maladies, and brings light to shew them their case, to dispel their darkness, to direct, beautify, and comfort them, yet they *choose darkness rather than light*. It suits their hearts to live in darkness, and to steer by guess, though rocks and quicksands are all around them. But their privileges must bring a more woful condemnation upon them, than if they had lived in heathen darkness, or had lived under the darker dispensation of Moses, Heb. x. 28, 29. To continue in sin, against the light and law of Moses, was an heinous offence, and deserved a very sore punishment; but to refuse the light of the gospel, and sin wilfully under it, is far more heinous, and the punishment must be far more grievous; for God has allotted different degrees of punishments unto different degrees and aggravations of sin.

IV. LET all that have perceived the beauty, enjoyed the pleasure of the light of this star, and had his special conduct and influences, be excited more and more to look unto him. He is not only the efficient cause of our first believing, but is the finisher and the conductor of our faith. He is gone before, and calls us to look, and follow hard after him. O let us look forward, be continually looking off from sin and self, and the allurements and terrors of this world, and from every thing that would pull us back and dishearten us. Let us look to the Morning Star, to the incarnate God, the suffering Saviour, that we may derive strength and beauty from him. Let us follow his most perfect pattern in every grace and virtue, in all the fruits of love and holiness. Let us look to him to increase, carry on, and perfect our faith, and at length to crown it with all its blessed fruits and effects.

O that this might be the business of every day, of every sabbath day, and emphatically the business of every sacrament day. *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* The Redeemer is come to Zion; the day-star is risen, and brings light. Christ is the fountain of light, he is risen as the morning light. O that every communicant might have some token for good,

that he appears for us. Though darkness should cover the earth, darkness that may be felt should overspread the people, yet, O that these communicants, ministers and others, might have light at the same time! And let us not only receive, but reflect the light borrowed from the morning star. As children of the light, we must shine as lights in the world. If the morning star is risen, and we behold its beauty, and feel its gladdening influences, let us, not only with our lips, but in our lives, return the praise to his glory,

AND O! that the light of the glorious gospel, that light which discovers so much of God and his good will to men, might so shine in all the golden candlesticks, and this in particular, as to invite others to come and join themselves to the Lord, that they might have the benefit, and feel the renewing, grateful influences of this light. O that the beauties of holiness among us, might be a powerful attractive by which Christ shall have a willing people brought to him in the day of his power. O that we could lift up our eyes round about, and see them coming, see the fields already white to the harvest! The light of holiness and righteousness shining in our life and conversation, the light of love, unity and goodness, is the way to bring forward the light
of

of that glory which will be seen in the latter day. This may bring in savages to the same family, to submit to the laws of the same kingdom, and put themselves under the tuition of it.

AND these things would greatly increase the pleasure and honor of communion seasons, and exalt the name of him, who, as morning star, is the forerunner of eternal day. That day is at hand, and a glorious day it will be to them that are prepared for it: a day, in which God will rain fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest upon the wicked; but a fair and bright day, and reviving as the rising sun to the godly. Oh! his second coming will be a glorious sun-rising, in which the upright shall have dominion. Let us wait for it, more than they that wait for the morning. Let us look up, and look forward to that day, when at the communion table. This will be the way to engage our hearts, with the most profound reverence and humility, to join the angels and twenty four elders about the throne, saying, *worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing.* A M E N.

S E R M O N

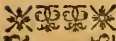
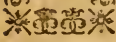


SERMON XVII.

*God's Dispensations, at times,
unsearchable.*

Z E C H A R I A H X I V . 6 .

*And it shall come to pass in that day,
that the light shall not be clear, nor
dark.*

 E R H A P S Divines have not more
P different sentiments about any portion of
 scripture, than this now read unto you,
together with its context. It is very certain by the
phrase in that day, the prophet points at a particu-
lar time ; and by his saying it will be a day that
shall be neither clear nor dark, he speaks of some
time that should be very remarkable. Some sup-
pose it refers to a time of great calamity among the
Jews.

Jews, when Antiochus besieged Jerusalem, took it by storm, slew eighty thousand in three days, took forty thousand prisoners, and sold as many more. But such a time of distress could not be called a day that was neither clear nor dark, for the light of that day was terrible darkness, thick darkness, darkness that might be felt. Others suppose it refers to the state of the primitive church, in which there was not a clear knowledge of the doctrines of christianity, nor a total ignorance of them; for there were many heresies in that day, and many continued in their infidelity, and the light of the gospel was greatly clouded thereby. Others suppose it refers to the end of the world, and these render it, "there shall not be light" and they suppose the word translated *clear*, means precious, dear, &c. And as sun, moon, and stars are very dear to the inhabitants of this world, those luminaries shall cease to shine and afford their benign influences, according to 2. Pet. iii. 10. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.* The day when God shall fold up the heavens as a vesture, and they shall be changed.

BUT

BUT, leaving these different interpretations to the curious, I think the prophet aims at the changing, mixed state of things respecting the church, at any period of time whatever, especially at those dispensations that are the least explicable by men. For one while God is represented as gathering all nations against Jerusalem to battle: and presently he changes the scene, goes forth, and fights against these nations, as he fought against the enemies of the church aforetime. And as it has been, so it is, and will be. The state of the church, and of believers, is a changing, mixed state, and sometimes divine dispensations towards God's people are such as no man can fully unfold. *The light is neither clear nor dark*; neither perfect peace, nor constant trouble; neither dark night, nor clear sunshine. Though there is a divine harmony in events, yet they are not fully understood by those to whom they happen; they do not see what God is about in them. Hence

WE may gather this truth, viz. Divine dispensations towards the church, and towards particular christians, are many times inexplicable.

The light is neither clear, nor dark. We are called to observe the divine government, but when we view it, there appears such a mixture of light and darkness

darkness, that we are non-plus'd, and know not what to say or what to conclude. How could Abraham, at the time, understand his being call'd to take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him for a burnt offering? It seem'd directly against the law of God forbidding murder, inconsistent with natural affection to his son, and inconsistent with God's promise, that *in Isaac his seed should be call'd*. How inexplicable are these difficulties, by the dint of reason! He could not dispute the command of God, nor could he see how the promise should be made good, or he should be free from the guilt of the most unnatural murder. So, who could have thought of the designs of providence in bringing Esther to be queen? Had she been recommended to Ahasuerus for a wife, he would, no doubt, have reject'd the motion with disdain, as she was a Jewess, and one of the daughters of the captivity. But providence over-ruled so as to bring her in unto the king, and God dispos'd his heart to take her to wife; but who then thought it was *because the Lord loved his people*, and design'd it for the preservation of the church? And who could have thought that Saul's inveterate enmity and rage against the christian religion, should prove the occasion of God's meeting him with a remarkable conversion? One would be apt to think, when

God saw his venomous spirit, breathing death to the christians that had fled from persecution, he would have said, "let him alone until his iniquity is full:" but, in the very time when his enmity boiled outrageously, he stopped him in the way, and Christ appeared in his glory and with his grace unto him. Upon this, no doubt, he might think that henceforward he should enjoy a scene of undisturbed repose; but instead of this, he enters upon a new warfare, not only from within, but from without—he becomes a very great sufferer for Christ, frequent imprisonments, and often in the dungeon of death. Perhaps scarce a year after his conversion, without suffering some hardships or other for his religion. Wherever he went, whether by land or water, he was in perils, exposed to perils of all sorts. And is not such a dispensation very mysterious? The promises of the gospel relate to the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. Under the old testament, the promises were mostly of temporal blessings. Was it not therefore so much the more perplexing to him that had been trained up in that religion, as soon as he was converted, to enter upon a scene of sufferings for Christ? But so it has been, and so it will many times be, that the dispensations of God are unsearchable. . God's ways towards his people are like the deep waters, which cannot be fathomed,
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like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked; so that the most we can say is what the Psalmist has said before us, *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path is in deep waters, and thy footsteps are not known.* Yet

WE may condescend upon some particulars now we are entered upon the subject, and consider two or three things especially: one is, some of those dispensations which appear unsearchable, or in which the light is neither clear, nor dark. And the other is, wherein, and wherefore divine dispensations towards God's people are neither clear, nor dark.

I. CONSIDER some of those dispensations towards God's people, which appear unsearchable; or which are so variable and mixed, that the light is neither clear, nor dark, And here

1. WHEN there is a seeming contradiction between the promise of God's word, and the dealings of his providence. This has often been the case with the church, and with particular saints in it. When God has promised some great salvation to his people, the first step towards it has appeared to be a step backwards. Did not the Lord send Moses to the Israelites when they were in Egypt, saying, *I*

will bring you up out of the afflictions of Egypt, into a land flowing with milk and honey? But when Pharaoh was desired to let them go, he answered them roughly, ordered Moses and Aaron to get to their burdens, and required the usual tale of brick from the people, without the usual allowance of straw, in order, no doubt, to break their spirits with hard labor, or have them exposed to punishment. This was a dispensation so contrary to the happy tidings that God had sent them, that Moses himself could not see through it, and therefore he returned to the Lord, and expostulated the case with him, and said, *Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me?* q. d. Is this the promised deliverance of thy people? How shall I reconcile this dispensation with the commission thou gavest me? Is this God's coming down to deliver Israel? Must I, who hoped to be a blessing, become a scourge to them? And so when God is coming out in ways of mercy and salvation to particular persons, the methods he takes to bring it about, may seem quite contrary thereto, and they may be ready to say his mercy is clean gone, and he has forgot to be gracious. Their corruptions may hence take occasion to rise, and say with the prophet Jeremiah, *O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.* It may be they are upon some important errand,

errand, and apprehend that God sent them, and promised to put words into their mouth, and to enable them to pull down sin, and to build up and to plant. But they meet with sad disappointments and sufferings, instead of success and prosperity: Will they not be ready to say, Lord, thou hast sent me, and encouraged me that I should have success in this great undertaking: why then dost thou not stand by me in it? Thus the church, and so particular saints may seem to themselves on the brink of ruin, at a time when they expected, according to the word of God, that salvation was at the door. And such encouragements and disappointments coming one after another, renders the light neither clear, nor dark. Faith is apt to shake at such a time, and the hearts of christians will tremble. The word of the Lord is sure, it is a tried word, but he clothes himself with darkness in the dispensations of his providence.

2. WHEN the church and particular christians be most engaged for the cause of Christ, their endeavors are attended with great disappointments. This is often the case; people have been greatly engaged, and the power of divine grace has been very conspicuous among them, and all their religious affairs are in a good posture, but the Lord permits
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some perfidious Sennacheribs to pour in an army of proud boasters upon them, and to spread a dark cloud over all the glory. Thus when Luther and others broke off from the romish church, and zealously engaged for a reformation, and things appeared very encouraging, pretently there rose up some that murmured, stirred up strife, run into libertinism and other corrupt principles, until their religion became mere phrenzy, and they turned true christianity out of their whole scheme: and that was the reason why Luther called them Devils, possessed with worse devils. And so the reformation in the days of Edward the sixth, the young Josiah of his time: notwithstanding his pious zeal in demolishing the old seats of Idolatry, and promoting the pure worship of God, yet, all the hopeful appearance soon vanished away when queen Mary got the government into her hands. And it has generally been so, when God has engaged the hearts of his saints to encourage and promote a work of his grace among a people, it soon meets with some remarkable hindrance. We may well say, in such a case, with the prophet Ezekiel, concerning the wheels, *and their appearance and work was as it were, a wheel within a wheel.* The disposals of providence, in such cases, seem to us intricate, perplexed, and unaccountable, though they have been wisely
ordered

ordered for the best. When we go about to compass the circle of providence, we may well be struck with amazement, and cry, *O the height and the depth of his counsels!* If prophets and apostles wondered, well may we. And yet, what think ye of Zerubbabel? The prophet Zechariah had a very comfortable vision for the people of God, that their temple should be rebuilt, and their city replenished, and that the hands of Zerubbabel should lay the foundation and the top stone. But presently upon it, rose up fraud, violence and sacrilege, which is the worst of fraud. So when multitudes were converted by the apostles, and the christian church began to flourish, to take root and spring up, and converts flourished like the morning dew. Philip's ministry did wonders; he broke the power of satan, cured a distempered world, and *the people with one accord gave heed to the things which he spake.* But in a little time, they who should have been engaged in promoting the common cause of christianity, were engaged in dissentions, intrigues, and party differences, until they parted one from another: and the church soon swarmed *with false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.* Now, in such cases as these, do not the dispensations of divine providence seem very much mixed and intricate? After hopeful beginnings,
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and great prospects of christianity bearing all before it, is it not strange that God should permit men in disguise to rise up and undermine the kingdom of Christ?

3. WHEN times of great light and grace are closely followed with great darkness and distress. Would it not seem very strange if God should pour out his spirit for the awakening and reformation of multitudes in a land, and for the saving conversion of many here and there, if he should greatly encourage ministers in their work, by observing the good fruit of their labors, and presently follow the same with desolation and some signal calamity? An instance like this might be given from the history of God's grace in Ireland, and the dreadful cloud that followed it. Mr. FLEMING speaks of the most remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit there, that ever had been since the days of the apostles, which was followed by the most cruel Irish massacre, wherein one hundred and fifty thousand protestants were butchered in one day. And at other times, men may put on the fair face of religion, and profess to be zealous promoters of a work of God, while they only wait for an opportunity to fetch a home thrust against those that bear a faithful testimony against their sins. Who ever made a great-

er shew of piety and devotion; who ever more zealous for the form of godliness, more frequent in calling fasts and solemn assemblies, than the people in Jeremiah's time? Yea, who more affected with the word when it was read unto them? *They heard all the words, and were sore afraid*; both one and another: even *the princes looked one upon another*, not knowing what to do. But presently the king cut the roll in pieces and burnt it in the fire. They also brought in a false accusation against Jeremiah, and with that they took him and cast him into prison, thrust him into a dark and cold, damp and dirty dungeon, and by that means brought themselves into a greater confusion and consternation than ever. But suppose the reality of true religion in heart and life, and great comforts with it, yet how soon may this be followed with distress and darkness? Consider how Christ encouraged and comforted his disciples, promised his holy spirit to convince and instruct the world, to glorify him by what he should communicate of and from him, also to increase their knowledge, succeed their prayers and endeavors: But then he tells them that they should be presently scattered one from another, and deserted of him too; he would leave them, and they would leave him, through fear of suffering. Now, was not this a day that was neither clear, nor dark; a dispensation

that is truly intricate and unsearchable ; that after such great grace and light, there should great darkness immediately follow it ? And so particular churches may share the same fate. What says he who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, to the church of Ephesus ? *I know thy works, and thy labor and diligence in my cause ; and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil ; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, but they are false teachers, and therefore thou hast found them liars ; and hast borne and had patience with thine enemies, and for my name's sake hast thou labored, and hast not fainted.* Yet, what a rebuke is given to this eminent church ? *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love : thou art decayed and declined in thy first love, and art greatly under the influence of carnal motives, and dost not honor me by any upright and faithful conduct as formerly Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* When a church has been distinguished by the grace of God, as Ephesus was, to have fallen away, and, as it were, to force Christ to come out in a way of judgment against them ; yea, to come suddenly and surprizingly upon them ; what could such a church do,

do, or think? We may well suppose the mixed and changing scene would be surprizing, and very unaccountable to them.

4. WHEN the wicked devour the righteous. One would be ready to think it should go well with the righteous, and they should always eat the fruit of their doings, and that riches and honor should be with them, and in their houses should be much treasure. Yet we find the case very often quite otherwise, *when the wicked spring as the grass, and when the workers of iniquity do flourish*, in pomp and power, and outward prosperity; when they succeed in their enterprizes, as if they were God's peculiar favorites. This David takes notice of in his day: *I have seen, said he, the wicked in great power; and spreading himself like a green bay-tree.* They may carry all before them with an high hand, and seem to be firmly fixed, and finely flourishing, and make a shew of religion too, while the truly humble souls are poor, and oppressed of their neighbours. The rich may be permitted to take away from those to whom they should give; to squeeze those whom they know cannot right themselves; yea, they may take pride and pleasure in trampling upon the weak, and impoverishing those who are poor already. Or God may permit men to grow rich *by robbing the*

hireling of his wages; by holding back part, or not paying at the time agreed upon; and so they may increase by oppressing their fellow servants,—by not paying their just debts. These seem very strange dispensations towards the righteous and the wicked, and were a strong temptation to the psalmist: he was almost ready to think that the children of God were no happier than the wicked. By such dispensations he was tempted to quit his religion, and give up all expectations of benefit by it. And who can account for such dark dispensations as these, when they see the ungodly share the least in the troubles and calamities of this life, and have the greatest share in its comforts? We are ready to say, *it profits a man nothing, if he should delight himself in God.* The workers of iniquity increase in wealth and honor in the world, and the hands of the godly are weakened in their godliness. Such a scene as this is so exceeding dark and mysterious, that, although it is common, yet many good men have been stumbled at it; they have been ready to think it would warrant them to call the proud happy, though in reality, their pride and prosperity is but a preface to their fall.

6. WHEN the grand adversary is suffered to counterfeit grace, and with so much exactness in
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in times of reformation, that some christians do not see the difference between his counterfeits, and saving grace. That this is fact, is evident from scripture and observation. In the apostles day, when the doctrine of justification by an imputed righteousness only, was preached and received, and many were converted, and rejoiced in that way with an holy joy: others also had their religious frames full as high under a very different motive: The former rejoiced because God was glorified in the salvation of sinners, in a way that excluded boasting and subdued sin: the latter rejoiced that Christ was their Saviour, and they might continue in sin. And so antinomianism has sprung up from time to time in the most remarkable reformations, and made the greatest shew of religious frames and affections, to the great hindrance of real christianity. Hence persons of glaring immorality, such as the unfaithful, the intemperate, the proud and contentious, and whisperers and backbiters, are voted for eminent christians. Why? Because at every returning season, their religious affections run high; and besides, they generally talk about religion the most of any persons, and will exceed some real christians in talking upon christian experiences; but they are the people that practically despise the letter of the scripture, and set up to vindicate a right for eve-

ry one to become public teachers and exhorters. Now, is it not an inexplicable dispensation, that satan should be suffered so far to impose upon the godly by false affections of hypocrites, as to make them receive them as eminent christians, when they declare the contrary by their daily conversation? Religious frames will serve with some for high christi- anity, instead of the supreme love of God, fear and reverence of his majesty, and universal obedience to all his commands. In this way the most awful errors have come into the church, exceeding any other way. And these errors will have such an efficacy to stir up high frames, looking so much like gracious affections, that, *if it were possible*, satan would hereby *deceive the very elect*. JOSEPHUS speaks of such in former times, and there have been more or less of them in all remarkable reformations, who set up for the most eminent and spiritual; and these have their agents and emissaries busy in all places to draw the people after them. How unaccountable is such a dispensation as this, in, and upon, eminent revivals of a work of grace! That the devil and his instruments should so work upon the imagination, and work up the heart into religious appearances, as to deceive poor souls. Yea, that the delusion should be carried so far, not only to deceive many by it, but would fatally and finally deceive

deceive the very elect, were they not kept or recovered by the power of efficacious grace. So when Moses wrought miracles for the conversion of Pharaoh, the magicians likewise with their enchantments cast down every one his rod; and so God suffers the lying spirit to do strange things in times of revival, to bring about his own designs.

6. It seems a mystery in providence that some men of great understanding should unite with self-deceivers in opposing the efficacy of the gospel. Men usually run into one of two extremes in their sentiments about the doctrines of religion, and the efficacy of them; and oftentimes those extremes meet in opposition to true religion. I believe most of the wise and learned world set up all their schemes for acceptance with God upon the foundation of the works of the law; but other self-deceivers are those evangelical hypocrites, who profess the highest approbation of an imputed righteousness, and are so afraid of the law, or think so meanly of it as not to take it as a rule. And how little soever these two sorts of persons value one another, they agree in this viz. to oppose the real efficacy of the gospel upon the heart. This seems to be a strange thing, that men of sagacity and genius, as many of both sorts be, under advantages to examine into things, should

should after all, stand out against Christ. Yet, so it is commonly. *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are called. But God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.* One would be apt to think that men of wisdom and learning might understand and engage in the cause of Christ: *but the wisdom of the world is enmity with God*; and therefore Christ is to them a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence. The wise philosophers of all ages, in the pale of the christian church, have generally mistook the way, and introduced that moral philosophy into seminaries, which tends to mislead others: they do not teach their pupils the humbling way of the gospel, but generally lay the foundation of all true virtue and religion in self-love: And amidst all their different opinions, and private differences, they have generally agreed, some few excepted, to rack their inventions for the founding and upholding false religion. Surely this is an inexplicable dispensation, that God should suffer most of the great, and of the learned part of the world to oppress and despise his own cause.

7. IT is a mystery in providence when those that have been eminently zealous for the truth, turn with
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the times, in opposition thereto. Some that with great zeal have contended for the faith once delivered to the saints, and have, with fervency, been promoting the cause of truth, have turned about and pulled down what they built up. Either the plausibility of seducers, or the love of the world, has led them to think lightly of the truth, and to fall from their own stedfastness. From burning zeal for the great truths of God's word, they seem to be unhinged and unsettled on a sudden, and know not where to rest, but, like a wave of the sea, are driven with the wind and tossed. Once nothing would do but the strictest adherence to those truths which the world hated and opposed, but now they do not love to hear much about what has been always controverted, and will be controverted by men of corrupt minds, and which, for that reason, must often be explained and vindicated. Now, when this is the case, it is matter of great stumbling, and nothing more likely to make men think there is no truth in any religion at all. One zealous person that shifts from side to side, seldom falls alone, but others about him are, like children, easily imposed upon, carried hither and thither, like clouds in the air, with such doctrines as have no truth nor solidity in them. Paul tells us that such persons use a great deal of devilish art to compass their designs, Eph.

iv. 14. Their zeal is a disguise, to compass selfish and wicked designs, covered over with the specious pretence of promoting the glory of God. Who, alas! can unfold this mystery of providence, that God should suffer those that appeared the most zealous for the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, to whirl about, and become as zealous for error!

How much of these mixed and mysterious providences of God may be seen in our day, is for us to enquire. There are moral signs of the times, by which wise and upright men may make moral prognostications, may so far understand the methods of providence, as from thence to take their measures, and to know what Israel ought to do. It has been the undoing of many, that they will not discern and attend to moral signs, especially when the kingdom of Christ has a dark aspect. O let us be attentive to discover and understand the times! Through inattention and proud selfishness, men will not hearken and discern; and therefore they *know not their time, as the fishes taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time.* How often have men found their bane, where they expected their bliss! Let us then never be secure, especially in a day of mysterious dispensations; but let us be on the search,

lest strangers devour our strength, and we know it not.

ASK whether satan is not remarkably bestirring himself against the church? Whether it is not manifest here, and elsewhere, that he has power given him, to instil prejudices in mens minds against the truth; yea, to stir up many to speak lightly of those great truths which they have professed the strictest regard to? And what may we judge from thence? Ans. His more secret working in time past was more dangerous than these open and outrageous assaults, for, now all true christians may see him clearly, and are warned hereby to make ready; for the devil is come down in great wrath, because he knows his time is short. He is now coming forth with his utmost efforts against the church, and will, probably, soon assemble a great army to mar the prosperity of the church for a short time. The greater his rage is against the Lord, and against his anointed, the sooner the time will come, when Christ will put him under his feet.

BUT cannot we plainly see, in these times, the most hopeful appearances and encouragements of good, strangely baffled, and issue in darkness? And is not this a sign of some near approach of distress?

Ans. Yes: we see the truth is amazingly deserted, and many are falling away, and falling off from the cause of Christ, and embracing false religion, and erroneous principles. - But this is a sign that help is near by. When Jerusalem's troubles were very great, God promised to *plead the cause of his people*, Isa. li. 22, and *to take out of their hand the cup of trembling*. When the enemies of the church have got to the height, the year of the redeemed will come. When the church is in a forsaken condition, and begins to say her wound is incurable, then God says, Jer. xxx. 17, *I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, because they called thee an outcast*.

To close this discourse: it must be confessed that the present appearance of things is very mixed, and many providences seem to be evident prefaces of a dreadful storm coming upon church and state. And in the prospect of it, we have reason to tremble for fear of God, and ought to be afraid of his judgments. It should touch us with tender concern, lest the dark cloud should burst out with thunder and ruin upon us. But then, the holy scripture has made a strange connexion between darkness and light, times of distress, and times of enlargement. When God's people seem to be on the brink of ru-
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in, and are expecting to be abandoned and rejected as reprobate silver, God has been wont to avenge what has been done amiss against his people, and to bring down and destroy their enemies. He has been wont to take occasion, from such remarkable dispensations, to amend what he finds amiss in his church, to bring his people unanimously to concur in purifying his house, to bring them to repentance, and purge out the old leaven, and to bless his people with peace, Zeph. iii. 8—13.

S E R M O N



SERMON XVIII.

*Wherein God's Dispensations,
are unsearchable.*

Z E C H A R I A H X I V . 6 .

*And it shall come to pass in that day,
that the light shall not be clear, nor
dark.*

*W*E have already shewn that divine dispensations towards the church and people of God are often inexplicable, or so variable and mixed, that the light is neither clear nor dark. And further we have observed, that when there is a seeming contradiction between promises and providences, when the church most engaged in God's cause meets with the greatest disappointments, when

when times of great light and grace, are closely followed with great darkness and distress, when the wicked devour the righteous, when the grand adversary is permitted to counterfeit grace with so much exactness in times of reformation, that christians should not discern between his counterfeits and saving grace, when men of genius and great penetration should unite with self-deceivers in opposing the efficacy of the gospel, and when those that have been eminently zealous for the truth, turn with the times in opposition thereto: When either of these dispensations are exercised toward the people of God, providence seems unsearchable, so variable and mixed that the light is neither clear, nor dark.

II. WE come now to consider wherein, or on what account such divine dispensations are unsearchable, or the light is neither clear, nor dark.

To this it might be replied, that the matter of the dispensations of heaven is often so mixed as to be inexplicable: The way and manner of God's bringing about his purposes, and accomplishing his faithful promises cannot be seen through by men; the method is unaccountable. Natural causes and appearances seem to shew the contrary to the design, as when God promised that a son should be born to

Abraham

Abraham, and that a spiritual seed, shou'd in due season be raised to him, from among the idolatrous heathen, who were then looked on with contempt. When God designs some great and glorious event, he often takes that way towards its accomplishment that appears to be contrary to the thing intended, and so darkness is the way to light, and light the way to darkness:

BUT let us consider some particulars by way of answer to the question stated. Here then

1. DIVINE dispensations towards God's people may be mixed and inexplicable, as to the particular cause or reason of them. The holy attributes of God many times appear with a sanctifying glory to believing souls, when they are ignorant of the special reason of such and such particular providences: There may be reasons of state, which Christ keeps hid from his dearest servants, while he imparts to them the blessings of his covenant, and the sweet pleasure of holy fellowship with the Father, and with himself. The reasons why he orders this, and permits that to befall his people, and does not govern second causes, whether natural or moral, otherwise, at a particular conjuncture of affairs; the reason why he smiles on the means of grace, and causes his people

ple to triumph at one time, and denies the blessing, and frowns at another time; the reason why he sends help and salvation to one part of his church, and sends disappointment, and baffles the expectations of another; the reason why providence seems many times to counter-act the written word; why the ways of Zion should mourn, while the counsels of selfish and designing men prosper: I say, as to the particular causes and reasons of these, and many other things which are under the divine government, we may well say with young Elihu, Job xxxvii. 23. *Touching the Almighty, we can not find him out.* We can not trace the steps he takes in providence; *His way is in the sea,* and we can not give an account of the reasons of his proceedings: they are like the way of a ship in the sea, which can not be tracked. We know that he does all things wisely and well, but the special reasons of such dispensations we cannot fathom with the line and plummet of any finite understanding.

2. DIVINE dispensations towards God's people may be inexplicable, as to the correspondence of them. There is perfect order and agreement, perfect fitness and proportion of one dispensation with another in the divine government: but poor, weak and ignorant man is so short-sighted as not to see

this agreement and beauty. The dispensations are so incomprehensible and mysterious, that we are ready to say as Nicodemus in another case, *how can these things be!* What do these dispensations mean? Where is the harmony and agreeableness of them? Who will undertake to open the correspondent proportions of one dispensation with another? Many times things are so variable and mixed in providence, that we are ready to say, wherein does the holiness and glory of God appear? Does infinite wisdom and righteousness, truth and goodness, sit at helm, and steer the ship? Are not these variable dispensations without form and due proportion? We may see God is at work; we may hear him speaking in this and that providence, and not be able to see at present, the wisdom and holiness, truth and faithfulness of God peculiarly manifested in his dealings. Though there is a divine harmony and connexion between what God is now doing in his church, and what he will do in time to come; and though all the holy and glorious perfections of his nature harmonize in these great and variable proceedings, yet the beauty of the whole is often out of our sight.

3. DIVINE dispensations are sometimes inexplicable as to the necessity of them. Sometimes God's
people

people are in manifold temptations, many sorts of adversities and afflictions from different quarters, personal, domestic, and public, which bring on great heaviness of spirit. And these dispensations are necessary for them. God does not afflict his people willingly, but acts with judgment in proportion to their needs. There is a conveniency and fitness; yea, an absolute necessity in the case; they never come but when we need them, never stay any longer than needs must. And yet, such is our ignorance and blindness, that many times we see no need of them, and perceive no special benefit by them. Pride and self-ignorance have an awful hand in our not being sensible of the necessity; and hence we can see them necessary for some in the same house, or some in the same church, but no special need for ourselves. No; as to us, and the necessity we had, these various dispensations are very dark.

4. DIVINE dispensations are sometimes inexplicable, as to the changes of them. Christ, the great head of the church, is the *same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. He ever lives and rules to effect the same original designs. But his dispensations of providence are very changeable, and often varying, even when the state and condition of his church and people, to appearance, is nearly the same. The church has

passed through many changes, and will pass through many more ; but God is unchangeable in his Being; counsels and perfections. Yea, his love is everlasting, his covenant and promises are unchangeable, but he seems to hasten from one change to another in his dispensations. Particularly ; how various are divine dispensations respecting the answers of the prayers of his people. At one time, when the people of God present and prosecute their desires to God, by prayer, for averting judgments, and pouring down blessings upon the church, and for its enlargement, though there are never so many difficulties in the way, yet they shall get an answer of peace, and in abundance speedily. At other times God holds them long upon their knees, begging and praying for private and public blessings, and they are held in suspense. Yea, though they are admitted and accepted at the throne of grace, it may be long before the blessing comes down. Sometimes God allows his people to hold him fast in prayer, and at other times he seems to keep them at a distance, and to be deaf to their intercessions, for the removing judgments, and taking up the controversy which he has had with his people. Though the most eminent, such as Noah, Daniel and Job, who have been most intimate at the throne of grace, should beg for a public blessing, yet they deliver
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their own souls only. Now, in such changing dispensations as these, must we not subscribe to the words of the prophet in my text, and say, *the light is not clear, nor dark.*

5, DIVINE dispensations are sometimes inexplicable, as to the ends of them. True indeed, the last end of all dispensations of providence, as well as of creation, is the glory of God. In all that God does he has a supreme regard to himself, and value for his own infinite glory : and the summary end of that religion which the gospel requires, consists in glorifying God, 1. Cor. vi. 20. *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his.*

BUT still, God has subordinate ends to answer in his holy and wise dispensations, and these ends are usually unseen by us. What God intends to bring about by such and such a dispensation, whether it is in order to introduce a more terrible, or a more glorious scene, next in order, who can certainly tell ? Many dispensations towards the church, in several ages of the world already past, have turned out in the issue of events, very contrary to human expectations : and many things now upon the carpet,
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may be designed by infinite wisdom to effect some great and astonishing things, very cross to human projections; and the ends to be brought about are entirely unknown. Men may have many conjectures, and they may observe providence, and compare that with prophecy, and, by that means, may make very useful remarks, and tell of many things: but what present dispensations are in order to effect in the next place, and the various designs of these and those things, they know not. We may know there are many great and precious promises that are yet to be accomplished, and may really expect the increase, the glory, peace and happiness of the church to be at hand, and perhaps it is so. But whether the present clouds that are spread over church and state, are not to rise from one degree of darkness to another, until it is most terrible and universal darkness; or whether the cloud shall presently vanish away, and the light break in with great glory, before the darkest day, who certainly knows? Or, who can see the designs of heaven in the frequent disappointments we meet with, when we are flushed up with expectations of great good? Or, who can see how the darkest dispensations should have a divine influence towards the most happy events; or the most happy events should be in order, and with design to bring forward some dark scenes? Such is
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the blindness of mankind, even the best of them, that they are ready to impeach infinite wisdom, and they are apt to think that God goes a great way about, to accomplish his holy and gracious purposes.

III. WE proposed to consider wherefore God frequently dispenses things in the kingdom of providence in such an inexplicable way and manner?

AND here we may offer many things. Particularly!

I. ONE reason of such variable and mixed dispensations may be to teach men that God governs the world. Job, speaking of special providences respecting the affairs of men, says, *God doth great things past finding out, and wonders without number: Lo, he goes by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, and I perceive him not*: shewing that finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, nor comprehend the measures he takes. And Paul speaks to the same purpose: *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*. And this also is to teach us, that when the wheels are set in motion, and providence has begun to work, yet we know not what he drives at. Now, I say, were it not so, should he dispense all in the kingdom of providence, and order according to hu-
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man foresight, or according to the schemes that men lay out, this would argue that the wisdom of God in governing, is not infinite wisdom. If his thoughts were not above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways, i. e. above our comprehensions, how would he appear to be a Being of infinite perfection, as he has revealed himself to be? He could not act like himself, the Omniscient, Omnipotent, independent God, and yet poor short-sighted creatures be able perfectly to understand all the reasons, causes, necessity, and ends of his several dispensations. Should men be able to look through all the divine purposes and designs, in the many changing scenes of time, it would tend to beget in them very mean and unworthy thoughts of the divine majesty. But when he carries on the affairs of his kingdom, and hides the reasons and ends of his particular dispensations towards his people, from their observation, it shows us that his wisdom is unsearchable: And whenever his covenant-mercy and truth break through the variable and mixed dispensations, the glory of them will shine with the brighter lustre.

2. ANOTHER reason of such inexplicable dispensations, may be to detect false-hearted hypocrites. However abhorrent to nature, hypocrisy and double dealing is, yet dissimulation of the moral and religious

religious character is sadly common in the visible kingdom of Christ. They do, at sometimes especially, hide themselves under the specious pretence of eminence in christianity, and will often outdo the most in discoursing about religion. But these disguises will fall off sooner or later: though the fraud may be carried on plausibly for a while, it will be brought to light. *His wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation*, says the wise man. Art and fiction will, one time or another, be discovered. And oftentimes men's hypocrisy is detected by the mixed and unaccountable dispensations of providence. If they saw through the end and designs of providence in a day of darkness and gloominess; if they could look through all the reasons, and how one mysterious step would lead to another, and how present darkness, perhaps, would soon issue in light; if they could see how all was calculated to raise up the glory of the church, and cause the glory of Christ to rise and shine upon her, if, I say, all these things were seen, it is most probable that hypocrites would take part with her in these distressing times, and would seem to love and favor Zion. But when the Lord works out of sight; when he brings about salvation to his people in mysterious and unexpected ways, the false heartedness of dissemblers, professing zeal for godliness, is often exposed by that

means. Hypocrites very often shuffle and change sides, when distress is coming, and the clouds gather blackness, and so the Lord causes the mask to drop. *When tribulation or persecution ariseth, said Christ, because of the word, by and by they are offended.* It is no hard matter for an hypocrite to pretend a re-examination of his principles, and then to give them up: and the darker dispensations of providence grow, the more likely it will be that hypocrites will be discovered in this way. Neither is there any reason to doubt but the infinitely wise God may keep his purposes hid from true christians, in judgment to his enemies, that they might harden in sin, and fill up the measure of their iniquity.

3. ANOTHER reason of such inexplicable dispensations may be to give christians a further knowledge of themselves. There is no knowledge more necessary for men to have, than the knowledge of themselves, and perhaps scarce any thing less known by the generality. Without some measure of self-knowledge, there can be no newness of life, because the foundation of a divine newness of life is laid in humility, which arises from the knowledge of ourselves, as fallen creatures. It is for want of this, that there is so little knowledge of the evil and
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odiousness of sin ; for want of this, that there is so much self-deceit and presumption ; and for lack of this, Christ is undervalued by a proud world. Yea, it is because christians know so little of themselves, that they feel so little of sin in their hearts, and observe so little of it in their lives ; that there is so little self-loathing for all the abominations of the heart and life ; that they have no more favourable thoughts of Christ, no more thirstings after him ; no more holy and heavenly conversation ; no more holy humility, meekness, and real christianity in the christian world. Now, when God works in a mysterious way, and divine dispensations are so variable and mixed as to be inexplicable, they serve to shew christians more of themselves. These providences serve to shew them what atheism and hypocrisy are remaining in their hearts : they see and feel more of the sin of their nature, observe more of the sins of their life, take more notice of the pride and abominations of their hearts, and groan more after deliverance. So when providence threatens ruin as they were looking for prosperity ; when human props are battered down, at the time of their raised expectations of succour from that quarter, then unbelief shews itself, and they are ready to say, *surely his mercy is clean gone, and he has forgotten to be gracious.* Such dispensations dis-

cover the unbelief of the heart, in its breaking out, unawares, in language after this sort, viz. O what do all these amazing dispensations mean! I was looking for light, but behold darkness! when I looked for good, then came evil. My harp is not only hung upon the willows, but it is turned into mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep. Surely I shall soon perish, or the cause of my dear Redeemer will sink, and his deceitful enemies will triumph, if these dark clouds hang over us a little longer." Thus, by the various steps of divine providence, while God is working in the dark, as to the designs and ends in view, christians are often brought to a clearer sense of the various and abounding corruptions of their own hearts, and to meaner thoughts of themselves.

4. ANOTHER reason of such inexplicable dispensations, may be to discover and try the graces of christians. The remains of sin are so active, grace so weak, thought so confused, and there are so many distempers of soul, that christians are often in the dark about their spiritual state. And, no doubt, God often takes this method of working in the way of his providence, to discover and try their graces.

Particularly,

FAITH

FAITH is tried, and sometimes discovered hereby. This is one end the Lord has in laying his people under manifold sorrows, and bringing them into great heaviness through inexplicable dispensations, "that the trial of their faith being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise, and honor, and glory. These dark providences prove the value and strength of faith, that a believer might have the comfort of it. When all the arguments of sense, reason and experience, which used to support him, appear to be against him, no second causes smile upon him, or favor his hope, then faith is roused up, and, against all inducements to the contrary, the christian is brought to believe in hope. Not only in Abraham's case, but if error and schism are propagated in the the church, and seem to come in like a flood, or darkness, from any other quarter, spreads over the church, so that there appears no external ground to hope but Zion must become a wilderness, and Jerusalem a desolation, then christians find no rest, unless they call in the help of faith. But one design of providence in such things, is to stir up and discover faith, and to try what straits they will lay upon the word of God, to let them see whether they can look through the cloud, and see

God

God in his providence clearing away the rubbish, in order to build up Zion.

AGAIN; these dispensations are for the trial of patience. Christians are apt to be froward, and repine at the righteous providence of God, because they do not see the reason and design of providence. But when providence grows yet darker, and more unsearchable, it is for humbling, and to excite patience in waiting for the time when these dark and inexplicable dispensations shall be cleared up. It is to make christians more observant of the divine sovereignty in providence, and to make them more obedient to his will, in doing whatever he pleases. But it is a great and noble trial of patience, when they know not how much darker providence may be, nor how long they must wait, before the word of promise is made good. Very apt are the best to complain with David, Ps. xiii. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever! How long wilt thou hide thyself from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?* They are apt to construe such obscure scenes, as coming from the unkindness of their heavenly Father, to be racked with care, and overwhelmed with sorrow of heart. Unbelief and impatience are ready to draw the sinful conclusion, that God has forgotten his promise,

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and his former loving kindness. But seeing all human prospects fail them, and they can find no ground of hope from abroad, they are called to live more upon God, to hope in him, and to plead his faithfulness.

USE I. Let what has been offered upon this subject serve to excite juster conceptions of God and ourselves. When we look upon the condition of church and state in these dark times, we cannot but acknowledge that the providence of God is very mysterious. We may justly fear the way is opening for a solemn Jubile among papists, even in America: though, if it should be so, I hope the triumphing of such wicked, persecuting Idolaters will be short, much shorter than their hopes, if our sins do not prevent. In the present day of variable, mixed dispensations, it would be arrogance and pride in us to pretend to know all the particular reasons of the divine conduct. We have nothing to offer that would justify or excuse ourselves before God. Our sins testify to our faces, and we must confess that we ourselves have procured all the evils that we feel and may fear will yet come upon us:

BUT God may be seen, and the wisdom of his providence observed in those dispensations. May
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not the abuse of prosperity in civil and religious interests be seen in the darkness spread over us? Is not providence suited to the awful circumstances of the people? Are not trials necessary to prevent a spiritual distemper that is growing upon us, or to recover us from our wanderings away from God, before our disease is incurable? Do not present dispensations evidently point out the pride, oppression, covetousness, wontonness, self-esteem, or other lusts that open in the light of the sun, after the most signal smiles towards us? Past blessings upon public affairs, and the great blessing of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit with the means of grace, were calls to humility, watchfulness, weanedness from the world, righteousness, charity and godliness. Therefore when darkness covers our glory, is it not a rebuke of rapine, immoderate desires of joining house to house, field to field; lofty conceit of ourselves, instability in the truth, and the long train of immoralities that spring from pride and vanity of heart? If we have just conceptions of God and ourselves, we need not wonder that his dispensations are dark; nor yet, if they should be still more inexplicable, until his discipline is brought to a better issue.

YET still; though we should see the righteousness and wisdom of God in present troubles, let us
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not think that we can therefore pry into all the wise designs of heaven in these mixed dispensations. Finite minds cannot fathom the bottom of God's counsels, nor of his conduct. We are but little acquainted with the divine nature at best; how then should we see through all the designs of his providence? If we should enter upon the bold attempt of censuring the divine government, or drawing rash conclusions of what is next before us, we should put ourselves in God's stead, and conclude about that which we know not. And if we can not by searching find out God, let us take heed that we do not find fault with his dealings. Let us not flatter ourselves that we have fully learned those lessons that are necessary for us to learn, while we are ready, upon every dark scene, to arraign God at our bar. Indeed, the best, the holiest, and wisest men, in this imperfect state, are but learners; and many dispensations of providence will be mysterious to them while they are in the body. Though divine light may break in from time to time, and one dispensation after another may be cleared up on some accounts, yet, even that which is in a measure opened, and good men know the most of, they know but in part; their best, their highest attainments therein, are, like their condition, narrow and tem-

porary, and there are depths still remaining which are unknown.

II. LET haughty souls take heed to themselves in this day of mixed and inexplicable dispensations. Some behave very proudly against God, under the darkest and most inexplicable dispensations of providence. But you should consider, many that have their heads very high under the dark dispensations of heaven, have been brought down very low with ignominy and contempt. There is a mad, proud confidence in hypocrites and other wicked men, especially when dark scenes do not particularly affect them, but their schemes are prospered. But consider, God may reach you by name, before the cloud is scattered. Former dispensations of evil upon the proud and disobedient, should be a check upon you. God, who has formerly scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and put down the rich and the mighty, may do it yet again. The kingdom of Christ may rise upon your ruin, and the ruin of all the pride and tyranny that is at present let loose.

III. LET christians be great proficient in divine wisdom and knowledge, by the mysterious manner of divine dispensations. It is now a time of inexplicable providences, both as to the public affairs of the

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the nation and land, and as to the state of the church. We need not be at a loss for the reason as it respects the providence of God, since we have proved ourselves a most ungrateful people under distinguishing obligations. We seem to be involved and environed with mountains of misery on every side, and what is next before us none can certainly say. But christians may gain some profitable instructions by these things, and they should be very careful to be great gainers. Particularly,

I. LEARN more of the divine sovereignty, and be more submissive to God. The Lord may choose whether he will open his designs or not; and they must be hid from us, unless he is pleased to reveal them. The reasons and ends of variable and mixed dispensations, are open or hid, just as he will. We cannot but observe great and sudden changes in the land, both in church and state. We see and feel great evils upon us of a religious and civil nature, and what is next to follow we know not. But our ignorance of the divine intentions in all these things will not excuse us from taking notice of his hand, nor from improving and submitting to his sovereign will. By how much the darker the times are, by so much the louder God calls you to adore his sovereign hand of providence. Many that have

suddenly risen to great glory, have suddenly sunk, and been brought to nothing. Nations and countries that have been flushed up with divine smiles, have been soon abased. And God may yet pour contempt upon princes and great men, among them that have idolized them. And when churches or provinces have exalted themselves against God, he can suddenly abase them. But christians should lay up these things in their hearts, and observe the surprising changes, so as to glorify God's sovereignty. And whoso is spiritually wise, will observe these various dispensations, and will understand the loving kindness of the Lord in them. It is an evidence of great sottishness in any, who will make no good improvements of God's hand when the clouds gather about, and over them.

2. WATCH against impatience, and censuring the hand of God in such dark times. When God frowns, and threatens yet sorer trials, we are very ready to complain, and censure divine providence. There is such an opinion of merit remaining and working in the best, that they are apt to complain of God's delaying his promises of that light, peace and glory, which are expected in the church. They are apt to think God stays beyond the appointed time for their own, and the churches deliverance :
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they have set one time, and God sets another: they have expected the light should shine more and more, without an intervening cloud, and God has determined many lets and hindrances should come in the way, dark clouds should rise, and perhaps darker than ever. Here then christians may see the ill-spirit that is in them, the disobedience of the heart, the weakness of faith, the coldness of love, in that they cannot trust God to fulfil his promises in his own way. But you must check this spirit, and get it more subdued. It will not honor God, nor credit your profession, to measure God's love, or the truth and faithfulness of his promises, by threatening and distressing providences. Though things are mixed, and many providences seem, on some accounts, inexplicable, though perhaps they are leading to, and monitors of greater darkness, yet it will appear, in the best time, that all these things were to bring about, and usher in the set time for favoring Zion.

3. LET the mysterious manner of God's working, serve to brighten every grace. God will not be served by the by, at any time, especially when the aspects of providence are dark, they tend to promote and advance the grace of God in christian's hearts and lives. Such dispensations tend to clear the sight, to purge the taste, and give a spiritual re-
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lish, to quicken the heart to duty, and so make christians live more unto God. And if you live observing providence, you will live conversing with God in providence; and the more you commune with him, the more you will grow up into his likeness. The more you stir yourselves up to take hold of God; the more you are up and doing in a dark day, the more the Lord will be with you, to direct and quicken, and to excite you effectually. And the more experience you have of his love, and the light of his countenance, the more you will live in the exercise of faith, the stronger in faith and love. O you had need to have the vigor of the life of grace renewed upon you in times of darkness, that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.

4. WAIT upon God without fainting for him to scatter the clouds, and to appear with his great mercy. There are two things that often make our waiting tedious; one is the greatness of a calamity, and the other is the length of it. Our public calamities are very great, and may be much greater, and how long before deliverance comes we know not. Now, through the weakness of faith, hope, and patience; through temptations that raise strange clouds and mists in the soul; through the impetuosity of carnal

carnal affections, and the changeableness of man, we are apt to faint and give out in such a day as this is. But this is a day that calls for courage and every grace to be active. It is a time that calls for strong faith to work, when reason and human props fail. Faith may fetch water out of the rock, as well as out of the fountain. And when sense and reason can not bear you out, it is a time to pour out your souls in hope, waiting upon God. Be not dismayed therefore at present intricate and inexplicable dispensations, but say with the prophet, Isaiah viii. 17. *I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and will look for him.* Though the pride, covetousness, and uncleannets that defile the land, make divine smiles look improbable, yet, since God has engaged to take care of his people, it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Or if bloody times are at the door, and you should be called to suffering, yet, having your anchor cast within the veil, you will ride out the storm.

THOUGH we know not what events are next to follow present dispensations, yet we may, without a spirit of prophecy, fear the increase of darkness, before the shadows flee away. But, in the best time, all the clouds will scatter, and the sun will shine in

its full strength, and then Christ will lay open and make plain those dispensations that, at present seem very mysterious. It will not be very long before christians will see how God has been using hypocrites, and all his enemies, to bring about the purposes of grace and mercy to his church, even when they designed its ruin. . Whatever storms it has to ride through first, at even tide it will be calm, and the church will emerge out of the tempestuous sea; arise and shine O blessed day before us! The day when the faithful witnesses will rise, and, at God's call, and under his protection, shall ascend up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies shall see the glorious change that is made in their circumstances: when also, the powers of darkness shall be put to confusion, and the gospel of a glorious Christ shall have free course among the nations. *Even so*
Lord Jesus: A M E N.

S E R M O N



SERMON XIX.

The perfection of the moral Law.

P S A L M XIX. 7.

The Law of the Lord is PERFECT.

HERE are two ways by which the
T great God speaks of himself to men.
One is by the creatures, which declare
themselves to be God's works; for they could not
exist from eternity, nor make themselves. There-
fore the Psalmist justly says, *The heavens declare the
glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy
work.* The air and æther, the planets and fixed
stars, the sun and moon, with their succession of
night and day, light and influence, do all declare the
glory of God their Creator. The other way of

God's declaring or making himself known, is by the holy scriptures. The works of creation might have served, if man had retained his integrity; but to recover apostate man, it was necessary to take another course, and that is by divine revelation.

THE holy penman of this psalm gives us an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God; the law and testimony, the statutes and commandments of the Lord, which he prized far above all the wealth of this world, and the pleasures of sense: And no wonder, for thereby he was warned of sin and danger, duty and interest.

THE law, mentioned in my text, doubtless signifies the rule of holy living. In a large sense, the law may be taken for the whole doctrine of Moses, which is enumerated under the name of testimonies, statutes and judgments, or for the whole of the covenant by which God distinguished the children of Israel from the gentiles; but, as David has given several titles to the word of God, in this psalm, I am rather inclined to think that the law respects only the law of the ten commands. And to recommend this law to our esteem and affection, and to set it up above all other laws whatsoever, he says it is perfect; immaculate: there is nothing wanting in it,

it, nor any thing that exceeds the proper bounds of a law to intelligent creatures ; in nothing defective, in nothing redundant.

CONSIDERING the moral law in this summary view, I shall offer some evidences of its perfection.

I. ITS original is an evidence of its perfection: It is the law of the Lord, says the holy writer ; the law of Jehovah, the all perfect Being. And, agreeable to this, every where in the sacred scriptures, it is called the law of Jehovah. Though this law was given by Moses, and has been published by other inspired writers, from one generation to another, yet it does not take its rise from any mere man, but from God only. The sacred penmen, whom God sanctified to himself, wrote only such things as were suggested to them by the Holy Ghost.

Now, if it be God's law, it must necessarily be a most perfect law : it must partake of an excellency adequate to the divine author, and greatly excel all the excellencies that may be found upon the creature. Had it been a human device, we need expect no greater degree of excellency in it, than is to be found in man, and it must have shared in the imperfections of its author, because no mere man is

so wise and good, but that he is liable to mistakes. But as it is the law of the Lord, it must partake of the divine excellencies, and therefore it is perfect, like its author. As God gave it for a rule to intelligent creatures, it must necessarily flow from the essential holiness, justice, truth and goodness of God. The supposition of a creature's being capable of yielding supreme reverence and adoration to God, inters the necessity of the law's being perfect, or partaking of all the moral excellencies and perfections of God.

II. THE nature of the moral law is an evidence of its perfection. There are several things in the moral law of God, which serve to evidence its perfection. As

I. IT answers all the wise ends of government. The designs of government are to advance the honor of the law-giver, and the submission of the subject. The highest end of all laws which God has given, must necessarily be his own glory, because he cannot possibly consult an higher end. Therefore the highest end of all law to intelligent creatures, must be to impress their minds with a sacred reverence of the divine Majesty, tending to excite such creatures to fear and honor, love and serve him,

him : and subordinated to the honor of God, this law must respect the interest of the rational nature: Yea, when rational creatures are considered as seeking God supremely, they must be supposed to seek their own happiness ; for the supreme honor of God and the happiness of man are inseparably connected together. No human laws were ever so perfect, as entirely to secure the honor of the prince, and the good of the subject. In some respects they fail of answering both these ends in perfection ; and that is the chief reason of their being repealed and altered from time to time. But the moral law of God needs no alteration or repeal in any one instance, it being a compleat body of laws, every way fitted to answer all the ends of government, both to the honor of the prince, and happiness of the subject in all respects.

2, **ALL** the requirements of this law are but what reasonable creatures ought perfectly to obey. They are exactly suited to those capacities which God bestowed upon man in his first creation. There is nothing required but what rectified reason and judgment must readily approve ; nothing forbidden but what is disapproved and abhorred by every honest man of a sound mind. Hence, God does, as it were, lay aside his prerogative, and submit the
matter

matter to a fair trial, whether it is not infinitely reasonable that his people should *cease to do evil and learn to do well*, according to the rules of his holy law. And again, he plainly intimates that he requires no more of intelligent creatures, than to act the part of such creatures : *Remember this, and shew yourselves men* † And hence the apostle Paul insists upon an entire and unreserved obedience to the law of God as but fit and right : *Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead ; and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* ‡ And again ; *Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ;* § a service every way becoming intelligent creatures, and what in the right exercise of reason cannot be refused. It is as much as to say, that men cannot decline from the perfection of obedience to the divine law, without acting contrary to the nature which God gave them. While man continued in his original state of moral rectitude, he was every way equal to the duties required in the perfect law of God ; and had he not chosen rebellion, he might have maintained his rectitude, against all the temptations of the devil, and never have offended in any one

† *Isa.* xlvi. 8.‡ *Rom.* vi. 13.§ *Ch.* xii. 1

one point, in thought, word or deed. Hence the fault is not in the law, that it still insists upon perfection of obedience to all its demands and commands: but the blame lies at our door, and there can be no possible reason assigned for abating the rigor of a perfect law, in compliance with that moral inability which man has brought upon himself, by his own chosen rebellion: If the strength of an evil inclination might partly excuse disobedience, then by how much the stronger the inclination to evil, by so much the more excusable; and consequently those that give themselves up to work all manner of wickedness with greediness would not be to blame at all.

3. THE whole duty of man is summed up in this law. Were it defective in any one point of duty, it could not be a perfect law; but there is not one, the very least defect, for it binds every one to perfect and perpetual obedience, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness, chastity and sobriety which we owe to God and man.

THERE is no part of duty to God, but what is included in this law. The sum of man's duty to
God

God is, to love him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind. This implies the knowledge and acknowledgment of him, as the only living and true God: And where there are right perceptions of the divine majesty and excellency, there is a reverential fear; the highest esteem and veneration, a supreme affection, the highest gratitude, constant and unshaken faith and dependance, ready obedience and submission, and a supreme regard to his glory. The law of God teaches us that he is a Spirit, infinite in being, glory, blessedness and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipotent, unchangeably holy, just and good. And therefore that he is infinitely worthy of all love, honor and homage that is possible for the most perfect intelligent creature to give him: not only that we are bound to this homage, reverence, love and obedience; but that all must be performed in the highest and most spiritual manner that is possible, to the utmost exactness.

AGAIN; the law of the Lord requires all possible duty from us, both respecting ourselves and our fellow creatures, in private and social life. This law does not omit one single instance, wherein it could be mended, so as to render it more prudent

or decent, comfortable or useful, to act in any case, at any time, otherwise than the directions therein given. It is a law full of rules for self-government, for a good, yea, a perfect conduct to one another. Our Saviour sums up the whole of second table duties in a few words: *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* This is the requirement of the law, that in every thing our dealings with others be just in the same manner, and with the same upright and compassionate temper, as we reasonably would expect from them towards ourselves, were they in our circumstances, and we in theirs. This law teaches us, that whatever our civil stations be, we renounce, abhor, and utterly forsake all irregular inclinations and desires, which consist in *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.* And that we be perfectly pure in our whole life, in a perfect government of our passions and appetites; in a perfectly just, honest, benevolent heart and behavior toward all men; that we have no carnal inclination; that we have an entire conquest over all impurity of thought, word and deed—that we entirely banish all falshood and lies, deceit and fraud of every kind, to the remotest distance from our designs and conversation, and pay the strictest regard to truth and uprightness, at all times, and in every circumstance.

BUT it would be almost endless to enumerate all the rules of duty to be observed towards ourselves and others, in all which the moral law of God requires sinless perfection; and therefore in Rom xii. 2. it is called the *perfect will of God*.

4. IT is a law that binds every individual person. It is equally calculated for, and enjoined upon all mankind, without exception: it includes every soul under its bonds, high and low, rich and poor, superiors, inferiors and equals: the king upon the throne is equally obliged by this law, as the meanest vassal that bows at his footstool. There is no man so great, but God is infinitely above him, and therefore has a right to demand perfect obedience from him. Neither learned nor unlearned are excused from obedience. *Kings of the earth, and all people; princes and all judges of the earth. Both young men and maidens, old men and children*: these are required to praise God with perfect, unfinning obedience.

5. IT is a law that binds all the powers and faculties of men. The law reaches our mortal bodies; such members as our hands and feet, our eyes, ears and tongues, these, none of these are at any time, nor in any measure, to be instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but to be used in a just and righteous

ous manner for God. And so, all the faculties of our souls, understanding, will and affections, love and hatred, hope and fear; all that we have and are, must, with full consent, and without reserve, be consecrated to God, in perfect obedience. Soul and body, time and talents, interests and employments are to be improved for God. And here lies the excellency of this law, that it binds the conscience, so that no human laws can disannul it. Men cannot acquit themselves to their consciences, if they neglect to do that which is lawful and right in the sight of God, the infinitely wise Ruler and impartial Judge of the world. The law of God is to direct and govern the consciences of all intelligent creatures.

6. It is a law that endures for ever. Every divine precept in the decalogue, flows from the unchangeable nature of God, and the constant nature and relation of man, and therefore the law never alters: It was a law to Adam, a law to Israel, and is so to us Gentiles. It endures through all ages; the whole was designed to endure for ever, and is infinitely more invariable than the laws of the Medes and Persians. It is founded upon the infinite perfections of God, to which nothing can be added, nor any thing diminished, and it must endure to endless ages. And therefore our Lord says, *until heaven and*

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The perfection of the Moral Law.

earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law. The natural and necessary result of the divine perfections, make moral duty everlastingly binding upon all capable subjects. There may be, indeed, an alteration in the capacity and relation of subjects, which will alter their obligation to some particular duties, yet there can be no alteration in the law, which is as unchangeable as God himself.

USE I. Is the law of the Lord perfect in all those respects in which we have considered it? Then how awfully guilty are those who hold it in contempt! It must be an infinite evil for any to make light of this perfect law, as though it were mean and contemptible, not worthy to be treated with common decency. It is an awful consideration that any professors of christianity should represent the moral law as not binding upon the consciences, and, as some say, no more to be regarded than an old almanack. What is this but despising God himself, who speaks to us in his law? Surely, the perfect law of Jehovah ought for ever to be sacred to us; we ought to speak and think of it with great reverence, for the purity of its precepts, the sublimity and majesty of its sentiments, and the plainness of its style, might well secure our veneration; and be-

sides;

sides, no other law so much concerns our best and lasting interest. And yet, as if it were not enough to live and act contrary to the requirements of the law, are there not many who treat it in a most scurrilous manner? And what can be more contrary to that reverence which is due to the perfect law of God, than for persons to trample it under their feet?

II. LEARN hence, the vanity of expecting to be justified before God by any works that men can do. For, the law extends to every duty, and requires perfect obedience in heart and life, and yet without any, the least defect or remission. But we come vastly short of the perfection of the law in our best performances, and yet must be able to lay claim to a perfect righteousness for justification, or else the law will condemn us. Well therefore has the apostle said, that *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight*. Personal obedience, in the present degenerate state, can never justify us at the tribunal of God; for the law is so far from acquitting any of its subjects from condemnation, that, by its light and authority, they are convicted as sinners and brought to see themselves so. And therefore a just sense of our own inconformity to the perfection of the law, at best, and our numberless sins of omission and commission, are enough to show us the
necessity

necessity of a foreign righteousness for pardon and acceptance. For how can we imagine that God will accept us for an imperfect righteousness, when his law requires sinless perfection? To do this would reflect upon him as a moral Governor of the world, and be an infinite dishonor to the rectitude of his nature. God can look upon no righteousness as sufficient to recommend any to his favor, but what every way corresponds to the perfection of the law; and therefore through the great deficiency of our own, it is become absolutely necessary that we be provided with a perfect righteousness from another, as our surety: in the right and virtue of such a righteousness, God may accept us, and bestow his blessings upon us. This may teach us the necessity of being found in the righteousness of Christ, the only Mediator, in the merits of whose sufferings, God will graciously pardon our sins, and and in the virtue of whose active obedience he will accept our persons upon believing in his name. And, blessed be God, *if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Christ is a glorious and ever prevailing intercessor to plead our cause with his and our Father, against the charges of the law and justice, that our iniquities may not be punished upon us according to their deserts. He has wrought out an everlasting righteousness.

ousness, which he presents before the throne on our behalf. Had there been a law enacted, that could have entitled a fallen creature to life, on condition of his performing the obedience it required, God would have spared his Son : but it was impossible that any transgressor should ever be justified, by his fulfilling the righteousness of the law, because thro' the corruption of nature, he is brought under guilt, and rendered utterly insufficient to answer all its demands. We are incapable subjects of a justifying sentence, by any thing wrought in us, or done by us. But God in his infinite wisdom and grace, has found out another way, and sent his Son, who assumed human nature into personal union with himself, to do honor to the perfect law, and answer the great designs of divine love to us. God, by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, shewed his just and unyielding abhorrence of sin, and passed and executed a judicial sentence against it, in the sufferings of Christ, as our substitute. This was done, that the whole righteousness demanded by the holy, broken law, might be filled up by our public head and representative. It is on his account God appears on a mercy seat, that sinners may approach him with humble boldness, and find acceptance. This demonstrates the glory of divine justice, and the perfection of the Redeemer's righteousness. In this way,

way justice is satisfied and provision honorably made for the pardon of sin. In this way God displays the rectitude of his nature, as well as the justifying righteousness of Christ, which he has appointed and accepts, to shew forth the riches of his grace. O may this be our only hope and peace, before God, unto him who has freely *loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor,* and has cleansed us from the guilt and power of our sins, by an effectual application of the virtue of his own blood; unto him who is divinely glorious in his person and office, be honor and dominion for ever and ever.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N XX.

The uses of the moral Law to the Unregenerate.

P S A L M XIX. 7.

—*Converting the Soul.*

ALTHOUGH every good man, whose
T principles are right, and whose heart is
changed and sanctified by the grace of
God, brings forth the fruits of righteousness and
holiness, in spiritual, useful designs and actions; and
every unregenerate man, whose principles are
wrong, and whose heart is under the dominion of
sin, brings forth fruits of unrighteousness and ini-
quity in evil inclinations and works; yet neither of
these is discharged from perfect obedience to the

moral law of God ; but still the renewed have something defective, something offensive in their best duties ; and the unrenewed do nothing but sin in the best that they do : therefore the law condemns them both : neither the one nor the other can be acquitted and accepted of God, by his best performances.

SOME may object and say from thence, “ wherefore then serveth the law ? ” To what end or purpose ; of what use and benefit to men, is this perfect law of God ?

THE pious and inspired psalmist answers that it is eminently useful : *the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.* i. e. It is of eminent use and service, as a mean to bring sinful man back to himself, to God, and to his duty. It is an holy law, opposed to all impurity, and requiring perfect moral rectitude. And therefore it may be called a transcript of the holy nature of God, which is his moral excellency, by which he is separated from all impurity, seeking himself in all things, and above all things, in all his thoughts, words and actions, exactly conformed to that holiness which he has expressed in his law. Hence, he invites men to the imitation of his holiness : *Be ye holy : for I the Lord your God am holy.* And again ; *be ye perfect, even as your*

your Father which is in heaven is perfect. As he is infinitely holy in his essence, so his law is perfectly holy, and requires perfect holiness of all men; or a dedication of themselves to the glory, will and cause of God; flying all manner of impurity, both of flesh and spirit, and with an ingenuous and perfectly undisguised candor and singleness of heart, and with perfect integrity and uprightness of soul before God, they aim supremely at his glory, agreeable to his holy nature and will. And on this account the law of God is eminently useful to all men, teaching every point of duty to God and man, and binding them to walk accordingly. Though nothing on man's part can answer for his transgressions, yet God expects and requires obedience to the precepts of the moral law. And therefore the prophet says, *God hath shewed to man what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* The abounding of divine grace gives no liberty to sin? but, *if a man offends in one point, he is guilty of all*; for the contempt of the same authority is manifest in the breach of one, as in the breach of all, and the same curse is deserved in the breach of one, and in the breach of all. And the reason is, because the whole law is inseparably connected together, like a chain of ten links, which, if one link is broken, the chain

is dissolved. The law is therefore useful to all men, as a mean, to convince them of their moral inability to keep it, and of the moral defilement of their nature, hearts and lives, to humble them under the sense of their sin and misery, and to help them to a clear sight of their need of Christ. This law therefore must be very useful to the irregenerate, and the regenerate, to the unconverted, and the converted.

FIRST, It is of eminent use to the irregenerate and unconverted: For this reason the apostle Paul says, *the law was our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* For by the strictness of its moral precepts, and the severity of its curse, it shows natural men their sin and danger, the insufficiency of their own righteousness, and their need of a perfectly righteous and atoning sacrifice. It shews them their sinfulness, accuses & condemns them for it, but shews them no help either for the guilt of sin contracted, or against the power of it. Hence it is said, *by the law is the knowledge of sin.* By this law they may see their sins clearly and effectually, and therefore it is far from being a righteousness unto life. Hence the apostle speaks of its usefulness to him, in this regard. *I had not known sin, but by the law.* He knew by his former experiences that he should never have rightly understood that
 this

this and that was sinful and condemnable; never should have been suitably humbled for them, and been brought to see his need of Christ, had it not been for the light and authority of God's perfect holy law, which made the discovery to him, by the application of it to his conscience: and so it is with others.

THE perfect law of God applied to the conscience, awakens the stupid careless sinner to a sense of sin and danger. Some men, who enjoy the external light of divine revelation, appear to be as destitute of any internal light, or moral sense of the perfection of the law, as the poor ignorant heathen, who are without the clear instructions, commands, and prohibitions of the law, published in the scriptures. These can easily despise all the reproofs of the word and providence of God; they will mock at fear, and set God and all his threatenings at defiance. But when, out of the general knowledge of the mind, a man has a moral sense, or secret judgment of the certainty and perfection of God's law, he perceives the contrariety of his heart to God, and his danger thence arising. This application of the law rouses him up, which is represented by *awaking out of sleep*. He shakes off sloth, and a supine, careless and drowsy frame of spirit, and becomes diligent

diligent and watchful. It is for want of this moral sense of the law, that sinners are generally thoughtless and unconcerned at this day, and give a dreadful loose to their lusts. They seem generally to be strangers to the true knowledge and discerning of the pure and spiritual meaning, and high requirements of the law, though they may be acquainted with the letter of it! O that this perfect law might be set home, in the light and energy of the holy Spirit, upon their minds and consciences, to awaken them out of their security!

SURELY, if the law were thus applied to a sinner, he would be sensible of the rebellion of his heart, and the reign sin had in his soul: he would be convinced of the righteous judgment of God, the worst of punishment was due to him. Sin would revive in his conscience, in its hideous forms, and with terrible accusations of guilt and obnoxiousness to wrath. It is this application of the law that produces deep sorrow of heart, and ardent cries after deliverance from avenging justice.

AGAIN; the perfect law of God applied, serves to convince the natural man of his moral inability to help himself. He finds, by this application, he cannot divest himself of the natural blindness, enmity

mity and carnality of his heart. He cannot choose to see and turn to the Lord, contrary to his present inclination, and to that strong motive, which is superior to all other motives in view. He is convinced that he cannot make atonement for sin, nor satisfy the rights of justice: he confesses his forfeiture of life and every blessing, and that it is not in the power of his own hand to ransom his soul from death. But if he is left even of God, so far convinced, he will not apply to Christ for help, according to the gospel. The pride and enmity of his heart make him stand off, and stand upon terms. He will not submit to God upon a peradventure; but, bad as he finds himself to be, he is in hope of doing something that is connected with a gospel promise.

BUT further; the law is serviceable to shut up a man to the faith. By the strictness of its precepts, and the severity of its curse, it is adapted to convince men that it is impossible that unrenewed sinners should do any thing but sin, and therefore that they run further in debt, notwithstanding all their attempts to help themselves. And by the application of this perfect law, a sinner may be brought to such a sense of guilt, as to acknowledge God's right to punish him, by executing the curse threatened upon him.

him. He may find himself like a captive in ward, under the commanding and condemning sentence of the law ; shut up as a criminal inclosed in prison under a sense of guilt, and justly liable to wrath. An effectual application of the law to his conscience will make him own the equity of the righteous Governor, if he should cast him off for ever. When it speaks throughly, by light in the conscience, it is *that every mouth may be stopped, and the rebel may become guilty before God.* Every plea of righteousness on the footing of his own works are silenced and confuted, so that he has nothing to say in his own excuse, were God to proceed with the utmost severity against him. He has the sentence of condemnation passed against him, in his own conscience, by the law set home with power, and therefore he has nothing to plead but mercy, sovereign and free mercy, with the self-condemned Publican, to cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*

SOME divines seem to suppose that the silencing and confuting all the pleas of righteousness on the footing of our own works, is the effect of that immediate work of the Spirit, which implants a principle of spiritual life in the soul, though the more general opinion is different. Be that as it may, so far as any means are used to bring souls to this temper,

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per, to strip them of self, and make them yield to sovereign mercy, it is done by the application of the divine law to their consciences. And such an application is necessary to prepare them for Christ. I say, it is necessary, for without it they will choose to live upon themselves, and their own doings, and to be beholden to free grace as little as possible. Men's hearts will not come down to take the blessings of the new covenant as a free gift, without they are brought to it by the application of the law to their consciences. It is very cross to the pride of their hearts to have nothing of their own to boast of. They would fain rest in the improvement of their natural abilities : they set up their earnest seeking ; their moral sincerity, their honest endeavors, &c. And nothing but effectual conviction by the perfect law of God, will beat them off from such vain hopes : they would overturn the foundation of the gospel, and cry down Jesus Christ and free grace, if that pride of their hearts were not overcome by the authority of the law so applied as to bear down the pride of their hearts, and make them sensible of the infinite vileness of their duties.

OBJ. THOUGH a man does seek his safety from wrong principles, yet, if he is morally sincere, and seeks in earnest after grace and Christ, God will

hear and accept him : and therefore the authority of the law need not be so applied as to beat down the corrupt principles of the heart.

Ans. 1. The highest improvement of natural abilities, and the most earnest endeavors after grace and salvation from a corrupt principle, lays God under no moral obligation to bestow saving grace upon any. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy:* The most diligent endeavors and enquiries of natural men after grace and salvation, can be no motive with God to bestow his saving mercy upon any, for he is moved by nothing out of himself. But it is necessary that a man should have the law effectually applied to his conscience to make him sensible of this. While in a state of nature, under the power of pride that reigns in him, let him be ever so earnest, he is still disobedient to God, and to his holy, just and good law. Under all his endeavors after salvation, he is wandering from God, and from the way of life and peace, being seduced by the treachery and pride of his own heart ; and he will continue to do so, unless he is bowed to the foot of divine Sovereignty by the authority and perfection of the law applied to his conscience.

2. GOD is under no promisory obligation to bestow Christ and salvation upon the utmost endeavors of natural men. All those endeavors are excited by sinful principles, and therefore they are not acceptable to God. Nothing is done in a spiritual holy manner, that is not done under the influence of divine faith, and *without faith it is impossible to please God.* There is not even the least degree of moral virtue in such endeavors, but all is done to serve a lust. And how can that which is done under the power and dominion of carnal principles, be it ever so zealously done, or with ever so strong desires, be acceptable to God? Besides, the whole stock of gospel promises are made in Christ. They are ratified and confirmed by the death of Christ, to them that are savingly called, and vitally united to him, and not to others. Those that are effectually called, and they only, do receive the promise of grace and glory. All the promises are made primarily to Christ, and none may claim them, until they are in him. But men may seek upon natural principles, and not be able to enter into life: they may fish, and catch nothing: they may desire to die the death of the righteous, and die the death of the sinner. Now, unless the perfection of God's law is discovered to the inmost sense, by effectual conviction, men will never let go their arminian hold

of their own doings, and honest endeavors; but will carry it in their minds that they shall, by and by gain the point; i. e. put themselves under such circumstances that God will be obliged by promise to bestow salvation upon them. But if they were suitably pressed by the application of the law, it would beat down this vain and proud imagination, though nothing else will do it; and therefore the application of the law in its purity and perfection to the conscience, is eminently useful to the unrenewed, as a mean of their conversion. But

Is not God above his law? May he not disannul it, to make way for the endeavors of natural men to be accepted?

No; by no means; in no case. The apostle Paul assures us that *the law is not made void through faith*. The authority and perfection of God's law is established by the righteousness of another, unto justification, and as a compleat and obligatory rule of life. To say that God can dispense with this law, or moderate the rigor of its demands, is to say that he is above himself, and can suffer violence to his own nature, of which the law is a transcript. If the law might have been disannulled, what need could there have been of the death of Christ? If
God

God could have made void the law, to make way for the relief of sinners, why did he not spare his Son from sufferings? Why did he deliver him up to die in the room and stead of the elect, as a sacrifice of atonement for their sins? Christ must needs suffer, not only to satisfy the justice of God, and to magnify the law and make it honorable. And indeed, however hypocrites may cry peace, peace to their souls, there can be no true peace of conscience, until you can see the honor of the law secured, and its perfect demands answered.

USE I. Learn hence, one reason why so many remain unconverted, who enjoy the written law of God. It is obvious to any one of careful observation, that many who enjoy the law of God, written in the bible, and explained in the public ministry, are still bound down to the power of sin, and bound over to everlasting destruction by the holy law of God. The bitter fruits which they bear, as bitter as gall and wormwood to the palate, are plain evidences of their irregnecy. Others that are more refined in their outward walk, appear to live upon their doings, and imagine that God will abate the rigor of his law, and so they shall end well at last, though they continue under the dominion of sin. Now, if the law of the Lord is perfect, and will
abate

abate nothing of a perfect righteousness, as we have heard, then one reason of their living in their sins, is, because the law has never been so effectually applied to their consciences, as to convince them of its perfection, and the severity of its demands. If they have had some awakenings, these have led them more to their external conduct, than to a sense of the vileness of their hearts. If they were thoroughly convinced that the law was perfect, that it required sinless perfection in heart and life; if they had an inward sense of the amazing contrariety of their hearts to this law, and the Law-giver, and the necessity of a perfect righteousness for their security, or unavoidable and endless misery without it, could they be easy, as they generally appear to be? It is impossible! Destruction from God would be a terror to them! This light of the perfect law would so pierce and wound their consciences, under a sense of the vileness of sin, and their danger thereby!

BUT for lack of this sense of the law, my friends, you have generally a self-fulness; hope for safety from something done by you, and will not be at the foot of sovereign mercy. O if the Lord does not sever you from your sins by the application of his perfect law; if he does not beat down the pride of your hearts, and beat out the lurking cavils that are
therein

therein ; if he does not bring you to yield to the disposal of his mere good pleasure, you never will receive the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Your slight convictions are like to be a spring of hypocrisy, and spring of apostacy, but never will prepare you for mercy, unless divine grace so operates as to humble you out of self, and brings you to submit to God. If you fall short of effectual convictions of the perfection of the law, you will never renounce your own righteousness, and be entirely beholden to Christ and grace for justification and salvation, but will stumble and fall, and lose the prize.

II. LET the unrenewed strive, in the use of means, after thorough convictions of the perfection of the law. There are some that have so many awakenings in their consciences, as to fear the wrath of God because of their sins, who have never been thoroughly convinced. Others are more insensible ; they seem obstinately bent upon their lusts, and conscience lets them alone ; and yet, they have some speculative and general knowledge of the law, and of sin. Both these sorts of sinners have reason to dread the consequences of their present state. Both hold fast to the lust of their own hearts, and refuse to submit to God. And all men in a state of sin do obstinately refuse offered mercy, until they have

a sense of the nature of sin and misery, by the effectual application of the law, and those divine influences that humble them at the foot of God.

THOSE of you that are in this state, whether awakened or unawakened, have just reason to tremble, lest the vengeance of God seize upon you: for you are condemned sinners; you abide under a sentence of condemnation by the law, and nothing but the slender thread of life that keeps off the execution. Whether you will ever be so convinced of the perfection of the law, and your obligations to keep it perfectly; whether ever you will be brought throughly to feel yourselves under its curse, and the necessity of deliverance, while there is yet hope, God knows. But means are to be used with a view to this end: Therefore in order hereto

SERIOUSLY meditate upon the perfection of every part of the law. This would tend to make you sensible of your falling infinitely short of all its requirements, and to convince you of your aggravated guilt and danger. It would tend to excite natural conscience, and cause it to bear witness against you. Though you have lived under great light, and enjoyed many and great advantages to gain knowledge, yet, upon close attention, you might see
that

that you have been guilty of infinite evils in breaking through your obligations to God and man. A just view of the law would tend to rob you of that comfort you take in your duties, and to fill you with an awful apprehension of the majesty and holiness of the great Law-giver. What is better adapted, as means, to convince you that God might righteously leave you to perish in your sins; to resist and walk contrary to you, as you have resisted and walked contrary to him? If you carefully meditate and ponder upon the extent and perfection of the law in all its parts, it might serve to convince you that if God should eternally deny you those effectual convictions which are necessary to prepare you for Christ, it would be a righteous neglect, and but a just treatment of you, corresponding with your treatment of him and his law. Would there not be a great likeness between your temper and behavior towards the law of God, and his conduct towards you, if he should let you alone in your sins, to go down to everlasting perdition? You might see that such unholy, sinful services as yours, provided you were outwardly reformed, could never move divine pity towards you. All external means, though excellent in themselves, may increase your hardness of heart, and ripen you for a more aggravated damnation. Yet, that God, for his own sake, may make

ule of the law to bow and break your hard heart, and prepare you to receive from Christ the gift of righteousness and life.

AGAIN: beg earnestly that God would make you deeply sensible that his law is perfect, and that you are bound by it. As ever you desire a due sense of sin, before it is too late, lie at the foot of God and implore his mercy, that he would put you upon the wheel, and break you down by thorough convictions. Indeed, he cannot be obliged to do this for you, by your prayers, or any thing else that you can do: but he can do this for you, and bestow his saving grace upon you if he pleases; and unless it be done, to saving purpose, you are undone for ever.

Do not excuse yourselves from prayer by saying, *your prayer is an abomination to the Lord*, for this will not excuse you. It is also said, *the way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*; but will it thence follow that irregenerate persons must perform no duties, of any relation they stand in, natural, civil, or externally moral? Must they not perform the duties of a magistrate and subject, a husband and wife, a parent and child, a master and servant? This would destroy all humanity, and all relations of life. So it is said, *the plowing of the wicked is sin*; but
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will it therefore follow, that the unconverted must not till the ground, nor labor in their ordinary callings? You might as well say it is not lawful for any man to employ them, nor for them to eat or sleep.. But in all these things we are to distinguish between the duty done, and the manner of doing it. That which is useful and necessary, becomes sin by its being done from wrong principles, and to wrong ends.

HOWEVER, it is your duty to pray; and prayer is an instituted mean to convince you of sin, and to prepare you for Christ. Why else did God, after he had made large promises of giving a new heart, and a new spirit, say, *nevertheless, for these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* The house of Israel was all God's covenant people, unconverted, as well as the converted. And those that were the unconverted are particularly required to pray God to bestow the new heart, and new spirit upon them. Nor can I see but that the unconverted must be excluded the public prayers of the church for them, and so never hear a prayer, as well as be excused from praying for converting grace. If they are encouraged to pray in outward distresses, much more for the salvation of their souls: but they are encouraged to pray in

outward distresses, for when they cry to him in their trouble, he brings them out of their distresses.

FURTHER : the unconverted are commanded to pray, as a mean of converting grace. I shall mention only the command to Simon the forcerer, that great seducer of the people ; *repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.* The case looked almost desperate, and yet as it was possible, Simon is commanded to humble himself and cry for mercy, if God peradventure would give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. This is spoken of as doubtful, if he should humble himself and beg for mercy, whether he should obtain it. I think the apostle cannot intend evangelical repentance, though Simon must have had repentance unto life eternal if he had been saved. But Peter spake of repentance before faith in Christ ; for if he had spoken of that repentance which is the effect of saving faith, -how could he have said, if perhaps ? It could not have been a perhaps with a writer under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But had that been the meaning of the apostle, he must have said, “repent and pray,” and then of a truth God will forgive you ; his promise and oath are gone for it, and he cannot go back : the heavens and earth shall sooner

fooner pass away, than Simon could have lain under the guilt of his sin, had he been a true penitent. But here is only perhaps, and therefore I think, that the repentance spoken of is only legal.

BUT perhaps you will say, how can the prayers of the unconverted be a mean of grace, for when I have attempted that duty, under a notion of means to that end, I have seen the sins of my duties to be my greatest sins? Ans. This is rather an evidence that God has been working in your conscience, by your prayers: how else came you to have such a deep sense of the sins of your duties? You see that self is set up, and not Christ; that you have used your prayers to appease conscience, and therefore the sins of your prayers appear to be your greatest sins. But this is far from militating against the direction to pray for a sense of your sinfulness. Indeed it argues that by this very mean you have been convinced of the vile treachery and deceitfulness of your heart. And doubtless this is one reason or end, why the unconverted are required to pray for converting grace. It is a moral duty, and endeavoring to attend it, in a right manner, tends to convince them of their moral inability to pray in a right manner. How is it that sinners are usually brought to despair of help in themselves,
and

and to be sensible of the worthlessness and vileness of their duties? Is it by endeavoring to pray, and to use other means, or by restraining prayer and neglecting means? Experience teaches that conviction comes under the use of these means. Experience teaches that sinners are made sensible of the sinfulness of their duties by attempting to do them. The converted, usually, know that they were convinced and humbled, when they were striving to use means of grace with all their might. But what of all this? Is there no ground to expect sinners will be converted, until they are stirred up to keep the law? Ans. No; for who ever truly embraced Christ, in the gospel, before he was sensible of the perfection of the law? It is conviction that makes men sensible that the law is perfect; it is conviction that makes them sensible that the law must be kept: it is conviction that puts them upon trying and praying to make up with the law. It is conviction that makes them despair of relief in that way, and look out after Christ, the only helper.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N . XXI.

*The uses of the moral Law to the
Regenerate.*

P S A L M XIX. 7.

—*Converting the Soul.*

✻✻✻✻ H A V E, upon these words, endeavored
✻ I ✻ to shew the use of the moral law to all
✻✻✻✻ men, though no man since the fall, can
attain to righteousness and life by it. Particularly,
I have attended to its usefulness to the irregenerate,
awakening the conscience, convincing of sin and danger,
cutting off all vain hopes, and preparing the unconverted
for Christ. And now

II:

II. WE shall observe, that this perfect law of God is of eminent use and service to the regenerate and converted.

WE grant, that sincere converts are dead to this law, as a covenant which requires perfect obedience, as the condition of life, and pronounces a curse for every failure : in this respect the law is vacated, and has lost its power over all real christians. They are freed from its terms for justification and condemnation, because Christ has *borne their sins in his own body on the tree ; and redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them.* They cannot be justified at the awful tribunal of God, by their own personal obedience : for this law is so far from acquitting any of its subjects from condemnation, that by its light and authority, they are convicted as sinners, and brought to see themselves so, through the want of conformity to it.

NEVERTHELESS ; the perfect, moral law is of eminent use to real christians in common with other men. For it is holy, and serves to teach them the holy nature and will of God. It is a perfect rule to square their lives by, and they are bound to walk according to it. It is also useful to convince them of the remaining backwardness of their hearts to
keep

keep the law, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, heart and life. It is of service to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby to help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience. Thus far in general, the law is useful to real christians in common with all other men. Let us now descend to specialties.

AND here ; this perfect law is adapted to teach believers what infinite obligations they are under to Jesus Christ. He has been made a curse for them, in the greatness of his love : and by the merit of his death, he has bought them out of the hand of justice, and so by the price of his own blood, has delivered them from the wrath and punishment which is summed up, and threatened in the curse of the law. He came under the sentence and execution of the law, in their room and stead, when he was *delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*, to suffer upon the cross. When it was impossible that ever a transgressor should be acquitted by the tenor of the law, because it pronounced the curse for every sin, Christ, by assuming human nature into personal union with himself, and being made under the law, and that in such a low condition, as carried a resemblance of the sinful state ; and

being thus sent to do honor to the law, and answer the great designs of divine love, God, by the atoning blood which Christ offered, shewed his just and unyielding abhorrence of sin, and executed a judicial sentence against it, in his penal sufferings, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled, in our nature, room and stead, and so be esteemed, as fulfilled in stead of all true christians, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Surely then, real christians have reason to admire at the infinite wisdom and grace of God that a method of salvation by Christ is revealed, so as to honor the divine law, and render the salvation of sinners possible to believers. Are you already delivered from the guilt and dominion of sin, by Jesus Christ? How deeply should you feel yourselves obliged to devote your souls and bodies to God, and to yield an unfeigned and unreserved obedience to his law, as his willing servants!

AGAIN: it is of eminent use to stir up a spirit of gratitude. It was this consideration that moved Zechariah to break out with holy rapture, in that instructive hymn of praise: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation, in the house of his servant David; that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might*
serve

serve him without fear, in holiness before him, all the days of our life. And truly, such a ransom from sin and misery, into which we were fallen, and under which we lay by the righteous sentence of the law, is enough to excite the ascriptions of all possible honors to our God. What sharer in this great salvation would not gladly spread the news of it far and wide? Surely, this will naturally excite real christians to pour out their souls in joyful thanksgiving and praise, that through the undeserved and compassionate kindness of their God, Christ, the Son of righteousness, has shed his reviving saving beams upon them! It was mere love and grace, that provided and sent such a mighty Saviour, to redeem your souls from destruction, and guide you in the way of peace with God, and peace of conscience, and peace one with another. This Saviour is come to fulfil God's promises of the Messiah, that mercy of mercies, and to make good his holy and inviolable covenant to the children of promise. One great design of which was, to vouchsafe his special favor unto you, that, being rescued, by the merit, might and grace of Jesus Christ, you might be at liberty for, and engaged in his service, and might be enabled to perform it, without the slavish fear of God, or the tormenting fear of men. Doubtless, if we have a due sense of the perfection of the

law, and redemption by Christ, we shall join the apostle, *giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Had not Christ given himself a ransom, we could not have had a compleat deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin, and the curse of the law. We could not have inherited the spiritual and eternal blessings that sin had forfeited: but now we are assured of the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood for these purposes, according to the riches of the Father's grace, from the dignity of Christ's person, and the excellency of his office. He has made satisfaction to the law and justice of God in a way of atonement, so that on this account, together with all his sufferings and obedience which he finished at his death, christians have free and full forgiveness, which includes deliverance from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, from the power of sin and the sting of death, together with a recovery to all possible happiness and glory in their whole persons. Now, these and other benefits, could not arise from any worth in the services of real christians, but merely from the inexhaustible fulness, excellency, and boundless overflowings

flowings of the free mercy of God the Father, as he appointed, gave, and accepted of Christ, who also, in the greatness of his love, graciously consented to lay down his life, and magnify the law. This therefore, if any thing, calls upon them to abound in grateful thanksgivings, and delightful tributes of praise to God and the Lamb.

AGAIN: it is of great use to provoke christians to the greatest watchfulness unto duty. When Paul was convinced of his wicked and injurious conduct towards Christ, in the cruel and unjust designs, which he was prosecuting against his members, the conviction was so powerful upon his conscience and heart, that he trembled under a sense of shocking guilt, and was astonished to think how vile he had been, and therefore he cried out, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* He was ready to resign to the authority and command of Christ. He confessed that he had done wickedly, and would do so no more. Then he would fain be led in a right way for knowing and doing his will, that he might testify his repentance, and do honor to Christ's name. When the law is faithfully preached, and thoroughly applied to christians by the holy Spirit, they will surrender themselves up to God, his authority and command, concerning their duty that lies before them.

If

If they have been of a cruel and bitter disposition, being battered and hewn, and broken down by the law, they become gentle, humble and tractable, under the conduct of Jesus Christ, so that *a little child may lead them*. Nothing breaks down the pride of man's heart, and excites to walk more humbly and closely with God, so much as the law applied in its perfection to the heart. True, it is the gospel applied that draws forth the grace of humility, but it is the law applied that makes men afraid of sin, and breaks them down at the foot of God, despairing of help any where but by the gospel.

ALL men, since the fall, are habitual enemies to the law. They have the law of sin and death in their hearts; the law in their members, gratifying the perverse inclinations of sin, contrary to the perfect law of God. But in conversion, this law is engraven upon the heart, by the Spirit of God, creating anew in Christ Jesus, putting new dispositions in the heart agreeable to the divine law. The whole law of God, as a rule, is engraven upon the heart of all real christians, agreeable to the importance of the truth contained therein. Those things that are most weighty, will have the deepest impression: they are delivered into the very form and image of the doctrines and commands of Christ, as into a mould,

mould, which has left its prints and lineaments upon them. The deep things of God, the weightier matters of the law, such as the knowledge, love and fear of God, reverence and obedience to God, make a deeper impression than those truths which are not so important. Those who make a great stir about small matters, such as *mint, anise and cummin*, and neglect the most important duties of the law, such as justice and mercy toward man, and faith toward God, are but hypocritical and self-conceited boasters. Their hearts have not been cast into the mould of the law as a rule of righteousness.

BUT where men are savingly converted, the moral law is impressed upon their hearts. Christ never lets them go lawless, but puts the yoke of obedience upon them: for although Christ has fulfilled the law as a covenant of works, he has not made void any part of it, as a rule of duty. And this rule lies mainly upon the hearts of christians: their hearts are conformed to this rule, and all its requirements in matters of duty. And because it is a principle in the heart, it is a *yoke that is easy, and a burden that is light*. Hence christians love to obey God in all things, and have a careful respect to all his commands. They take diligent heed that their hearts and lives are given up to his revealed will,
and

and have a divine pleasure in obedience. Others may do many specious things that are very useful to society, but their hearts are not cast into the right mould; they do the external act, but do not love the law, nor the Law-Giver who requires it. But where it is written in the heart, it works thoughtfulness, care and diligence to observe every branch of christian duty. A gracious application of it to christians, in the exercise of faith, teaches them, *that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

INDEED, though the law is perfect, in all those respects which have been considered, it can do nothing without the gospel, any more than a rule can do without a hand to use it. The law is added to the gospel, as a rule is put into the hand of a workman. The rule will do nothing of itself, and separated from the hand, though the hand will do nothing right without his rule. So here, though the law is applied, it is the gospel applied, that gives ability to perform acts of obedience to the law.

The

The gospel not only convinces men of the perfection of the law, by the Surety's fulfilling its precepts, and suffering it's penalty, but it makes it firm and abiding in christians, as a rule, and by gospel grace they are disposed to obey all the commands of God: and this grace is more and more increased in them, until they arrive to the full proportion of that mature age, with regard to the perfection of their graces, comforts and holiness in heaven.

Now, that real christians are excited to observe every part of the law as a rule, and that they find it exceeding serviceable to that end, is evident. Were it not so, the gospel would not send them to it as a rule of practice. The gospel does not send them to it as a covenant of life; nor yet for strength to do moral duties; but the gospel sends them to the law as a rule of duty. Moses was that famous law-giver, who delivered the mind and will of God in the ten commands: and the gospel sends us to Moses to learn. Hence Abraham is represented as saying, *they have Moses and the prophets; let them bear them*; intimating that the rule of life was given in the law. And God requires love, and all branches of duty to God and man, as much under the present, as under the ancient dispensation. And

therefore Jesus Christ has set himself for a pattern of imitation, in all the duties of humility, kindness, love, purity, and other christian offices, that we should do as he hath done. Christ, as Mediator, has not set himself up to be imitated, wherein it respects the merit of his obedience and sufferings; but as to the acts of moral obedience which he performed, he is an example, worthy of imitation, and he bids us to follow him.

THUS, having considered the use and service of the perfect law of God, to all men in general, and to real christians in special, we shall close the subject with some application.

I. LEARN hence, the great design of infinite wisdom in publishing the moral law. We have no need to search after the hidden counsels of God, in order to find out the design of infinite wisdom in giving his holy law to intelligent creatures, for God has revealed the end and design of it. And as it respects fallen man, it is of eminent use to discover and convince of sin, to humble and prepare sinners for Christ, and to be an everlasting rule of righteousness. And real christians may find their daily need to consider its perfection and extent, to preserve a due sense of their obligations to Christ, the
only

only Saviour, to excite their gratitude to God for the gift of his Son to redeem and bless his people, and to humble them, and stir up christian watchfulness unto every duty. Indeed, this perfect law of God is of use to those that are not, nor never will be effectually called: for all men have that natural principle of reason and reflection, which discovers the requirements and prohibitions of the law, and, no doubt, by looking into it they may be much the better rulers and subjects, and promote the welfare of society in their several places and relations. Thereby also, they may become very serviceable to the church of Christ, and so "the earth may help the woman." Though they are under the influence of some lust in all they do, yet, by the law, they shall be inclined to interpose for the shelter and protection of the church, and shall favor its righteous cause. For, although speculative knowledge of the law, or any application of it to the conscience by a common work of the spirit, will not make them delight in it as God's law, and delight to practice it as such, yet their lusts are restrained, and they are driven to do many things by its influence upon them, which makes this a better world to live in, and the church is served thereby.

BUT the great design of the law, or its being revealed and continued to men, is (next to the glory of the divine character) the good of the elect world. I grant, that there is a two fold design in both the law and gospel, but the principal design and end of both, in their revelation to mankind sinners, is the salvation of the self-ruined, in a way honorary to God; and the law is to advance the design of the gospel in this grand affair. But then, there is another end, which I shall call accidental, because it does not necessarily follow from the nature of the law or the gospel, but from the sinful nature of fallen man. It is from thence that the law serves to convince men of sin, and to restrain indwelling corruption, to render sin out of measure sinful to human sense; to heighten and aggravate the vileness of it in our view, and to condemn sinners for the very least defect. But still, we may say of the law, as our Lord Jesus says of himself, *that he came not into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*: and yet, Jesus Christ did, by accident, condemn the world: he was occasionally set for the fall of many; an occasion of stumbling and falling to many Israelites, and others; but the direct and principal design of God, in sending him, was to raise up and save, rather than to condemn. So here, had there not been a
seed

seed to whom the law was to be a servant, we should not have had it revealed or published in the world: for there was condemnation enough, by the light of nature, for ever to make men miserable. Neither was it the design of infinite wisdom to increase the misery of final impenitents, though eventually it will prove so. But had it not been for the elect, this holy and perfect law would never have been published, as an introduction to the gospel.

II. LEARN hence, those do greatly err who cry down preaching the law. Our Lord Jesus Christ, that great gospel preacher, began his ministry by publishing the moral law, and assured his hearers that there were no abatements made of its most rigorous demands. And it is still dispensed to the elect to make them sensible of their need of Christ, to perform the office of Mediator for them. He that loved the church and purchased it with his own blood, as the fruit of his love, delivered the law to his disciples, and gave the interpretation of it to them. Therefore for any to imagine that preaching the law is carnal, or needless, is to cast an awful contempt upon the love of Christ. He that appointed the city of refuge, appointed also the revenger of blood: and if there had been no revenger of blood, men would never have fled to the city of refuge. It is
vain

vain to pretend that preaching up the perfection of the law is unsuitable, in our fallen state; for Jesus Christ preached it, in its wide extent; and tho' his heart was so full of love and pity as to weep over Jerusalem, when he beheld it, he preached the law, and insisted upon its perfection. And his ministers are bound to explain and preach the moral law, in the perfection of all its precepts, and the terror of all its threatenings, as a mean to convince and humble, to prepare and make men sensible of their need of Christ, and to shew them the everlasting rule of righteousness. Our Lord delivered the law with an evident design to subserve the wise and glorious ends of the gospel: and we are bound to preach the law, in such a manner as tends to promote the same end. And if this law of God is preached in a way that tends thereto, if the great and good end is not answered, the fault does not lie in preaching the law, but in the corruption and enmity of the heart to the law and its author. Therefore it is a great error that some men have fallen into, and it argues great ignorance as well as pride, for them to say that preaching the law is carnal, or legal preaching. For giving the law to fallen man is a great act of grace, and one of the greatest privileges that real christians enjoy, to have the law so preached as to serve the great designs of the gospel.

Those

Those therefore who do not love to have the law preached, and its perfection insisted upon, despite the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. LEARN hence, with what a view the ministers of Jesus Christ are to preach the law. The Lord Jesus was a pattern of preaching the law, and his ministers are to preach it in the same manner as he has published it. The duties and precepts of it, the threatenings and curses of it, must be preached so as will tend to serve the great design of the gospel. Therefore

THE law is never to be preached in a legal manner. Will you ask what it is to preach the law in a carnal, legal way? Ans. Those who preach the law as a matter of speculation, or as a moral philosopher would preach it; and those that retrench and diminish the perfection of its demands, must needs preach it in a legal, carnal manner. This way of preaching the law is one main reason why men are led, by the public ministry, to neglect the perfect righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of acceptance before God, and to seek justification partly by their own righteousness, and leave it with Christ to make up their deficiencies. If men are led to believe that the law is diminished as to the
perfection

perfection of its requirements and prohibitions, they will naturally look for justification by the works of the law, that they might have something to glory in before God. They will disapprove the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and by no means brook the thought of utterly renouncing their own righteousness, and of being beholden to Christ and grace for righteousness and salvation. And hence it comes to pass that the modern way of preaching the law serves to defeat the grand designs of the gospel. This, doubtless, has been a great inlet to deism and infidelity among professing christians. No wonder multitudes expect to go safely to heaven, without making any use of Christ, or of his righteousness. No wonder revealed religion is held in contempt, and men think that if they are honest and do as well as they can (as they term it) they shall be saved: for if we preach down the rigor of the law, or do not maintain its invariable perfection, we do, virtually, tell our hearers that their doings will serve instead of a perfect righteousness. This is the way to improve the pride of men's hearts, to make them vainly imagine that they have something of their own to render them the objects of divine favor. This is the way to hinder their submission to sovereign mercy, and their acceptance of the moral obedience of Jesus Christ for righteousness to eternal life.

Contrary hereto

IT becomes ministers to preach the law, as to place the righteousness of Christ for the only ground of acceptance, and so as to lay Christ for the foundation of all christian obedience. We must maintain the perfection of the law, and the certainty of its awful threatenings, as a mean, to convince men of their sin and misery; to make them sensible that they have nothing, and can do nothing that will recommend them to the divine favor, but they must have that righteousness of faith, which is adequate to all the challenges of the law. And we must so preach the law, as to discover that union to Christ is the foundation of that assistance and strength which christians are to expect in the duties of the christian life. When we preach the law in this manner, we preach it so as to correspond with the revealed design of it in the hand of a Mediator. This is to shew men the subserviency of the law to the designs of the gospel. When we preach the law in such a manner as tends to stir men up to seek for grace and righteousness in another, so as to lead them to Christ for strength to obey the divine law, then we preach the law as a servant to the gospel. O that this primitive way of preaching was more common in our land, and in all churches! It is much to be lamented that any ministers should press duties under a notion of their having any thing

recommending men's persons to the favor of God; or so press them as to leave Christ out of the foundation of them; or without showing that vital union with Christ must be the ground of assistance and acceptance. O that men may be taught how to perform the duties of the moral law in a gospel manner! In preaching the law we are to lead men to Christ for grace, to do to them in a way that shall be well pleasing to God; show that all holy duties are the fruits of divine faith. We are to enforce duties with gospel motives; to shew men that the most holy duties that ever were done by a mere creature, are without worth or merit before God; and in this way make every duty that is urged upon our hearers, point to Christ.

IV. LET us enquire whether the law has that efficacy upon us, that it has upon all real christians? It is one grand design of the law revealed to fallen man, to convince of sin, and to bring sinners to Christ, that they might live upon him, to excite their gratitude to God, and christian watchfulness unto all duty: Now, if the law of God has been applied to us so as to answer the good purposes, we have an abasing sense of our vileness and unworthiness; we esteem Christ highly in his whole character; we join with other saints in giving glory to God

God for visiting and redeeming his people, and take earnest heed to walk before God, in holiness and righteousness all our days. **But**

HAS the law been so applied to us as that we take the whole blame of our sins to ourselves? When God begins to deal with conscience, men will confess the fact, acknowledge there is great blame lying somewhere, but will try to lay the blame at some other door. *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me, and I did eat. Or, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* At the first alarm, though men are constrained to own the sin, they fly to some extenuating considerations, and are apt to lay the chief blame elsewhere. If the law has not done its office so thoroughly as to bring you to take the blame of all your sins to yourselves, you will make some excuse for your sin, either charge it upon God himself, or turn it off to those that inticed you; or you did it ignorantly, or it was a matter of no great consequence, or the like. But if the law has wrought effectually upon you, sin lies at the door; you lay the whole blame upon yourselves; your own vile heart and nature: You will see sin as it is against the authority, holiness and love of God. You will see it as committed in the presence of God, and the great prophaness of sinning, when God stood by and looked on.

AGAIN: has the law been so effectually applied as to make us feel our infinite obligations to God in Christ, that grace may now set up its throne on the ruins of sin, and may triumph in pardoning and subduing, and in spreading abroad the blessings of salvation through Christ? Had not the righteousness of Christ been infinitely excellent and perfect, the law would have stood against our recovery to a spiritual life of communion with God, and devotedness to him; against our acceptance to God's favor, and a title to the inheritance of eternal life. If then you have been slain by the perfect law of God, and brought to Christ for salvation, you highly prize him as surety and your covenant head. You are sensible that salvation could not be conferred, unless the law had been magnified and made honorable. And therefore you will admire Christ in undertaking and bringing about the redemption of sinners, in a method that does everlasting honor to the law, which is perfectly holy, just and good, and infinitely safe to believers.

AGAIN: is the gratitude of our hearts drawn out to God and our Saviour? God's design in giving the law, was to demonstrate the horrible evil of sin in a clear and striking light, and lay the conscience under an affecting conviction of it. And have you
had

had this conviction by the law, so as to see and recommend the grace of God in Christ to your inmost sense? Have you felt, and do you feel your need of this Saviour, and are you brought, with gladness and uprightness, to embrace the gospel method of salvation, that therein God may be glorified, and the glory of all flesh be stained? Gratitude to God and the Father, will certainly flow from the heart that is redeemed from under the law, and from under the curse, *that they might receive the adoption of sons.*

AGAIN: are we become watchful to observe all the duties of christian obedience? Is the law a rule of righteousness to us? Is it engraven upon the fleshy tables of our hearts, so that as to matter and manner the law is become our rule? If the law has wrought effectually in you, and you have fled to Christ according to the gospel, your heart is inclined to serve God. You have felt the motives of divine grace, and have been made willing to obey. You not only approve of the law as holy, just and good, but your judgment is determined for God, and for obedience to him. Your will is swayed with love and delight, and bent with constant endeavors to attain what you resolve upon.

V. LET christians be excited so to improve the law, as the better to further the designs of divine grace revealed in Christ Jesus. The great designs of grace are not yet compleated in christians, nor will they be while in this world. How much sin lies undiscovered in the heart, which ought to be detected and subdued! How much need is there of further conviction, to condemn all sin yet more and more! How much do the inward principles of holiness need perfecting, before we have compleated our obedience, and have arrived at sinless perfection! How much direction do the best of us need in point of duty; and how much shall we need daily, through the whole of the christian course to the end of it! Now, to excite christians to a right use of the law, so as to answer the ends of the gospel, let them seriously consider a few things, especially the following ones, viz.

1. A right use of the law tends to a further discovery of the remaining hypocrisy of the heart: There is abundance of remaining hypocrisy in true christians; and hence they do sometimes counterfeit some particular act of Godliness, or some higher degree of it than others seem to have. How pleasing is it to the pride of the heart, to have it whispered about, what an eminent saint is he?

What

What a wonderful frame was he in at such a time, or under such an ordinance? This is spiritual hypocrisy. But there is such an amazing depth of deceitfulness in the heart, that the various tracts of hypocrisy are hardly discovered. There are so many coverings put on, that hypocrisy is often passed over unobserved. But if christians would make that constant use of the law of God which they might, and ought; if they would rightly consider its perfection, in every part, and read their own hearts in that glass, it would tend to one scene of hypocrisy after another, that has been working in the heart, and carrying on by ends and intentions that were not clearly discovered before. The perfect law of God, duly attended to, brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and makes plain discoveries of the most secret principles and dispositions, thoughts, contrivances and designs of the heart. A right use of the law would shew you the double-dealing of your heart, the frequent stops you have in your heart, between gospel motives, and other ends of action. It would discover to you the vast partiality of your heart, and your inclination to favor one side rather than another, in your professed enquiries after truth. You might see how slack you have been in the use and application of the most proper means, or how rash in your conclusions; or how

easily

easily you have your eyes blinded against the light that has been offered. Did you make a due improvement of the law, you would be sensible that your heart has abounded with reserves and exceptions; and many times you have, in a measure, satisfied yourselves with *making clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter*, though within there was little besides moral filthiness and selfishness. And hence, if there is any benefit in finding out the base hypocrisy of the heart, it is of very great consequence to be conversant with the perfect law of God, for it is by the right use of this law that the hypocrisy of the heart is discovered. And the more this lies open to a true christian, the more welcome will the gospel be to him. Only view the pride and hypocrisy of your heart in the glass of the law, and you will see that Christ must be all in all to you, or there can be no hope.

2. A right use of the law is an excellent mean to restrain and hinder the out-breakings of indwelling sin. Sin is the most unruly and boisterous creature in the world, like raging billows of the sea, in a violent storm, casting up its own mire and dirt, or, *like a bear bereaved of her whelps*. But the law is a glorious instrument in the hand of the spirit, to keep under and restrain indwelling sin. It not only
restrains

restrains the conscience, but discovers the baseness of all sin : it keeps them from open violences and immoralities. *I withheld thee*, said the Lord, *from touching her*, Gen. xx. 6. Sometimes indwelling sin does arise, but to have it kept from breaking out is a great mercy. Hence David prays, *keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins*. But how does God keep christians from out-breakings of sin, when it rages ? Ans. By the application of the law ; and, without this, indwelling sin would break out into very heinous and presumptuous sins. But the law applied, keeps lust within its bounds from breaking forth, so that christians do not pour forth themselves upon it with greediness. True, it is the gospel that mortifies sin, and disposes christians to *purify themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*. But the spirit of God makes use of the law to this end also ; not only by regenerating souls, but by setting the new nature to work against the principles of sin, and by withholding christians from the actings of lust, that it might not get dominion over them. And by these means sin dies in believers, and their hearts are weaned and taken off from it. And all this is done by the use of the perfect law of God, restraining sin in the heart from out-breakings until it withers and dies.

3. A right use of the law tends to promote holiness of heart and life. In this life, all true christians have abundance of imperfection. They are, indeed, sanctified in all the faculties of their souls, and powers of their bodies. But, as they know but very little of God, and of the methods of wisdom and grace in Christ Jesus, compared with what is known in the bright regions above, so they are far from that perfection of holiness they are reaching after. There is yet remaining abundance of sinful defilement, cleaving to their best duties; and abundance of faulty omissions and careless performances of duty. But, although they can never arrive at a state of sinless perfection, in this life, yet a right improvement of the law tends to the furtherance of gospel holiness in believers; for in observing the law, they may see more of the holy nature of God, and the glory that was stamped upon them in their creation. They may see a perfect resemblance of Christ, in his human nature, and that perfect conformity to God which saints have in heaven. They will also see more of the rule, to guide and direct their way, from which they are to learn their duty, that they may be sent to the grace of the gospel for strength to yield christian obedience to the law,

THEREFORE

THEREFORE, you never need to fear making the most careful use of the perfect law of God. It is the abuse of it that every man ought to be afraid of; but the right improvement of it is eminently useful. *The law is good, if a man use it lawfully.* It is of excellent use, not only to convince of sin and bring us to live upon Christ, but as a standard of all righteousness, and a conscientious discharge of every duty, to God and man. If then you improve the law to discover the plague of your own heart; if you improve it to humble your soul within you; to restrain all sin, to make you sensible of vileness, and bring you to Christ for strength to live unto God; this will be making a good use of it. And if you make this use of the law, you will prize Jesus Christ highly: you will highly value his person, his character, his purchase, and all his offices. It will be a mean to excite you to a close walk with God, and to maintain that divine intercourse with him, which will be the comfort of your life, and the adorning of your christian character.

4. THE better use christians make of the law, the more delightful it will be to them. The main reason why musing upon the law of God is a burden, and why they find no benefit therein, is because they do not love it, and the little use they

make of it, is after a legal manner. All that obedience which they perform, is mercenary obedience, it has nothing of a gospel spirit in it. All their meditations upon the law are but a forced business, and so they never make a good use of it. But if you would use it so as to answer the design of the gospel, you would find great sweetness in close meditation upon it: Love to the law will excite meditation, and meditation will excite love. *O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day.* Some good and delightful thoughts of the law, will be interwoven with your common thoughts. It is true, while you are in the body, the principles of sin will so far exert themselves like a law, as to be very perplexing: it will suggest evil things, and propose such allurements of ease, pleasure and worldly advantage, as sometimes to carry you into its evil design. But still, if you use the law to quicken a sense of your obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ, and your gratitude to God the Father: if you dwell upon it for its excellency as a perfect rule, and its subserviency to the gospel, you will *delight in the law of God after the inner man.* You will have the noblest satisfaction in all the pure and spiritual precepts of the word, as right and good, and as what you take the highest pleasure in obeying, according to the prevailing sense of all the faculties of your souls.

souls. So far as you have hearty conformity to it, as a rule of righteousness, so far you will delight in christian obedience. The more you are sanctified, the sweeter the law will be to you. The yoke of Christ will be easy, and his burden light.

VI. WHAT has been offered upon the subject affords matter of comfort to believers. The greatest display of divine wisdom and grace, next to the unspeakable gift of Christ, is his using the perfect law, which judges and condemns every sinner, to advance the riches of his mercy in the salvation of his people. It is a great blessing that Jesus Christ should employ the holy angels in offices of protection, care and kindness, and in many important services in life and death, for the benefit of those that shall inherit eternal life. It is great mercy that all things are given to believers in a covenant way—that they are ordered of God, for their spiritual advantage. And particularly, that all the faithful ministers of Christ, together with their gifts, graces and ministrations, are given for their sakes, that they may be built up in faith and holiness, to compleat salvation. But wisdom and grace shines still more in making use of that law which curses every sinner, to awaken and convince the conscience, and make the self-condemned fly to the Lord Jesus Christ for
salvation;

salvation. Yea, wisdom and grace shine gloriously, in securing obedience to all the duties of the moral law from those whom he justifies freely by a foreign righteousness; and so the law is used to serve the grand designs of the gospel.

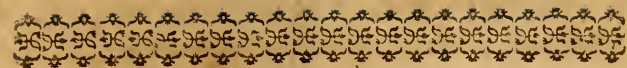
O what a glorious concord between the law and the gospel will appear at the last great day of account! The law as the instrument of God's government, and the rule of his justice; the gospel, the instrument of his grace and salvation! The law to guide and teach believers in the ways of holiness, to convince of sin, condemn for it, and hasten them to Christ; the gospel, a divine remedy, discovering grace, and salvation and blessing! And how wonderful does it appear; and how much more wonderful will it appear, that the same law which has come to the conscience with the authority and majesty of a king, and filled our hearts with distress and anguish, should serve our spiritual and eternal welfare, in a way everlastingly honorary to God and his government!

MAY not all true christians take up a joyful triumph in their mourning for their friends in Christ that are departed, and in the prospect of their own approaching change, and sing, *O death, where is thy sting?*

sting? O grave where is thy victory? Methinks it will be no crime in you, to anticipate your future glorying, in which you will bravely insult these enemies: What are all the conquests of death and the grave come to? The sting of death is sin: this is like the sting of a serpent: and the strength of sin is the law, armed with its curse, and condemning to endless death and destruction, as the just wages of sin: But this law has been a servant to drive you to Christ, and the gospel of his grace has drawn you effectually: Therefore you are freed from the condemnation of the law, through the merit and power of our Lord Jesus Christ: He has taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and redeemed you from the curse of the law by being made a curse for you. He has disarmed death of his sting for every real christian, that he might raise their bodies from the grave, to an incorruptible, unfading inheritance of all glory and blessing. In reflection therefore upon all this, and in the view of the grace of God, in improving his holy law to serve the marvellous designs of his love displayed in the gospel, be animated to an holy stability in the faith, hope and holy profession of Christ: Let the vast importance of these things determine you, by divine grace, to continue settled in the glory of the law, and the divine harmony of it with the gospel. Let not the corruptions of your own
hearts,

hearts, the temptations of the devil, nor the flatteries and frowns of the world, ever move you from the law for your conviction, abasement, and as a school-master to keep you close to Christ, and as a rule of holy living; nor from the gospel, which is the foundation of your hope. Let these thoughts engage you to constancy, and abounding in every good work, to the glory of Christ, and in obedience to his commands. For God is not, nor never will be unfaithful to his own everlasting covenant, nor violate his promises, *to forget your work and labor of love.* Therefore, my beloved brethren, be diligent, to live as becomes the expectants of heaven, that you may be found of him as your Judge, and in him to acceptance, as washed in his blood, and sanctified by his spirit; *that he might present you to himself, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that you might be holy, and without blemish;* and in this way, *out of the eater will come forth meat, and out of the strong will come forth sweetness.*

S E R M O N



SERMON XXII.

*Of Spiritual delight in the law
of the Lord.*

P S A L M I. 2.

— *His delight is in the Law of
the Lord, and in his Law doth he me-
ditate day and night.*

THE Psalmist begins with a description
of the character and condition of the
godly man. He is truly a blessed man,
and his character is given by the rules he chooses to
walk by, both negatively and positively. Negati-
vely, *he walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor
sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* And then possi-
tively, as in my text, *his delight is in the law of the*

Lord. Some think, that by law is meant all the doctrines, precepts, promises and threatenings of the word. And it is true, that real christians do take pleasure in the promises, as well as the laws of God. Their wills are brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God. But then a bad man may be pleased with the promises, though the precepts of the moral law are not kindly entertained in his heart. Therefore, since the psalmist is giving the peculiar characteristic of a good man, it seems reasonable to conclude it means the perceptive part of the word, or the moral law, which he *loves above gold, yea, above fine gold.* Now, as an evidence of his delight in this law, it is said that he *does meditate in it day and night.* i. e. He is deeply and affectionately thoughtful about it: he is diligent and constant, upon all occasions, meditating therein; not as trivial, but weighty; not a speculative, but important truth.

UPON these words I design to consider christian delight as it differs from that which is carnal—The object of his delight named in the text—The reasons why christians have this delight in the law of the Lord,—and the evidence of it, viz. Their meditation therein day and night.

I. LET us consider something how christian delight differs from that which is carnal. There is a carnal and a spiritual joy. The wicked rejoice in their outward prosperity. Job tells us, *they send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.* Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people : but christian joy widely differs from all such delights.

IT is more solid and real. The delight that is carnal, cannot be abiding, but empty, superficial and fleeting ; for it is not founded upon any substantial good. What do those gain who live in luxury and worldly pleasure, but remorse of conscience, or sottishness and stupidity ? How uncertain, fading and perishing are all the things of the world ? The world and all its enjoyments are continually fleeting and changing hands ; the best worldly good is very precarious : and therefore the apostle says, *the world passeth away.* And how is it possible that such precarious, empty things, should afford solid delight ? But the delight that is godly, is solid and substantial. It is *joy in the Holy Ghost* ; and therefore it must be more excellent and solid than the other can be. It is better grounded, not built upon mistake, but the surest foundation that any

man can build upon, the word of God which is truth itself. The world and all its pleasures will be soon gone, but building on the truth and faithfulness of God, is building on a sure foundation; for God can as soon cease to be, as cease to be true. Besides; spiritual delights do more intimately affect the heart, than those that are sensual. There is no joy comparable to that which a gracious soul has from God. *Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* And therefore our Saviour tells us that he gives his peace to his followers, *not as the world giveth.* It is God's gift, set home, and takes root in the heart, and not a poor flighty, flashy joy that will not fortify the mind under distresses.

AGAIN: christian delight will make a man the better. Carnal delights fill the mind with vanity and folly, and sensitive pleasures draw away the heart into the slavery of sin: and therefore being under the dominion of sin, and *serving divers lusts and pleasures,* are joined together. But christian delight strengthens the graces of the christian life: it is so far from disordering the mind and encouraging sensuality, that it tends to purify the heart, to render sin the more hateful, and strengthen christians against the temptations of sense. The more a man delights

delights in God and his law, the more he will cleave to him, and go forward against flesh and blood, in the christian course. *The joy of the Lord is his strength.* Holy delight in God and his will, fortifies the mind to perform all sorts of duty required in the law. The safety of the christian life, lies very much in maintaining a spirit of christian delight. Hence steadfastness and rejoicing in hope to the end, are united by the apostle, Heb. iii. 6.

II. LET US consider the object of this delight: There is an agreeable affection of the reasonable soul, in its union with God in Christ; and there is a sacred delight in the law of the Lord; the perceptive part of the word. Every real christian has an entire affection for the law of God; for every part of it, as it is perfectly suited to every faculty of soul and body, and as it is adapted to every relation and station of life.

THE pious psalmist did not glory in vicious and wicked courses, nor in following sensual inclinations, beguiling his heart with groundless apprehensions, that there is no such evil in sin, as the word declares, and as conscience sometimes suggests. Neither did he place his delight in the honors, pleasures, or profits of the world, as those do who see no greater
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good : but his delight was in the law, engraven upon his heart, and the rule of his life ; the word by which his heart was renewed and sanctified, and his affections animated in religion. The temper and inclination of a person is known by his delight and displeasure. He that is *in the flesh, has the motions of sin working in his members to bring forth fruit unto death.* The greatest part of the world are greedily pursuing the pleasures of sense : but where the law is engraven upon the heart, men are inclined to nobler things ; things beyond their utmost conceptions, much more beyond all their deserts, even the fulfilment of the precious promises, in their variety, riches and extent.

It is the moral law that seems to be specially aimed at in the text. And though the true christian has great pleasure in the promises of the gospel, this does not exclude his delight in the commands of the law. The commands point out an agreeable work for him to do, and teach him what is to be done, and what to be left undone. These requirements and prohibitions are agreeable to the new heart, and right spirit, in regenerate souls ; for complying with God's will and conformity to his law, has a divine pleasure annexed to it. It is not the study of the law as it opens matters for empty speculation that is the ground of his delight in it ; but

he delights in it as a rule of obedience and christian practice. It is delightful to his soul that he has a perfect and sure rule, commending itself with good evidence to his conscience, and plainly teaching that it is from God, and a representation of his own moral character. The delight that men may have in speculative views of truth, which they study for amusement, is nothing to that delight there is in holy practice. Nothing is more comfortable than a good conscience, under all the troubles of various kinds, which christians meet with in the world. Hence the apostle and his brethren, under the many tribulations they met with, from their adversaries and others, could say with holy triumph in their hearts, *our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world.* I shall allow that speculative views of truth, are much more delightful than any sensual pleasures. *Honey is pleasant to the taste, and so is the knowledge of wisdom to the soul;* but especially the knowledge of divine things; to understand and contemplate the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. To contemplate this divine mystery makes a heaven upon earth. To have the practical knowledge of this wonderful plan, as much exceeds the speculative view of it, as speculation

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tion exceeds bodily pleasures. And not only so, but the practical knowledge of the law, is as much more delightful than speculative, as speculation is than sensual delights; because practical knowledge of the law gives an intimate feeling of the truth and excellency of every part of christian duty contained therein.

Now, the foundation of this delight, is love to the law and its author. There is love to the object before there can be delight in it. It is impossible any thing should be delighted in, before it is loved and desired. By nature we count the commands of the law burdesome. The dispositions of a carnal heart, stand in direct opposition to the perfections, authority and government of God, to the revelation he has made of his mind and will, and to a conformity of heart and life to his law: *it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can be.* But in renovation the heart is changed; the man is under the prevalent guidance and government of the holy Spirit, and of a spiritual and gracious principle, which is wrought in him. Hence he has another kind of love, and other kind of affections: supreme love to God, determines his heart to an impartial respect to the whole, and every part of the
moral

moral law ; and therefore the apostle makes conscientious obedience to every command, the test of unfeigned and governing love to God. *This is the love of God ; i. e. a proof of love to God, that we keep his commands.*

III. WE promised some reasons that induce the real christian to delight in the law of the Lord.

I. IT is because he esteems it a fit rule of duty for God to give, and for rational creatures to receive. It is a law that mankind could not do without. It is a law that requires a supreme regard to God, that we should love him supremely, serve him uprightly, with a perfect heart and a willing mind ; rely upon his word, and delight in his perfections and government. Every particular, in its utmost extent, is intrinsically pure and right ; the eternal and unchangeable rule of holiness ; and its direct and natural intent is to promote holiness. And surely, to know and love God, to fear and honor him, to trust in and worship him, in the way and manner he has appointed, is delightful in itself, and must be so to every gracious heart. So God bids us *keep mercy and judgment*, i. e. shew kindness to all men, as we are called, and they need : exercise humanity to all in their straits : be just in all our judgments

and dealings ; render to all their due, in their several places and relations. And these duties are not grievous to the upright & gracious soul. If these duties are not observed, the order and welfare of society cannot be maintained : magistrates and subjects, officers and churches, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants would all run into confusion. But there is a great blessedness and pleasure in the christian observation of all personal, relative and stational duties. In the law, God acts as governor and commander, but as it comes to a real christian, it is like the counsels of a friend.

2. BECAUSE regenerate souls have an heart suited to obey the law of God. Nothing is really delightful, but what is suited to the nature and disposition that a man has. That which is delightful to one, may be hateful to another, as the food of a swine may be loathsome to a man. There is an essential difference between the carnal and spiritual mind, the sanctified and un sanctified heart ; the heart of stone, and the heart of flesh. When a man's heart is possessed of gracious principles, the duties of obedience are delightful. A thorough change being made in the will and affections, and in the practical powers of the soul, by engraving the word upon the fleshy table of the heart, to guide and govern

govern him in all his ways, then he delights to do the will of God. In an irregenerate state we are bent upon serving the lusts of our own carnal hearts, but the renewed mind has an inclination quite another way. Though false biaſſes will incline a christian unto carnal things, yet corrupt nature is subdued, and the new nature is inclined to the way that is everlasting. And the real christian will have divine aid to increase his delight in the ways of God. He is not only fitted with inward power and inclination to do the things that God commands and approves, but the spirit of God does excite and actuate that inclination, by renewing and quickning influences. And therefore the apostle says, *God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* If a good work is begun, he continues to carry it on; gives internal virtue to excite, incline and determine the will.

3. THE good which christians find in obedience; makes them delight in the law. The natural fruit of an upright regard to christian duty is peace of conscience. *Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.* None enjoy themselves more than those that are uprightly strict in observing all the duties of holy practice. They may have troubles without, and great peace within.

The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The righteousness of faith, and true holiness of heart and life, is the way to solid peace in the soul, and to the consolations, which the Holy Spirit is the author of: And there is no such solid peace, as in obedience to the commands of God. It is found specially comforting under reproaches and persecutions: If a man suffers for his love to God and his law, he will see more cause to love and obey God, and to increase in his strict obedience to every branch of duty, than he did before. When he sees the excellency of divine truth, and feels the power of God supporting him while he confesses it, he will the more readily embrace God's commands, and take pleasure in his ways. The Lord appeals to the experience of his saints, *do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?* Mich. ii. 7. Have you not found it so, that mercy and truth attend such as keep his covenant and testimonies to do them?

4. The esteem and love they have for God himself, make them delight in his law. If a man loves God, in his true character, he must needs be suited with every thing that comes from him, and leads to him. Common favors of providence point to their gracious author, and their main end is to draw
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out the heart to him, and to excite and enable us to serve him : but these favors are often improved to gratify some lust, and draw the heart away from God. But there is a deeper stamp of the divine character in God's law, and its use is more eminent to lead us unto God. *I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips, I have esteemed the words of his mouth, more than my necessary food.* Job. xxiii. 12. The real christian will keep close to the law of God, for his judgment and affection lead to it. He lays up the word in his heart, and is more careful to do the will of God, than to provide food for his body.

IV. WE proposed to consider the evidence of holy delight in the law of the Lord; viz, He meditates therein day and night. Many there be, that read and hear the word in a cursory, inattentive manner : but the Godly are careful to understand it : they discourse with themselves concerning the great things contained in it, with close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, until they are suitably affected with those things, and experience the power of them in their hearts. They have an habitual regard to the law of God as the rule of their actions, and the spring of their comforts, and have it in their thoughts upon every occasion that occurs, whether by night or day.

THE inadvertency of many to God's law, is their bane. They have slight apprehensions, which make very weak impressions. They read and hear the word, but it is to them like *seed that fell by the way-side : then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* They do not meditate upon the word, never lay it to their hearts nor cover it over with second thoughts; the word makes no impression, through the hardness of their hearts; so that satan obtains his will upon them. Many that hear the word are *like a man beholding his natural face in a glass, who goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* They have some notions and convictions of their guilt, depravity and danger, but proceed no further, they take a transient view of themselves without any deep and abiding impressions upon the heart. God's great charge that he brings against his people, is, *they do not consider, or lay to heart. I hearkened and heard, said God, but they spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?*

ON the other hand; the scripture recommends meditation upon the word, as one step towards, and an evidence of obedience. When the heart of Lydia was opened to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, she seriously attended to, reflected upon, applied to
herself,

herself, and obediently received the suitable and important truths which were delivered. And the apostle James says, *whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* He that, in opposition to a transient view, intensely and accurately dwells upon, and looks into the perfect law of God; which is a law of liberty to real christians, for serving God with holy freedom and delight; and if he continues thus intently to dwell upon it in a course, this is the evidence of his happiness, though not for, yet with his work of faith and labor of love.

Now that sacred meditation in the Law of the Lord, day and night, is a sign of holy delight in it as a rule of christian practice, is manifest : for

1. IT is a sign that a person desires to know God and his duty. A true christian knows that a superficial knowledge has no effectual influence upon the heart and life, and that it must be by intense meditation that he must become acquainted with the spirit of the divine law : and therefore he searches for this knowledge as for silver, and seeks after it as for hid treasures. He labors in the search of it, and willingly undergoes much toil, and runs great hazards :
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he is indefatigable, and invincibly constant and resolute in the pursuit of this divine knowledge.

2. CONSTANT meditation upon the perfect law of God is a sign that a person desires to keep his whole duty fixed in his mind and memory. Inattention is a sort of ignorance for the time it is indulged. Though a person may habitually know a thing, he does not actually know it, when he does not consider it. *They consider not that they do evil*: They act at a venture, right or wrong, pleasing or displeasing to God, they seem indifferent. So God complains that his people, though they had some habitual knowledge of his law, they were inattentive to it and its author, and therefore they run into many and great sins. *They consider not in their hearts, that I remember all their wickedness.* i. e. They do not seriously meditate and ponder upon it. But a real christian knows the necessity of the actual knowledge of his rule: he wants it always before him. And he knows the way thereto is to meditate in it day and night, never to forget and lay aside any of its rules, but he keeps them alive in his mind and heart, for daily use, by constant and close meditation upon them.

3. **CONSTANT** meditation upon the law tends to excite holy affection. Dwelling upon an object with strict and constant attention will have some effect. No man can closely meditate upon any thing without being moved towards or against it, in liking or disliking. A christian finds that truth unthought of, has no secret power to subdue sin, and stir up the heart to love and holy practice. But he dwells upon the law by constant meditation, and that kindles his love to, and delight in it. He besieges his own heart, by frequent and deep thoughts, that it might yield to God, and give entertainment to all and every rule and branch of duty contained in the law. He finds the only way to come at his heart is by his understanding; and that his intelligent faculty must be engaged in what is presented to it, or it will not gain the heart. Indwelling sin, and the grand adversary of the soul, are watching our frame, to take us off from intense meditation upon divine things, so as to make us forget our rule.

USE I. Learn hence, they are far from the christian temper, who delight in sinful practices. Some who are professing christians make a light matter of many breaches of God's law: they are manifestly pleased with the sins of others, and will make themselves and their companions merry with that for

which they should mourn. And they make light of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin, and when they have committed sin, and will turn to their course of iniquity, as the horse rusheth into the battle, and think they shall have peace, though they go on. Some indeed, seem to be grieved at, and watch against some sorts of sins, but take pleasure in others. One is apparently devout in worship, and will abound therein, but is careless in the duties of the second table. Another is sober and temperate, and will seem grieved at intemperance in others, but he is unjust, covetous, oppressive, or unkind towards his neighbour. Another is honest in his dealings, and charitable to the necessitous, but is luxurious, intemperate, or given to carnal pleasure. Now, such persons, let their profession be what it will, are void of the christian temper; for they take pleasure in some sin or other. There is some particular lust, contrary to some particular law, so that they say, spare thy servant in this thing. The whole law, as a rule of holy living, is not their delight: if they are intensely meditating upon one branch, the other branches they neglect. These men, how demure soever they appear in some things, choose to live without the yoke of true religion upon their necks. They do not like to be bound by the whole law, as the rule of their whole conduct, but break
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the bands asunder, and cast away the cords from them.

II. LET us try our state by the temper of our hearts towards the law of God. They who love God and embrace the gospel do not pick and choose, like one part, and dislike another, but *delight greatly in all God's commandments*. They stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his Majesty, and deference for his whole will. They are pleased with the equity and goodness of all his commandments: they are all written in their hearts: it is their choice to be under them, and they call them an easy and pleasant yoke. It is their delight to be searching into, conversing about, reading, hearing, and meditating upon the law. They not only delight in the promises, but the precepts, and think themselves happy under God's government, as well as in his favor.

BUT is this the supreme delight of our souls? Does the law of the Lord draw our hearts off from worldly vanities, to the study of its extent and excellency? What are our conceptions about it, taken or considered as a body of rules? What do we esteem our greatest treasure; to grow rich towards God, in an increase of grace and holy obedience, or

to heap up earthly treasures? Which is our greatest care, either to maintain our carnal delights, or to obey God? If our delight is in the law, our minds are exercised about it, and in it. Our thoughts follow our affections. It is wearisome to meditate upon that which we do not delight in. It was no great matter for Haman to lead Mordecai's horse, said one, yet a burdensome offensive service, because it was against the grain. Small matters, when they are disagreeable, are tedious. The difficulty in holy duties does not lie in the duties themselves, but in the disposition of the heart. If you have an heart to meditate upon the law, you will find time, strength and opportunity for it. Delight in all the rules of christian practice will set you to work, for all persons are apt to think closely upon that which pleases their hearts. Why are not holy thoughts, and intense meditations in God's law, as natural and free to us, as worldly or carnal thoughts? The defect lies in the heart. *I delight in thy testimonies, said the psalmist, and therefore I will meditate in thy statutes.*

III. LET all be excited to meditate in the law of the Lord with delight. Go over and over again with these great and necessary truths with intense consideration.

THE world, in general, are meditating upon other things with eagerness. Some have their thoughts, day and night, upon vanity, and have no time to spend in sober meditation in the purity and perfection, the reasonableness and excellency of the law. They have no time to consider of the requirements and threatenings of it, nor of the method and necessity of escape from the wrath threatened to all those that break it. They have time enough to think of, and practice wickedness, but no time for God and his law, for Christ and his salvation. Many have their thoughts taken up with various sinful thoughts and desires. Uncleanness sets up the stage in the heart of one, revenge in the heart of another. Envy stirs up repining thoughts, and pride whispers vanity: while others have their hearts going after covetousness, and are exercised in covetous practices, hearts entirely engaged in contrivances how to compass their desires after the riches, honors, or pleasures of the world. But our exhortation is to all, that they would meditate in God's perfect, and widely extended law; a duty awfully neglected: but it might be of great use if it were revived.

Consider

1. IT is a necessary duty. It is not a matter that may be complied with or neglected at pleasure; but

of absolute necessity. God has commanded it for a wise and holy end. *This book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mightest observe to do all that is written therein.* It is also necessary, in order to keep grace alive, and lively in the heart. Faith will decay without meditation upon the promises. Hope would fail without contemplation upon the things hoped for. Love will wax cold, unless the height and breadth and depth of God's love in Christ be contemplated. And as meditation is an help to other graces, so it is to duties. The heart is hard, the memory slippery, the thoughts vain, and therefore, unless the good seed is covered by meditation, the fowls of the air will come and pluck it away. A man never comes to observe the scope, order and extent of the law, until he meditates upon it. We may lay down general rules, and deduce practical inferences, but that which fastens them upon men's thoughts, is meditation. What is the reason that men are so barren and sapless in prayer? It is for want of meditation. What is the reason there is such unholy practice? It is for want of meditation. David found his desires enlarged in prayer and holy practice, the more he meditated on the word, Ps. cxliiii. 5, 6.

2. It is a profitable duty. Usually God visits his people in their deepest meditations upon his word. And there is a natural tendency of Good in this duty. It tends to fix the truth upon the mind. Sermons meditated upon; the law of God considered and meditated upon, are long remembered, and that sets the heart on work. The greatest truths will not work upon a person who does not think them over. Tell him of sin, of God, and Christ; of heaven and hell; of the law and gospel, and nothing moves him, because he will not meditate: or if he is a little stirred, with the truth set before him, it is soon gone, and his conscience is easy. We must inculcate the truth upon ourselves, again and again, if we would have it affect us. When we look upon the law or gospel, in a transient manner, we cannot see half the beauty and importance of one or the other. O let us store our minds with good thoughts of the word, and set it a work on holy things, and then we shall find no time for vanity, no time for slander, no time for idleness. Meditation is the nurse of true religion, the great instrument of all the offices of grace. Without meditation we take up things by hearsay, and repeat them by rote; without affection, without life, or sense of their worth and importance. O

let us bind the word upon our hearts, that when we go, it may lead us; when we wake, it may talk with us:

O that these things may sink down into our hearts, that we might intermeddle with the divine law, so as to be divorced from it as a covenant, and adhere to it as a rule! By meditation, the truth, extent and excellency of it may be enforced upon us. Meditate on God, whose character is transcribed in the law, that we may love him, and it. Meditate upon it, that we may know sin and hate it; that we may fear hell, and shun it; that we may know the qualifications and work of heaven, and pursue it.

S E R M O N



SERMON XXIII.

Of the glory of Divine Grace.

E P H E S I A N S I. 7.

— *According to the riches of his
Grace.*

THE great apostle gives a general ac-
T count of the saving blessings of the gos-
pel, in the beginning of this chapter ;
and then enlarges upon them, as prepared in God's
eternal election, as purchased by Christ's blood, and
as conveyed in effectual calling.

THE fountain of all these blessings, we are told
in my text, is *the riches of God's grace*. He had no
other aim in the whole plan, but to display abroad
his goodness and benignity ; that perfection of his

nature, which sheds a divine glory upon his whole character. Particularly, it is with this view that his chosen ones are acceptable to himself, in his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. In him, as their head and redeemer, and by virtue of their union with him, they have a glorious and compleat deliverance from all evil, and a recovery unto all blessedness, and that by the invaluable price of the Redeemer's blood. And these, as well as all other gospel benefits, are not from any desert of our own, but merely from the inexhaustible fulness, excellence and boundless grace of God. Hence,

THE great design of God in the whole work of redemption through the blood of Christ, is to shew forth the glory of free grace! When all mankind had equally fallen from God, by violating the covenant of works, and had made themselves worthy of death and eternal condemnation, God of his mere grace and good pleasure, chose to take one before another into the covenant of grace. As sovereign proprietor and disposer of all blessings in heaven and earth, he discovers the good things of the gospel, so as to make them effectual to some and not to others. And therefore our Saviour said, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent,*

dent, and last revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. But we are taught that this sovereign choice of one before another, is in and with Christ, as their great Head and Representative, in Eph. i. 4. This was the effect of the riches of his mercy and grace, towards most miserable sinners, who were not only most unworthy, of any grace or favor, but worthy of all indignation and misery. It must therefore be of mere grace that God has contrived and appointed a method of redemption; that he has given and accepted Jesus Christ to that end. Hence said our Lord, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* It is a matchless design of mere love and grace, from all eternity, towards sinners of this wretched, guilty, and rebellious world, that he has given Christ to be the salvation to the ends of the earth, and to be made a propitiation for the sins of his people. It is mere grace that God has given such a surety, such a Mediator, *the seed of the woman that has bruised the serpent's head.* It is the riches of grace that Christ should be Mediator of the covenant; that God promised him, and, in the fulness of time, fulfilled his promise. And therefore Christ calls himself *the gift of God.* And in him God gives to his people *exceeding great and precious*

promises; the best of promises, great beyond our conceptions, much more beyond our deserts.

Now, that this redemption through the blood of Christ, with all the favors and blessings contained and implied in it, is from the free favor and grace of God, will appear, by a further consideration of several things. . . . It will appear

1. FROM the person that reveals it, and first entered upon the plan; and that is the Lord, God all-sufficient; God the Father, as appears by the context. It is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed his people*. He devised the method of redemption, and all that the Son does therein is not his own will, but the will of him that sent him: and it is by the will of the Father that he was set apart, and that his people are sanctified. The original of all the favors we have from Christ, and by redemption, is from the Father's grace. He has all in himself, and shines in his own, and not a borrowed light. As he is all-sufficient, so he is self-sufficient, and can be debtor to none, nor stand in need of any. He needs no borrowed excellency or glory from another, and therefore for him to choose out some of rebel man; to open a way; to send and accept of his Son, as Redeemer and purchaser
of

of all the blessings opened and offered in the gospel, and bestowed upon elect sinners, must needs be of the riches of his superabundant and overflowing grace.

2. FROM the condition and temper of man. All mankind had broken the first covenant by sin, and had fallen under the curse of it. So far were all from the needed blessings, that they were bound over to deserved misery. And not only so, but they *desire to be under the law*, for justification before God: they choose to help themselves, by their own obedience, and look upon that way most desirable. They have mean and low thoughts of the essential rights of God's justice, and seek to set up their own imperfect, and external performances, and desire to make them stand as their righteousness, for acceptance before God. Thus blind, self-conceited, and proud is man, and scorns to be entirely beholden to free and sovereign grace, and to renounce all trust in his own righteousness. His heart is set against the gospel way of redemption through the blood of Christ. Now, what can it be but the riches of sovereign grace in God, to reveal this method of salvation to those that are enemies to his grace? Can we find any thing recommending to this favor, in those who shut their eyes, and stop their ears from
hearing

hearing the dreadful things denounced against them in the law of God? Can it be supposed that there is any worthiness in those who do their utmost to render the grace of the gospel ineffectual to answer its wise and beneficial design?

3. FROM the distribution of these blessings to some sinners, and not to others. Consider the tremendous condition of the once happy and holy angels, who did not maintain their dignity and integrity, but turned rebels to the crown of heaven. These are cast down from their bliss and glory, which God had given them for an everlasting abode, in case they had continued in sinless obedience to him. But they, on account of their revolt from God, and rebellion against him, he has committed, like condemned prisoners, and holds them fast by his purpose, power and providence, *in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.* Christ did not take upon him the nature of angels, to help and rescue them that fell from their original state of rectitude and happiness, but passing by the angelic nature, he took upon him the far more inferior nature of man, and left sinning angels to perish under the curse, without making them an offer of mercy. And when all men were *strangers from the covenant of promise, far from God, and from all spi-*

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ritual life and happiness; all alike in their natural state, in opposition to the perfections, authority, and government of God, that the Lord has been pleased to choose out some to be members of his visible church, and to hear of, and enjoy the external dispensation of the means of grace, and out of them to choose out a number to redeem and save, and that for nothing but because he had a favor for them; to take some parents and redeem them from sin and misery, and leave their wicked children; some children, and leave their ungodly parents; to pass by one, and make another experience the power of distinguishing love: what shall we say to these things? Is it of mere grace, or is it from any worthiness in one more than another? When God says, *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and the base things of the world, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are.* When it is manifest that God does not ordinarily make his despised doctrine effectual to the conversion and salvation of men of superior rank in the world, but calls home persons of contemptible characters, those that are accounted as worth nothing at all: Is there any ground of boasting in parts, learning, or accomplishments? Is there any thing in man to render him

him the object of divine favor, or make him wise to salvation, either by any methods of his own devising, or by any ability in himself to improve the gospel to that purpose, one more than another? Or how comes this difference, but according to the riches of God's grace? Is it not free grace that raises up some poor, sinful creatures above their brethren? When this is candidly considered, reason itself will say, *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* He extends his mercy to the miserable as he pleases, and whom he sees fit, in his awful Sovereignty he passes by, and leaves them to their chosen obstinacy. While some see the glory, and hear the voice of the Son of God so as to live, others see the light and hear the voice, but do not understand the meaning. Well therefore has the apostle said, *by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* The whole of the gospel salvation, from the first to the last, is entirely a free and undeserved gift, all owing to the mere good will and favor of God.

4. FROM the great privileges to which believers are advanced. The persons of believers are united to the Lord Jesus Christ in his highest preferment. As the lowest abasement of Christ was, to be *made under the law*, both under the precept and under the
curse

curse of it; so the highest advancement of believers, comes by union with Christ. Thereby they have an interest in his righteousness and sonship. Hereby there is the nearest relation between God and them; the nearest and sweetest union; of enemies they are the friends of God, and their communion exceeds the communion of the holy angels themselves, for they are *betrothed unto the Lord forever; yea, they are betrothed unto him in righteousness, and in loving kindness, and in mercies.* The God of infinite mercy has forgiven their sins, and changed their hearts: and now there is an everlasting contract between them and their God; but all is without desert in them; they are betrothed of mere love, and the freest kindness: mercy is the never failing stream, the abundant fruit of divine love towards undeserving creatures. Besides; when they are brought into this special relation to Christ, by union, they are intitled to a reward of all their holy services. There is not the meanest good offices they do for Christ that shall go without a reward; even *a cup of cold water, given to one of his little ones, in the name of a disciple,* shall be rewarded. Mountains of gold, or all the diamonds of the east; nay, the whole world cannot equal the reward that a saint shall have, for the very least service he ever did for Christ. And this reward arises from union with

Christ, and interest in the same covenant with him: *Our goodness extendeth not to God.* We cannot pretend to merit any thing by the best we do. God has no need of our services, he is not profited by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessedness. But if we are vitally united to Christ, and do any thing for him, to his poor saints, there is merit enough in him, which, by covenant, shall procure a reward. Had there been no agreement and engagement on the Father's part with his Son, the Father might have accepted the righteousness of Christ or not, as he pleased; and therefore the ground of his prevailing for a reward to the righteous, is the free grace of the Father, promising to accept of his satisfaction for his people, and to reward their holy services on that account.

BUT did not Jesus Christ purchase the great and precious promises which God the Father has made and revealed in the gospel?

ANS. No, he did not purchase them. We should carefully observe the difference between the promises themselves, and the fruits and effects of them. All the blessings promised, are dealt out by Jesus Christ, and are parts of his purchase. He has purchased

chased the fruits of the spirit; effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification and eternal glory: but he has not purchased himself; but he was the free promise of the Father. *I the Lord, will give thee for a covenant of the people.* God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. This is the grand, comprehensive promise of the gospel, implying the rest. And when God determined to save and bless some of self-ruined mankind, Jesus Christ is considered as his Father's servant, as he was the person into whose hand the whole affair of redeeming sinners should be committed. And to display the exceeding riches of the Father's grace, in him who is the Prince of peace, and to manifest that all things are of God, Christ came. To shew that the whole scheme of the gospel, in its whole extent and glory, are entirely of God as the author; and who has, in his infinite wisdom and grace, found out an expedient to repair the breach which sin had made.

CHRIST was appointed to his office of Mediator: his great designation was from the riches of the Father's grace; and therefore he says, *behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth*, Isa. xlii. 6. Christ was chosen out by the Father to the great work of redemption, to which he is sealed and sent. He was chosen to be the head

of all the elect in the covenant of grace. And as election to grace and glory, was an act of the riches of grace, so the designation of Christ to his office of Mediator and Redeemer, was an act of rich and free grace. When considered as God, he is equal in power and glory, and the same in substance with the Father, yet as God-man and head of the church, he comes under the acts of God's will; and it was free with God whether he would have chosen him to this office, and call him to this honor, yea or not. He did not assume to himself this great office and dignity, but was called and authorized to it by God the Father. And therefore, says the apostle in the name of Christ, *lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me.* The Greek word, rendered volume, signifies head, and therefore it is better rendered "head of the book," and may refer to the first and principal article in the book of life, which contained Christ's engagement to God the Father; or to the first promise of *the seed of the woman.*

AGAIN: it was of the riches of the Father's grace that Christ was fitted for his office. We readily allow, and firmly believe that Christ was truly God. *Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* In his proper nature,

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he is as truly and properly God, as in his human nature he was man ; and therefore he did not count it a usurpation, or injury, to claim an equality of nature with God the Father ; he and the Father being essentially one. Yet the scripture does ascribe the whole of his being qualified for his office to the boundless grace of the Father, When our blessed Lord spake with reference to his coming into this lower world, in the Fortieth Psalm, and when he actually came into his incarnate state for executing his office, he said to his Father, *a body hast thou prepared me.* He owns that his Father, in infinite wisdom and grace, prepared for him a true human body, animated with a human soul, and so formed a proper human nature for him. And so, it was by the Father's grace, that the human and divine nature were united in one person, that the works and sufferings of Christ might be dignified with infinite worth, to render them available for a complete atonement. Hence it is said, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee : therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* And this is the reason why the human nature of Christ, as in personal union with the divine, should be called the Son of God. And it was in obedience to the Father that he took the human nature into union with himself,

himself, without which he could not be qualified for his office. In obedience to the Father's command, *the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily.* All the essential perfections dwelt substantially in his human body, when *the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*

AGAIN: it was by the riches of the Father's grace, that Christ was anointed for his work. The Father sent him in a way peculiar to himself, not only in his coming into our nature and world, but in the exercise of his public office, and he had a more divine way of uttering the mind of God than any mere man, because God gave not the spirit by measure unto him, as in John iii. 34. The Father poured out the gifts and graces of the holy Spirit upon the human nature of Christ, in a measure far above all creatures. He has all sorts of gifts, for all sorts of uses. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.* And hence he was furnished *to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn: to*

appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. It was by this anointing, by the grace of the Father, that he was fitted to be the universal head of the church, and the store-house to all his people.

AGAIN : it was of the Father's abundant grace, that Christ was assisted and carried through the great work of redeeming sinners: *God hath given to us eternal life, says the apostle John, and this life is in his Son.* This eternal life is purchased by, and treasured up and secured in Christ, who, as head of his body, has all the springs and fulness of it in himself, to communicate in the dispensations of grace, which shall issue in eternal glory. But that he has the fulness of this grace and power, he ascribes to the gracious assistance of his Father. God the Father promised him help to go through his work, and Christ encouraged him'self by exercising faith in the Father's promise. Memorable is that promise to the Messiah: *He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, until he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law, Isa. xlii, 4.* This is the Father's promise to Christ, that he would support,

support, assist and strengthen him in every branch of his office, that he should not be deceived through ignorance, nor kept back through fear, nor hindered by want of power. And it is with these, and such like promises, that Christ supports himself in his great undertaking, because he relied on the faithfulness of the promiser. *The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me, who shall contend with me? Let us stand together: who is mine adversary: Let him come near to me,* Isa. l. 7, 8. Thus Christ relies upon his Father's gracious promise, against the hardness of the people, and all other opposition, that he would bear him up, and carry him through. And so, by faith in the promise, he was wonderfully borne up in the prospect of his sufferings and death. He was sure that he should not be driven off from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it, because of the promised presence of his Father. And when he was in his agony, an angel was sent down from heaven to strengthen him. This gave him triumph in the cross, and a pleasing prospect of the glorious issue of all his sufferings. *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glo-*

ry rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Though he was bruised and put to grief, yet he kept fast hold of the Father, as his God, and encouraged himself from the experiences which saints had in former times, of the benefit of faith and prayer. Our fathers trusted in thee : they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered : they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. And therefore he depended upon it, that God would carry him through, and grant deliverance.

AGAIN : it was of the Father's grace, that Christ was accepted in his redeeming work. It is true, Christ is an infinitely worthy person ; his worthiness is answerable to all the world of mankind, and to all the fallen angels, and to millions of worlds besides ; for he is an infinite person, possessed of all possible perfection and glory. Consequently, there is a worth and value in all that he did and suffered, answerable to all that the law and the justice of God did or could require, because the value of his doings and sufferings arose from the infinite worthiness of his person : and had it not been so, it could not have been satisfaction to an offended Deity. But now, whatever favors God bestows upon

us, Jesus Christ has paid a valuable price for. Yea, his obedience deserved and merited whatever the Lord shall bestow upon the elect through eternal ages. Though grace in time, and glory through eternity is the free gift of God to them, yet it is not so to Christ, because he has paid the full value of all these blessings. But it was boundless grace to accept of what Christ did and suffered in behalf of sinners. Had it not been for his promise, he might have refused to accept the valuable consideration; refused to impute it to any of the fallen race of Adam, or to consider it as done in their stead, and for them; for it is unquestionably just, that the soul who sinneth, should die; and therefore it must be grace only, that brings in the exchange of person. There is no abatement of the most rigorous demands of the law; but, of mere grace, God has agreed to accept of the righteousness of another in our stead. All the benefits of Christ's death, remission of the penalty due for sin, reconciliation to God, justification before him, and adoption into his family; all depend upon, and flow from the riches of the Father's grace; for had he not appointed the redeeming work of Christ, and promised to accept it for his people; had he not been appointed in their stead, not one soul could have enjoyed the benefit of it. And therefore it is by his will alone,
that

that the blessings of grace and glory are made over to any sinful creatures. They were entrusted with Christ, and he paid the full price of their redemption by agreement. Hence he said, *I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* The whole of his business that he came into the world upon, was punctually to fulfil his Father's will, as the Savior of sinners. He was entrusted by the Father with this work, and sent into the world with a commission to effect it. He did all by appointment from the Father, and therefore said, *my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work,* 1. Cor. xv. 24.

FINALLY; all that Christ has and does, as Redeemer, will appear to be according to the riches of God's grace, in the last day. And therefore Christ, as man and Mediator, having fully executed the whole scheme of his dispensatory kingdom, for which all power was given him after his resurrection, will deliver up his commission to God the Father from whom he received it. This seems agreeable to what we are taught by the apostle Paul, who says, *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.* This does not mean that Christ will in all respects cease to be a king; or to have any further reign or dominion.

His essential kingdom as God, will have no end: and he, in his human nature, will wear the honors of his office, and of his mediatorial performances, and of their secure and abiding effects, and will be in a state of authority and glory, as the head of the church, for ever and ever. But he will give up his church, which is his kingdom, and the present mode of administration in providence and grace. He will lay all down, and make it appear to men and angels, that whatever he has done in the kingdom of grace, he has done as constituted Mediator, and appointed ruler over all: It will then appear that all the great and marvellous things which he has been doing, in his universal dominion over all persons and things, was in obedience to his Father's will. Then he will surrender up himself, together with the whole church, to the Father's disposal, with respect to the honors that he shall wear as man and head of the body, and with respect to all the blessedness which they shall eternally enjoy, and be confirmed in, with and under him. *Then shall the Son, said the apostle, also himself be subject unto him that hath put all things under him, that God may be all in all.* i. e. That God essentially considered, and all the perfections of the Godhead, which are common to the three persons, shall have all the glory of all the saints, and of Christ also; and shall have the riches

of his grace honored as the fountain of all. God shall be the immediate fountain of dominion, and of all divine emanations of glory and blessedness to all the saints, and to the man Christ Jesus himself, as the head of them, that it may appear that he has done all, in his mediatorial work, as the Father's servant, and in obedience to his command.

USE I. Learn hence, that God is willing to save the chief of sinners. For saving sinners does exalt the riches of free grace : and surely, if he was willing to appoint his own Son to be the Redeemer ; if he fitted him to sustain the office, and anointed him to his work ; if he assisted and accepted him in it ; if he laid the whole plan, and revealed it to a lost world ; and all to show forth the riches of his grace ; if, I say, these things are true, he must be infinitely ready to bestow his saving blessings upon sinners, on the most reasonable terms. There was no motive out of himself, inducing him to devise and open such a wonderful plan of redemption. The foundation of it was in himself ; his own infinite love and grace : he has done it for his own name's sake. The whole scheme, and all its surprising and gracious effects, from first to last, is entirely a free and undeserved gift ; it is all owing to the mere good will and favor of God. *Not by works*
of

of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us. It neither was, nor could be from any good works done, or foreseen, that was the ground of this device, or great preparations to redeem souls ; for there was nothing inviting in sinful man : but it was of his own free self-moving, undeserved, abused, and provoked mercy, and according to his own compassionate propensions, that he redeems any out of their deplorable state of sin and misery. Nothing is a more glaring evidence of unbelief, than jealous and suspicious thoughts of the riches of God's grace, and his readiness to save sinners. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* God has given incontestible evidence of his grace in Christ ; and therefore not to believe the report, but still to be suspicious of the truth, argues the enmity of the heart against God. And what can betray the enmity of the heart more, than to suspect the freedom of divine grace, now God has declared his design to save the self-ruined, and has been at infinite expence to accomplish it ? Was it not exceeding grateful to David that the General of his army should press upon him by the most importunate suit, that he might fetch home Absalom ? Doubtless Joab knew David's heart was set upon his son, and therefore, when he had got leave, he addressed himself with all speed to fetch him.

DID we believe the truth of God, in declaring the love of his heart, in providing for man's redemption ; could we see what infinite pleasure he took in his Son's undertaking for the help of those that had forfeited his favor, and were banished from his presence, would it be possible for us to hesitate, or be doubtful about the freedom and readiness of his heart to be reconciled ? Perhaps you may sometimes have an effecting sense of the compassions of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer : for he was essentially one with the Father, though personally distinct, yet, by a wonderful act of condescension, he *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross,* to redeem sinners from the curse of the law. But you may imagine that Jesus Christ found it hard work to persuade the father to accept of the proposals of peace which he made unto him ; that he chose rather to bathe the sword of justice in the blood of every offender. But this arises from the unbelief of your heart : for the scriptures teach you that the overtures of peace began on the Father's side. It was his free grace and love to perishing sinners, that he sent his Son into our nature and world ; that he fitted him for, carried him through, and accepted him in his work. He does no more than

than the father's will, and according to the riches of the Father's grace, *in bringing many Sons to glory.* He does it by a commission from the Father, and in a way agreeable to the justice and holiness, wisdom and goodness of God, and so as to vindicate the rights and honor of the divine nature, law and government. Therefore your being a sinner, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all God's mercies, is no hindrance to your being redeemed and saved with an everlasting salvation: for he loves freely, and justifies freely by his grace, and invites you to come, if you will, and partake of the most excellent of all blessings freely, according to Rev: xxii. 17. O that you might incline to cast your souls upon the abundant riches of this free grace in Christ Jesus. Cast anchor into Christ himself, the object of hope, who is now in God's peculiar residence and glory. Look upwards, through these aspectable heavens after Christ: fasten upon him, and the Father through him, as exhibited in the promises. Remember that all the glory that is given to Christ in his exalted state, and all he did and suffered in his state of humiliation, is and was, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore here you must rest the whole of your salvation, even upon the riches of free grace; and say, *Why should I sit still and die? If I say, I will enter into the city, then the*
famine

famine is in the city, and I shall die there : and if I sit still here, I shall die also. Now therefore I will rest upon free grace in Christ : If God has mercy upon me I shall live, and if he leaves me to the chosen obstinacy of my own heart, I shall but die.

II. LEARN hence, that the riches of God's grace in redemption have a tendency to inkindle divine love in the heart. What can more tend to inkindle love to God, than a reflection upon his love to us ? If our love to God is the fruit and effect of his grace, then it must be inkindled by it. And if a manifestation of his love to us, and a sense of it, and reflection upon it, are not powerful motives to draw our hearts to love him, there are no motives that will draw us. A sense of his favor and love in Christ, will engage us to chuse him, his word and promises, above all worldly good.

THE great design of divine grace revealed in the gospel, is to engage the heart to God. And therefore God says, *I drew them with the cords of a man ; i. e. with such obliging goodness as tends to work upon rational creatures : with the bands of love ; i. e. with such strong bands as would hold them fast to his love.* The various methods of divine grace tend to fix the heart upon God. And therefore it

is amazing ingratitude and baseness for any to continue their rebellion against him: God desires our love, not only for what he is in himself, but for the emanations of his love to us; and he will accept of nothing from us, but what proceeds from supreme love to him.

BESIDES; all the great and astonishing preparations that God, of his free grace, has made for the redemption of sinners, will be of no real benefit to any souls, unless they are a mean of working and exciting supreme love to God in their hearts. The designation of Christ to his mediatorial office; the union of two natures in one person to fit him for it; the gifts and graces of the Spirit bestowed upon his human nature; the support, assistance and strength Christ had, in the discharge of every branch of his office, and the acceptance of his doings and sufferings in the behalf of sinners; all these great and glorious things, are from the free and boundless grace of God the Father. His mercy is great beyond conception and expression; it is a fountain that can never be exhausted. But, unless we are drawn out in love to God, all this infinite love can do us no real good. Disobedience to God, and the want of love, are inseparable. *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.* No duty done by us

can be pleasing to him, unless it springs from love. Be our character and pretences what they will, if we withhold our love from God and obedience to him, we are abominable in his sight. Can any one imagine, that God will overlook the contempt of the first and great command, the love and fear of himself? Shall we rob God of his unalienable right, and yet hope to be guiltless? Our first and supreme love is due to him; our obligations are written in nature and scripture, as with the point of a diamond. Love consecrates every moral duty, and makes it truly an act of religion, so as to be good and acceptable in God's sight, through his Son Jesus Christ. But if love be not the foundation and principal of our moral works, they are but the body without the soul.

AND therefore all such persons as are destitute of this love to God, will be judged Christ-despisers, and must be shut out of the presence of his glory for ever, and be consumed with his wrath, which burns like fire. And there is nothing that does inflame the wrath of God, and make it burn so fiercely, as that contempt which gospel-sinners cast upon the riches of his grace in Christ. Upon such, *he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest.* The fire of God's wrath will fasten furi-

ously in their consciences, and burn to the lowest hell. Their punishment will be more dreadful than the sinners of Sodom, or Gomorrha. God will cut them off from the interest they professed to have in the Lamb's book of life, and cast them into utter darkness. Their crimes were highly aggravated, by despising the rich and wonderful grace of God in redemption, and therefore the horrors of the thickest darkness, misery and black despair are laid up in store for them. And this must be their portion, without the least dawn of hope, to all eternity, if they will not be drawn by the exceeding greatness, freedom, and endearments of God's love. It is at their utmost peril then, to reject free grace now it is revealed in Christ. They will drink of the wine of God's just fury, which is prepared without mixture of mercy, and will be poured out into a cup filled with God's indignation; and they shall *be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.*

III. FROM our discourse upon this subject, we may collect great encouragement for backsliding christians to return to God. That there is great backsliding from God, none will deny. Though there is some zeal against sin and error, some inclination to look into the principles and manners of those

those who walk disorderly ; some patience and resignation to God's will under troubles which they meet with ; some love to Christ and his cause, that disposes to diligence in standing against contradiction ; yet there is much amiss among christians, on account of which God has a special controversy with them. There are great dissentions among professing christians, which some know not how to explain, and therefore are ready to question the ways of God and religion. Some are stumbled because of the troubles they meet with, and others from the scandals of professors. What by one mean, or another that has come in the way, there are many, whom it would be hard to think are not christians in reality, that are sadly fallen away. We may well confess that Jesus Christ *has somewhat against us*. There is one thing in particular, much amiss among us, on account of which he has a special controversy with us. We are grown cool and indifferent in our affection to Christ and his cause. Although we have solemnly declared our hearty adherence to the protestant standards of faith, we seem to be looking back with reverence to those that renounce them, and are evidently and greatly decayed in our love to the truth, the fruits and effects of it, in the earliest days of our espousals to Christ.

SOME

SOME, no doubt, under a sense of their backslidings, look upon their case almost hopeless. They are almost ready to say, that they have a confirmed state of apostacy, past recovery, as the apostle Jude speaks of some *whose fruit withered, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.* They are almost upon concluding that they are the persons who once *escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but are entangled again and overcome; so that the latter end, with them, will be worse than the beginning.* They will tell you that their case is more dangerous and hopeless, than it was before they knew any thing of Christ and his gospel. But let such beware of hasty and rash conclusions, and attend to the gracious calls of God, who is infinite and everlasting in his mercies: *Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings,* Jer. iii- 22. There is no sin too great for infinite mercy to forgive and subdue. He that has grace enough in his heart to send his Son to die for sinners; he that has grace and power enough to take away hearts of stone, and give hearts of flesh; he that *has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion;* he may send you help from your present troubles, and encourage your hope in Christ. His promise is made to returning backsliders, to encourage them

to hearken to his call. He loves freely, without desert : he is ready to be reconciled, and turn away his anger, if you will return, repent, and do your first works, and exercise the same warm heart and holy affection to him and his cause, as you did in times past. Therefore humbly beg that God would stir up and strengthen the faith of his elect in your hearts ; the faith that works by love to its object. Cry to him that you might rest, not upon any worthiness of your own, but upon the boundless riches of divine grace, which, in its operations, may abundantly fill your souls with its lovely manifestations and distinguishing fruits. Who can tell, but before you are aware, your repentings will be kindled together ? God has made himself strange to you for a while, to chastise you for your former unkindness : but, perhaps, he cannot refrain himself much longer, before he breaks out and says, *I am Joseph*. If you continue crying after him, even now he is withdrawn from you, he will return. “No chariot sent for Christ shall return empty.” He may soon, to your surprise, return and inflame your heart with love to him, and his cause, and one to another. He may soon give you the agency of the holy Spirit to dwell in your heart, as a counsellor, comforter, and sanctifier : and to bear witness with your spirit, that,
notwithstanding

notwithstanding your unworthiness and great provocations, God himself loves you ; that Christ has redeemed and will save you ; that he will set your feet upon a rock that shall not be moved.

S E R M O N



SERMON XXIV.

*Believers receive all Blessings
through Christ.*

H E B R E W S I. 2.

—Whom he hath appointed heir of
all things,—

THE sublime sentiments in this epistle,
T together with the nervous and pathetic
way of reasoning, and applying things
that relate to the person and offices of Christ, make
it highly probable that the apostle Paul was its
author.

In this chapter he shows the excellency of the
present dispensation of grace above the former, and,
to encourage a strict adherence to it, he gives a view

of the great difference there is between the Mosaic and Christian dispensation, and of the vast preference of the latter to the former.

AT the close of the Jewish state, and in the height of the Roman empire, Christ came into the world, and *set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: a kingdom that shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces, and consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.* And Christ, when he came, settled that religion which is truly spiritual in its laws and administrations, and must remain so unto the end of the world, until the whole of that part of the church of Christ that is or shall be vitally united to him, shall be compleated with him in heaven.

THE whole system of divine counsels is now compleatly made known to us, by the Son of God; by his eternal, only begotten and incarnate Son. This eternal Son, is God by nature, and therefore has an original and essential right to inherit all things. But as God-man, in his office-character, the Father hath chosen and ordained him unto heirship, by an unalterable decree. This super-added right is by the appointment of the Father; and therefore, in his mediatorial character, he is now
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the Lord, proprietor and possessor, ruler and disposer of all persons and things; all God's dominions, all that he is, has and will do; all are put into a perfect and full subjection to Christ. And the apostle tells us elsewhere, that the great and special design of his being the appointed heir of all, was that he might be head over all things to the church, i. e. He is made heir of all, and head over all, or has power over all for the good of his church.

FROM these two scriptures it follows, that all the blessings which the church or any particular persons inherit or may hope for, are under Christ. All blessings of all sorts, temporal and spiritual, for time and for eternity, Christ has a right to, is actually possessed of, and disposes of them freely and fully, and the church and particular men must come into the inheritance in and under him. The evidence of this appears

I. FROM the way in which they come into the covenant of Grace. Now, this is evidently by union with Christ. Men are in covenant with God, as they are united to Christ. *If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* They are heirs of the promise, just as they are in Christ. All that profess the true religion,

through the whole world, are united to Christ : they are parts of the house and family of God. This is evident from our Saviour's representing his church by a floor of wheat and chaff ; by a field of wheat and chaff ; and by a net taking in good and bad fish. And so the apostle speaks of it as *a great house, wherein there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.* All these are united to Christ, as they profess the truths of the gospel. And so our Lord speaks of them as fruitful and unfruitful ; but both the one and the other are in him, as in John xv. 2—6. Hence it appears that there is a visible and real union with Christ ; a visible union, where there is not a real and vital union. But in both cases, men have many blessings by being united to Christ.

VISIBLE union with Christ has its blessings. There is a two-fold good promised in the covenant external and internal, both which are promised to the visible church. The whole collective body, being united to Christ by a profession of the true religion, are distinguished from the rest of the world by external blessings. *He sheweth his word unto Jacob : his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation.* God has graciously vouchsafed the outward means of grace to
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his church : and this is a rich blessing, to have a sufficiency of outward means, whereby everlasting blessings are communicated. To enjoy the word and ordinances, in a covenant-way, is a ground of pleading for the saving blessings of grace to be conferred, and a great encouragement to strive after them : for Christ has promised the perpetual presence of his spirit with his visible church. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever.* This promise does not refer to the indwelling presence of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, but to his presence in and with the visible church. And in this sense Christ *walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks.* i. e. He is present, by his Spirit with his church, while the profession of the true religion is maintained. And the great end of this is to make the external means of grace effectual for the ends whereto they are vouchsafed.—But it is by visible union with Christ that these distinguishing blessings are enjoyed ; and the visible church holds all under him, by virtue of this union, as their head in the covenant of grace, and to whom these blessings were promised. The mutual relation between God and his visible church, by which they are brought nigh to him, and he nigh to them, is by union with Christ,

But then

REAL

REAL and vital union with Christ, is connected with spiritual, internal and everlasting blessings. They are possessed of this rich inheritance under Christ their head who are vitally united to Christ,

THEY become one with him as members of his body in a special sense. It is under Christ that they have a change from nature to grace; a change of heart, and receive another spirit different from the spirit of the world. They become one with Christ, in a legal sense, by the mutual consent of both parties. They are made partakers of his spirit, and of his nature. He is their head and they his members, he is the true vine and they are the branches in a special sense. Christ, by his free love, does represent them as his redeemed ones; and they, by the efficacious power of divine grace, do consent to be one with Christ, and to be represented unto God by him. So that they hold all their spiritual and eternal blessings under Christ, as he is head in the covenant of grace.

2. FROM the righteousness that procures the blessings enjoyed or promised. Who is that righteous branch, that the Lord promised to raise up unto David? Is not his name called *the Lord our righteousness*? Did not Jesus Christ come to finish transgression,

transgression, and to bring in *everlasting righteousness*? He was appointed an undertaker, promiser and sponser, by way of suretyship to God for us. He has ratified the covenant of grace by his death, and takes effectual care that all the requirements be answered. He has paid down the full price of all our many and distinguishing priviledges; the means of grace, the strivings of the Spirit, time and opportunity, and every advantage for getting heavenly wisdom. He has also purchased the holy Spirit, in his regenerating, sanctifying and comforting influences. He has purchased grace and strength to help those that are effectually called, in all their times of need. He has purchased pardon, justification and blessedness for all that the Father has given him for that end. He undertook to procure for us, those blessings which we did not deserve. He satisfied the law and justice of God; both the precept and curse lay upon him as his debt, that we, by the imputation of his righteousness through faith, might be justified also. And therefore he is said to be justified in the Spirit. i. e. Having satisfied divine justice by his obedience, sufferings and death, he was publicly acquitted and accepted of God, as the righteous Head of the church, and was cleared of all the vile reproaches of his enemies, in his resurrection. Hence it appears that all given and promised

promised blessings were primarily made over to Christ, and are bestowed upon men in and under him, and as the fruit of his purchase.

3. FROM the promises being made to Christ. Hence they are said to be made before the world began, in Tit. i. 2, which must be to Christ, as the Head of the church, and to the members as comprehended in him, before the earliest date of time, even from all eternity, before any dispensation of grace commenced. Hence also the blessings bestowed upon the church, are said to be *given in Christ Jesus before the world began*, i. e. in Christ the head of the church, these blessings were given from all eternity. Therefore the apostle says, *all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus*, or unto Christ Jesus, as it may be rendered. If the promised blessings were by deed of gift only from the riches of grace, they might be made immediately unto us, but they are all of them an endowment to be conferred, upon visible or real union with Christ; and none of the promised blessings can be claimed or pleaded, so there is no union at all. All the promises meet with union in Christ; for they are all made to him, and to us no otherwⁱe than as we are in him. If we are vitally united to Christ, then the spiritual and saving blessings promised are ours. Though
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we may be incapable of receiving many of the promises, being in an infant state, yet these promises are conveyed from God to Christ as an inheritance, which Christ has received as a common Father in our behalf, and which, in due time, we shall be brought to the possession of.

4. FROM the grace and privileges of the gospel being first given to him. God the Father poured out the Spirit, in his gifts and graces, upon the man Christ Jesus, in as great a measure as the human nature is capable of. *The Spirit of the Lord did rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.* And these graces are derived from Christ to his Saints. It is *the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: and went down to the skirts of his garments.* All the graces of the Spirit are first poured upon our Aaron, our great teacher, and high priest; and from him they are carried to the meanest member of his body, vitally united to him. The fulness of grace bestowed upon him, is for the supply of all the wants of real christians; it is of *his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace.* Christ has purchased all the graces and blessings of the Spirit, and they are treasured up and secured in

him, who, as head of the church, has all the springs and fulness of them in himself, to communicate in the free dispensations of his grace. To this end *he has received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Ghost*, to communicate unto believers. All the graces of the spirit do actually belong unto him and to us only as we are united to him; as we are members of his body, branches of this vine, so we derive the blessings and graces from him, and not otherwise——And as the grace, so the privileges of the gospel belong to him, and unto us no otherwise than we are united to him. As a reward of Christ's deep abasement and sufferings, God has *crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of his hands: has put all things in subjection under his feet: all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.* God has entrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence, in subserviency to the kingdom of grace. "All the creatures are put under his feet, and he gave some specimens of his power over them, when upon earth, by commanding the winds and the seas, and appointing a fish to pay his tribute." It follows that we can enjoy no privileges, temporal or spiritual, but what come from Christ, and are principally in him; and we hold them under him,

5. FROM the great regard God has unto Christ in all promised blessings. God has a principal regard to Christ in all the transactions in the new covenant. Through the impediment that arises from the corruption of nature, man is brought under guilt, and rendered utterly insufficient to answer the demands of the law: but Christ has accepted and fulfilled the condition, upon which God can, with everlasting honor to his great name, bestow every blessing. And as the Father has accepted him, as the representative and head of his people, in his mediatorial work and character, so, in all the holy services that christians do, and all the mercies which they enjoy or hope for, God has a principal regard unto Christ. The best duties that are ever done by the servants of God, are accepted only in Christ, and for his sake. Their most spiritual offerings of self-dedication, prayer and praises, alms, and all sorts of fruits of righteousness, are *acceptable to God only by Jesus Christ*. It is on account of his sacrifice and intercession, that their persons and services are introduced to God, and acceptable in his sight. And so, every mercy bestowed, or to be conferred hereafter, is only for Christ's sake. David says, *for thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things*. i. e. for Christ's sake, who is the eternal word and wis-

dom of the Father; he is the cause and fountain of all the blessings of God to his people. Should they pray ever so long for particular mercies, yet they will not be sent down until the Lord Jesus Christ interceeds for them, and then God sends messengers of peace. Therefore Daniel says, *hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.* i. e. for the promised Messiah or Mediator's sake, for Lord is usually attributed to Christ, in the old testament and in the new.

THUS I have proved the proposition laid down, that all the blessings which the church or particular persons enjoy or hope for, are under Christ; he has a right to them by purchase and grant, and he disposes of them all, freely and fully, and we have them from him and under him, who is heir of all things, and head over all to the church. O what riches of grace are displayed in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ! What grace is this, that God should make him an effectual Mediator between himself and his church, upon which the covenant of grace is founded, so that the Father should say to his Son *in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee—I will give thee to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages,* Isa.

xlix. 8. How glorious is the person, how wonderful and incomprehensible are the works of the everlasting Son of God, clothed with human nature, and appearing as heir of all things, in the quality of Mediator and head of the church! He carries the key of dominion over his house and kingdom, upon his shoulder, as a badge of his office!

WHAT meaneth all this grace? Is this the manner of man, O Lord God? Surely, the riches of divine grace shine in this great and glorious scheme. Not of debt, nor from merit, or any thing we can do; for there is not one blessing but it is of free grace in Christ. And the grace appears to be the greater, from the greatness of our necessity; for we were under the curse of the law, without a Mediator, without a promise of repentance, without any promise of mercy and acceptance upon repentance, and therefore should have been left in a helpless and hopeless condition, had not this way been opened in the gospel. But now, as Christ is the constituted heir of all things, and head over all to the church, the promises of purchased blessings brighten, and we may say with confidence concerning every one that is vitally united to Christ, and earnestly desirous of spiritual and heavenly blessings, that he shall have abundance, even to the utmost

for there was a dignity in his person, and therefore a worthiness in his obedience and sufferings, beyond all the persons whom he represents, and therefore it must be answerable to the whole church, and the blessings bestowed upon it, and all its members. And if he is heir of all things, and head over all to the church, his merit must be sufficient to make amends, and infinitely beyond all their wants, as he is God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever. The righteousness of his human nature, has an excellency and efficacy from the Godhead to which it is united, so as to be a full and perfect righteousness. And it is not only full and perfect, but everlasting, answerable to God's design and man's want. Christ has paid the price of redemption, and purchased the inheritance, and the glory in reversion. This blessing could not be in any mere creature, for they were all bound by a law, and when they had done all that was commanded, they would be unprofitable servants, for it would be no more than was their duty to do. Surely then, their doings could answer no legal debt; this only can be from the excellency of a person who was exempted from the law, unless by voluntary submission he was bound by it, and by his submission the law was glorified more than all intelligent creatures could depress it.

FURTHER;

FURTHER : in Christ is laid up a fulness of grace which is needful for man. God will not deal with sinful creatures, in an immediate way in any thing at all. Grace as well as righteousness, the renovation of man's nature, continual guiding and strengthening in the christian life, grace to resist and mortify sin, and overcome the world, is all laid up in Christ. God the Father, according to the good pleasure of his will, has laid up the meetness, the beginnings, earnestness and foretastes of eternal life in his Son, and Christ, as head of the church, has all the springs and fulness of grace in himself, to communicate to us. Hence the Spirit of all grace can be received from no other, nor derived in any other way. The supplies that any soul in the church receives, must be dispensed by daily and continued supplies from Christ. We are fitted for, and helped forward in every good work, *by the supply of the Spirit in Christ Jesus.* The rich communications of grace in Christ, enable us to make a good improvement of divine dispensations, to the glory of God, the good of others, and our own benefit. And who could dispense this grace, but he that has infinite wisdom and knowledge, in whom all fulness dwells, and is able to answer the condition and necessities of all that come to God by him? Christ, and he only, can give out suitable and seasonable supplies, and therefore all must be received under him.

2. BECAUSE it is for the honor of Christ that all the blessings should be in and from him. The glory of Christ is the glory of the Father also; and the Father is glorified in the glorification of the Son; God is glorified in the sufferings of Christ; his justice is glorified in the sufferings of Christ, his wisdom in finding out a way of redemption, and his grace in the manner of it. And Christ is also glorified by the preaching of the gospel, and subduing men to his obedience. No wonder then, that the scriptures give him the supremacy in all things; for in Christ all nations shall be blessed. He is the wonderful Counsellor, everlasting Father, mighty God, and Prince of peace; and therefore, in the last day, he shall *see his seed*; his effectually called in his church, and present them to God, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, to the everlasting honor of his undertaking.

3. BECAUSE this does illustrate the abundant riches of divine grace. In the whole scheme of redemption, God has contrived and designed to shew forth the glory of free grace. But this grace could not have shone so brightly, if the promises had been primarily made to man, as it does by their being made to Christ, that the church might have the blessings under him as the Head over all. Now,

temporal, spiritual and eternal blessings come down from his hand, and are the fruits of his purchase. God the Father authorised and furnished him to be the great treasurer of all his blessings. And he has perfect knowledge to direct his people, infinite compassion to feel all their afflictions, the spirit without measure to refresh them, and all power to support, strengthen and deliver them. He does infinitely exceed all our desires, and now stands before the throne to deal with his Father on our behalf. There he presents his person, and the merit of his sacrifice, and in a plea of right, he will have all blessings come down upon them who consent to hold all under him. God is willing to be a Father to them in Christ, and is ready to spare and pity, to provide, protect and preserve them, and at last to bestow a kingdom upon them, in a way that will most of all shew forth the glory of his grace.

4. BECAUSE of the disadvantages that would arise from holding any of the promised blessings in an immediate way. For, if it be an honor to Jesus Christ, to be the Heir and Head over all things, how would his main glory be secured, if his church did not come into the inheritance under him. It is a great sin, and must be a destructive principle, for men to look to themselves for the blessings promised ;

fed; all they do will not take them into covenant, but they must come in under Christ. And besides, this would tend to cut off the most excellent and honorable communion that the church and particular persons in it can enjoy in the world. The apostle says, *our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* i. e. Those who believe in Christ, have communion with God the Father in the blessings of his love, which are communicated thro' Jesus Christ, and in Christ they enjoy the blessings of his purchase, his graces and comforts, which is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. But the ground of this communion is only in the promises made to Christ as the head of the church, and representative of his people; and as they inherit under him. If this ground is taken away, how shall we come into the inheritance? Where shall we find righteousness, grace, victory, and other blessings? if we bring in Christ under us? And further; if we do not hold under Christ, the promised blessings might fail us; for we are changeable ourselves, and if the promises were not to an unchangeable Head, how soon might all be lost! Did not Adam soon lose the promised blessing of life and communion with God, by standing alone? Did not many of the angels lose their integrity in which God created them? And if we did not hold under Christ,

an unchangeable Head, we might soon break and lose the inheritance. But the blessing is not in us, but in the Heir of all things; and if we really derive life and all blessings from him, as the head, the blessings are as certain as Christ himself is, who has taken possession of all in our name. Hence, it is every way more honorable for Christ, and more safe and comfortable for us, that we should come into the inheritance under him; so that, though we forfeit promised mercies every day, yet the promise remains sure.

OBJECTION: "Some may object that some promises cannot be made to Christ, without dishonor to his name: such as the promise of repentance, pardon of sin, taking away the heart of stone, and giving an heart of flesh; healing backslidings, cleansing from moral defilement, &c. To suppose that these promises are made to Christ, implies imperfection, which is greatly to the dishonor of Christ. Surely the Redeemer of souls needs no pardon: he has no moral defilement to be cleansed from; no backsliding to be healed, no grace to be perfected. How then can these promises be made to Christ, the Heir of all things, and Head of the church?"

Ans. They are made to him as the price of blood, and part of the blessings he has purchased;
yea

yea, and as a part of that reward that God promised to bestow upon him. God the Father gives no blessings to sinners, but such as Jesus Christ has purchased with his blood. He bestows no pardon, gives no repentance, purges none from dead works to serve the living God, but what is done as a reward to Christ, for his obedience and sacrifice. The church of God are his *purchased possession*: he redeems from sin, and guilt, and death, and hell, and satan; from all temporal, spiritual and eternal evils. Hence Christ looks upon all privileges and blessings, as part of his due from God the Father, according to the grant made him before the world began, and that the blessings should come down in his right. And therefore under all his sufferings he took *delight in the sons of men*: he looked forward upon the whole design with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, that he might see all these promises fulfilled to him, in those blessings that are and will be conferred upon his people. It is the joy of his heart to see the travail of his soul. Has he laid down the price of these promised favors? And may he not well expect the fruits of his purchase? The promises are all put into the hand of Christ, the purchaser, and held out to us, that we might receive the blessing from him. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands, and of his fulness we
may

may receive, and grace for grace. God has exalted him to live and reign on high, as a prince enthroned in all the glory, majesty, and power of his kingdom, able and willing to give repentance and remission of sins.

USE I. How surprizingly great is the condescension and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in undertaking to purchase and take possession of all promised blessings for his people. Every blessing contained in the promises, he has voluntarily undertaken to secure, and has actually purchased by his own consent. That Christ should obey the law and suffer the penalty, is more honor to God than all creatures in heaven and earth could give; for they could do no more than duty required by right of creation. For stars to be hid by the light of the sun is nothing: but for the sun to be eclipsed, that the stars might shine, is great. For subjects to obey their prince is nothing; but for a prince to become a servant, is surprizing condescension. What is it then, for the Son of righteousness, to veil his glory; to be found in the form of a servant; to be made in the likeness of man; to be made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law?

HEREBY it appears that the eternal covenant between the Father and Son was for us, his covenant

nant people. He came into the world to do the will of God, and he is God's righteous servant to justify many, and was consecrated to this service before the world began. God did indent with him to bestow special blessings upon all his church, and so it becomes part of Christ's care. He bore it upon his bosom, and the names of all upon his breast-plate, from everlasting.

To this end he was made under the law ; by a judicial constitution he was placed as a subject both under the precept and the curse of the law. And the great design of this condescension, was, that he might *redeem them that were under the law*. To take human nature upon him, and go through a compleat course of obedience for us, is great love ; but to go through a compleat course of sufferings, unto death itself, the painful, shameful death of the cross, in answer to the demands of the law, and at that expense to redeem his church, is a much greater display of love : but to be *made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, is greatest of all. To have the sins of his people judicially imputed to him, by way of law charge, and in a sacrificial sense, as our substitute ; to be reputed a sinner, when he was perfectly holy and unspottedly pure in himself ; to make all our iniquities

iniquities meet in him, as all rivers meet in the sea ; this is condescension beyond compare. Had Christ only been an intercessor for us in our deplorable condition ; had he only prayed for us that we might be healed ; had he only improved his power and interest with God, to try us once more upon some new plan, this would have been a token of great love : but for the Lord Jesus Christ to become a surety for us to God ; to pay our debts, to answer all the requirements of the law, and secure the accomplishment of the promises ; what amazing love and condescension is this !

AND yet, this is not all : for as all is given into his hands, and he is the head over, and heir of all things by the Father's appointment, he not only undertakes to dispense all from God to us, but he has undertaken for all the duties we owe to God, and for all the blessings that come from God. He has engaged to God, that he shall have christian obedience from all that consent to receive him as the head and heir of all. And therefore we *bear fruit in Christ*, fetch in our influence and furniture from Christ, for without him we can do nothing. It is through his continual aids and assistances, by virtue of real and vital union with him, that real christians are animated, and strengthened to any of the

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The duties of the moral law, in a holy manner. All the good fruit they bring forth, they bring forth by the power of his grace and Spirit : all the abilities they receive, and all the good they do, is from Christ. The duties done are ours, but the efficacy and power by which they are done, is his ; from him we have a supply of the Spirit ; and he has undertaken to present us to the Father, at last, without spot, as a bride adorned for her husband ; not only washed in his blood, and arrayed with perfect righteousness ; but so sanctified by his Spirit, as to have no remainder of deformity or moral defilement, nor any thing else that can detract from our beauty, or abate our perfection, or tarnish our lustre.

II. Hence we might learn to know our place, and that we can enjoy no blessings, only as we are united to Christ, and inherit under him. Outward blessings, gospel privileges, the word and ordinances are enjoyed by visible union ; but spiritual grace, pardon of sin, grace to serve God, holiness and happiness in God ; these come in by real and vital union with Christ, and we hold all under him. All the promised blessings are put into his hands, as heir of all things, and head over all, to manage, overrule, restrain, order, and issue all events : and the blessings promised are ours, only as we are uni-

ted to him. Nor are the duties of obedience any further acceptable to God, than they are done in Christ. We have no access to God the Father, no pardon, no justifying righteousness, no acceptance, no glory, but as vitally united to Christ, and come in under him. And it is of great importance that we should know how we become heirs.

THAT Christ might have the honor and renown due to him. This is one part of that name, dignity and honor that is due as the Saviour, and constituted Lord of all, that he should be the foundation of all blessing, upon which the whole building is laid. He therefore is called *a chief corner stone*, because the stress and weight of the whole church, all its strength and beauty lies upon him. He is the bottom and top stone in the building, in whom the whole is completed. And this is one main design God has had in the work of redemption, *that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father*. This was the grand design in God's giving him the great commission he sustained, that in the whole plan, Christ should be exalted. If there is any work to do, any service for God or man, we are to look upon Christ as engaged therein; and the work is ours, only as we are one with Christ: the grace, strength, courage and pleasure, all come from Christ
alone.

alone. And if any of our poor services are accepted, they are accepted no otherwise than as they come up before God through Jesus Christ; but if it be ever so mean, being offered through Christ, and from him, it is an acceptable sacrifice. So, if there be a promise of the gospel, that we desire to have fulfilled, be it a temporal or spiritual blessing, we are to look upon the worthiness of Christ, and the Father's engagement to him for the accomplishment of it; for all the promises are made to Christ, and when they are viewed in him, and the good of them coming down through his hand, it renders him exceeding precious to the heart.

AGAIN: it is of great importance to keep a sense of our inheriting all under Christ, for our own humiliation. Do we hold every part of the inheritance under Christ? And are we entitled to no blessing, only as we are in him? Are we by sin cut off from God, the fountain of all blessings? Can we receive no favor, but through the hand of the Mediator? Does God grant the good of the promise at the request of his favorite Son, and for the sake of his worth and merit? Then neither our persons nor services are accepted of God, for any thing that we are or can do, but for his sake alone. If God speaks a word of comfort to us, it is by

If you are not in him by this union, you are undone for ever. All the grace and glory that is possible for us to be possessed of, is by union with Christ. There is no special promise, no pardon, no saving grace, that belongs to any, only as they are in Christ, and as they have accepted of him.

And yet

You cannot be vitally united to Christ but by your own consent. A mere visible union will not set you free from the first covenant; for you were born under it, and it will hold you fast, unless by your own consent you come and agree to take Christ, and inherit under him. Though we are drawn, yet we come, and though we are constrained, yet we act freely. *Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely.* You cannot be in Christ, in this special sense, unless you cleave to him in all his character and office, with your whole heart. You may be strict in performing outward duties, and cheat yourself and the world with vain confidences and a visible profession, but such confidences will fail you: God will make you sensible, sooner or later, that your hope is built upon the sand, and shall come down when the storm beats upon it. The promises and all the blessings of grace and glory are bestowed as a free gift; but you cannot have them without having
Christ

Christ himself. There is no saving and special benefit of the gospel to be had, without a saving interest in Christ. *If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* If we are not vitally united to Christ, as his living members, interested in and devoted to him, we are not heirs according to the promise, which was made to him as head over all.

THE terms of vital union are, receiving him, and surrendering ourselves up unto him. There is a mutual interest and relation between Jesus Christ and all true christians. Christ himself, in his whole character and his several offices, is received and embraced by all who have the faith of God's elect; and they forsake all, run all risques, and encounter all opposition, rather than abandon Christ and his cause. They are come to a point in the disposition and settled purpose of their hearts, even to the loss of all the world, if called to it, for Christ. They will pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand; part with any thing, be it ever so dear, rather than offend God. If then, you are not willing to part with all the enjoyments of this world, from a conviction of the excellency of Christ and the blessings of the gospel; if you do not consent to hold all under him, and render all to him, you are but nominal

nal christians. The apostle Paul says, *I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.* If you do not part with all sin and self-righteousness, and lay all down at Christ's feet ; if you do not make him your last end, you are not vitally united to him.

THE heart of the natural man is madly bent against Christ. His character, and the highest end of his coming into the world are contrary to the inclination and designs of the irregenerate. They do not like a character that is perfectly holy, nor a design that is to bring them down and exalt God in the highest way. The impiety and wickedness of their hearts are against setting the glory of God above all : they might possibly agree to have the divine character honored in subordination to their happiness ; but they are not pleased with the method of salvation, chiefly because it honors God. And besides ; they do not approve of the terms upon which Christ is to be received. What irregenerate person can give up all unto Christ ? Is not sin sweet to every soul that is unrenewed ? Are not pride and self, cleaving fast to them ? Have not the things of this world a malignant influence, to
confirm

confirm the blindness and stupidity of their minds? How then will such men consent to take Christ and promised blessings under him? This is doubtless an hard saying to carnal hearts, and they will not receive it. And therefore Christ says, *ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* God offers Christ to them, and, in him, all the blessings of grace and glory: but malice or obstinacy, brutishness, pride or self-righteousness is an impediment to hinder them. Christ, in his wonderful condescension, stands like an importunate suitor, at the door of their hearts: he knocks by his word, spirit and providence for admission; but they bar the door against him. Natural men had rather look for justification by the deeds of the law, and venture their everlasting all upon their own doings, than come to Christ that they might have life.

NOTHING but efficacious grace will make it otherwise. By efficacious grace I mean that which will infallibly produce the effect: and there must be such a power put forth, to open the heart and persuade us to embrace Christ, or we shall never consent to receive him, and all blessings from him. All the art of persuasion, that can be used by the angels of heaven, or the angels of the churches upon earth, will not do the necessary work. None
but

but Christ himself can gain admittance into the hearts of sinners. It is in his power alone, who has the keys of death and hell, to open so as no man can shut against him. Who but Christ, can make me sensible that there is the amiableness and sufficiency in Christ, that is not to be found in the whole world? Who but Christ can make a wretched soul sensible, that all is in him, that a rational creature can desire? It is he by his holy Spirit, that works in us to will and to do. It is he that changes the heart, and so the life and conversation. When a person perceives the excellency of Christ, and that all blessings are laid up in him, he desires to cleave to Christ, and receive all from him.

AND what is more reasonable than for us to forsake all and cleave to Christ as heir of all? He is given of God the Father to relieve and save the miserable, and therefore it is base ingratitude to reject him. Many are elected to the external privileges of the gospel, who are never called according to God's purpose. But this visible election should encourage you to look unto Christ, as one born in his house: as you are nearer related to Christ than the heathen world who are strangers to the covenant of promise, so the sin of rejecting him is greater in you than in them, and he will take the refu-

fal the more heinously at your hands, because it is despising his love. *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* Christ accounts it a great aggravation of the sin, that you are his own by covenant, his own to whom he is come in the dispensation of means, and this should awaken your attention, and excite you to come unto, and be vitally united with him.

AGAIN: consider the excellency of this union. Those that are thus in Christ, are the habitation of God, through the Spirit; a temple seperated to his service, and honored with his special presence. And what says God of such? *I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* He who is the fountain of natural, spiritual and eternal life, will fix his abode in them, by way of special relation and gracious influence. He will commune with them as a friend that keeps them company, and walks with them; one that hears and answers their prayers, and manifests himself in distinguishing tokens of love and favor; one who makes over himself and all his perfections to them for their portion; to form them for himself; to own them for his people, and delight in them as such. And such a blessing is greatly heightened if we consider, that it is not in our own right that we enjoy it, but we come into the inheritance under Christ.

BESIDES ; another thing that increases the excellency, is the perfection of that righteousness which gives the title. The righteousness of a mere creature could not procure it ; no, not of the highest angel : but it is *the righteousness of God* ; a righteousness which God of his infinite wisdom and grace has appointed and provided, approves and accepts ; a righteousness which his eternal Son, who is God, has wrought out, and brought in by his perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice. And therefore it is a righteousness that our sins can never spend, because it never fails, but is *an everlasting righteousness*. By this righteousness of his own, he opens the gates of the heavenly city to all the heirs of salvation, while they are shut and barred against all that are destitute of it. It is by this righteousness that you may *have boldness of access* to enter into the holiest, and freedom in your approaches to God, as your reconciled God and Father, and, at last, admittance into the immediate presence of glory. This is *the new and living way*, which Christ has prepared, dedicated and established, as sacred to our use ; a way that will never wax old ; a living way, as the once dead, but now living Redeemer has opened for us ; a way in which we may find quickening virtue, and spiritual life here, and eternal life hereafter. This is the way by which all blessings come from heaven

to earth, and by which we ascend to the many mansions, the delightful abodes of the sons of glory,

AND further ; what adds to the excellency of vital union is, that all things are in the hand of Christ for our good ; i. e. all providential dispensations. God the Father has communicated to Jesus Christ an absolute dominion and sovereignty over all men, and over all things, as he is Mediator. *All power is given unto me* says Christ *in heaven and earth*. He sits king and head over all the nations, as well as king upon the holy hill of Zion. He guides all the affairs of his providence ; holds every thing in his hand, and under his hands pass all grants, commissions and charters of the King of heaven. O what a favor have you, if vitally united to Christ, that this heir of all, is head and ruler over all ! If the world had been governed by an absolute God ; if it had not been in the hand of a Mediator, he would have destroyed it before now. But the Lord Jesus reigns ; the providential kingdom is twisted in with the mediatorial, and the administration of both is in his hand ; *let the Saints rejoice*. If you are vitally united to Christ, you will have reason to rejoice. His dispensations, it is true, may be dark ; you may not be aware what he drives at, in a cloudy day ; but righteousness and judgment are the habitation

habitation of his throne. What changes soever you pass through, though ever so dark and trying, they shall be perfective and not destructive.

IV. IT is a great comfort to real christians, that amidst all their "imperfections and sorrows all is in a good hand" Were our plea to be derived from our duties, we should have nothing but ground of terror and amazement: but in the way of believing, and close adherence to Christ, we may not only live a life of holiness, but a life of peace. All abiding, solid, and evangelical peace, is the result of the lively exercises of faith on Christ, the heir of all, and head over all. This is the way to suppress doubts and fears; to have the heart strengthened under our various pressures, and to make us rejoice in hope of the glory of God. O let every comfort spring immediately from Christ, by partaking with him in the promises. To dwell upon streams is the way to have your comforts dry up; but to take all from the fountain, will make bitter things sweet. To dwell upon creature comforts is a snare, but to live upon Christ, and take just what he gives, is a duty. To live upon the promises made to Christ, is life and health to our souls. Under all occurrences of providence, be they ever so dark and perplexing, yet, by the over-ruling wisdom, power and
grace

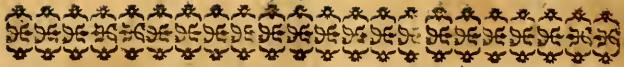
grace of God, they will, in their connexions and issues, promote our spiritual and eternal welfare. Therefore, though God does not smile upon us in temporal conveniences, according to our wishes, yet we may rest here, that he hath *made with us an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.* Let this be all our salvation and all our desire, though our sinfulness should hinder outward smiles.

PUT the case, that we must pass through many trials ; yet through Christ Jesus we shall share in the blessings that God has promised ; for he has satisfied the law, and purchased the inheritance ; and all the promises are made unto him, and belong to us only as we are in him. Let us live upon the promises as in him, and then we shall live upon him, for they carry us to the fountain of our interest. Every promise carries us to the fountain, which assures us of a supply of every thing we need.

AND if we are vitally united to him, the covenant is sure, and the righteousness of it is everlasting. Christ has paid for all the blessings, and willed them to the believer, and his blood cries for the accomplishment. His blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel : and hence, though the mountains may depart, and the hills may remove ;
though

though the waters of the sea do roar, and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; yet we may triumph in Christ. Are we pursued and oppressed with troubles? Have we work to do, and enemies to grapple with? Yet, *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* He is God all-sufficient, and therefore we may bid defiance to danger. The comforts of Christ conveyed through the promises, are sufficient to ballance the most loud and noisy threatnings of an angry and malicious World.

S E R M O N




SERMON XXV.

Of serving God in Newness of Spirit.

R O M A N S VII. 6.

—*That we should serve in the Newness of the Spirit, and not in the Oldness of the Letter.*

 H E true church of Christ, or those who are called according to his purpose, stands in the nearest and dearest relation to Christ ; and therefore they are called his body, his bride, his spouse, &c. denoting the nearest and dearest relation to him. And what more precious or more comfortable truths are there in God's holy word than those that naturally arise from, or are implied in these relations !

OUR Lord Jesus Christ has manifested infinite condescension and love to his church in his humiliation and sufferings for its sake. But he finds all that he came to redeem and save, in a state of sin and misery, as they descended from Adam, the first transgressor, dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature children of wrath even as others. But when the time comes for their being effectually called, they are renewed into the image of God's holiness by the spirit of all grace, and have a new name of dignity put upon them, even that of christians, or children of God and heirs of glory. And they have not only a new nature, but are in a new state, delivered from the law as a covenant of works, and experience a new life from Christ. They are brought into a spiritual union with him, to live by faith upon him, and enjoy divine communications from him.

EVERY real christian has the kingdom of God within him, which is a kingdom of peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and is interested in all the saving blessings of the new and everlasting covenant of grace. God the Father calls such, and the Spirit enables them to *serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* Before this renovation they were held in subjection

to the law as a covenant, and under obligation to be dealt with, for life and death, according to it ; but, in a way of believing, they are now delivered from its covenant-demands, and rigorous curse ; and that to this end, *viz.* That they might obey and serve God, under a new covenant, with new dispositions, aims and influences, in a new life and conversation ; and not in the old, legal carnal way of regarding only the letter of the law, which rather provokes than restrains the corruptions of the heart. Happy new year to all such new-born souls ! Every revolving sun brings them one year nearer to their heavenly Father's house, the kingdom of blessedness above.

BUT lest any should mistake themselves for new born, who are yet under the law as a covenant of works, the apostle here shews the difference between the fruits of a new and an old covenant spirit ; the one serves God in newness of spirit, and the other in the oldness of the letter. This is therefore what I shall, by divine support and help, endeavor to open plainly, and show clearly the difference between serving God in newness of spirit, and serving in the oldness of the letter. And then make some suitable application.

IN the first place then, I am to show you the difference between serving God in newness of spirit, and serving him in the oldness of the letter. And hereby you may judge whether you are under the law as a covenant of works, or whether you are under grace. I am sensible, my brethren, that I have entered upon a very difficult task, though very important: and therefore I pray God to shed abroad his light and love in my heart; that he would send forth his light and truth, that they may be guides to me in speaking, and to you in hearing. A little of his special light and energy, would give such help, that I might preach, and you might hear with convincing evidence.

AND here you may observe in general, the difference between serving Christ in newness of spirit, and the oldness of the letter, does not lie in the matter, but the formal nature of the action. If it were not so, a real christian could never know that he was freed from the law as a covenant, as long as he lived in the world. If the evidence of his being under grace, lay in the matter of the duty done, by what rule could he determine whether it was in newness of Spirit, or in the oldness of the letter? Can not a man under the law as a covenant, profess christianity, and perform external obedience? If he

can, how shall a man know his state, merely by his life and conversation? This may be a good rule to judge others by, but it can be no just ground of satisfaction respecting ourselves. Christians must always live in perplexing doubts about their state, if there is no discriminating difference between the best services of the irregenerate, and those that are done in newness of spirit:

· BUT the difference is very wide, and that on several accounts, viz.

1. THEY differ in their original. Those services which are done in the oldness of the letter, cannot spring from any thing higher than natural principles; for there is no principle of christian virtue or holiness in the irregenerate. Nature may be stirred up by the judgments of providence, or persons may be put under legal terror by common convictions, so as to produce great carefulness in external practice; but they produce no views of the glory and excellence of God's infinite holiness, no love to and delight in him, and in his law as holy, just and good. But those services which are done in newness of spirit, are founded in a new creature, and originate from those discoveries which are proper to the new-born. And therefore in opposition to all
other;

other services, they are called *the fruits of the Spirit*. i. e. by the principle of divine life wrought in the soul and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Others, who are yet in the way, may have the Spirit of God striving with them, in his word and ordinances ; they may be stirred up by the thunders and lightnings, and the sound of the trumpet from mount Sinai ; but all their services have a very different original from that newness of spirit with which real christians serve God. They may be strict in the external branches of righteousness and charity, and in the various acts of piety towards God : but there will be an essential difference between the life of these doings, and those gracious exercises, which arise from gracious dispositions, under divine influence: The holy Spirit discovers the glory of the holy perfections of God, in the person of Christ, and this discovery produces the highest esteem of, and love to him for his moral glory, and love to his laws, ordinances and providences as they are his. Where Jesus Christ pacifies the conscience, he sets up his spiritual reign in the heart ; and if you have any measure of holy joy in God, it arises from spiritual manifestations of divine glory and love, by the indwelling of the Spirit in your hearts: The original of these and other gracious exercises, and their practical fruits, are the exercises

of new-born souls, who have the principle of grace excited, by the supernatural influences of the blessed Spirit of grace. We cannot serve God, in any one branch of duty, of ourselves, or by the strength of grace already received; but by grace given at the time: we find by experience, we are animated and strengthened to serve God in every duty, in newness of spirit. Christians may be under sharp trials and strong temptations to desert the best service; but if they earnestly seek God for help, and by humble, importunate addresses to him for deliverance they will have an answer of peace, according to 2 Cor. xii. 9. The rise of all that power which christians have to resist temptation, or do any duty in newness of spirit, is from the Spirit of Christ. And this is one difference between the services that are done to God, and are acceptable in Jesus Christ, and those that are done with a legal spirit.

2. They differ in their rule. Those services, which are done in the oldness of the letter, may have the appearance of shining goodness in them; but then, people do not go according to the rule that God has given them. They are often with a sort of indifference to any rule: or men destitute of a new principle of grace, live by guess and good meanings:

meanings : or they set up custom and the practice of others ; and if they do as others do in the like case, they are right in their own opinion : or they are men of great penetration, as they suppose, and therefore set up their own unsanctified reason for a rule. It is not the law of God, with his image and superscription engraven upon it ; nor the example of Christ, considered as the brightest pattern for imitation, that gives law to their consciences, and are the springs of motion in their hearts. And this is an evidence that, how plausible soever the show is which they make, their services are all done in the oldness of the letter. Intentionally they are works of obedience ; not unto God, but unto self ; to good meaning, to the customs of the world, or to self-conceit.

BUT he that serves God in newness of Spirit, takes the law of God for *a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.* This is *the sure word of prophecy, unto which he takes heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place.* The renewed disposition of the heart is satisfied with this rule, and the real christian chooses Christ as his pattern. It was our Saviour's *delight*, in his state of humiliation, *to do the will of God : yea, thy law, says he, is within my heart.* And here in the christian follows Christ. *God's law is his delight ;*

light ; the greatest delight he has in this world. *O how love I thy law,* says David, *it is my meditation all the day.* This, the follower of Christ, looks upon as his proper rule of holy practice, accommodated to his present state. The pattern that Christ has set him he esteems as a living law. His heart and eye are upon Christ, who was *holy, barmless and undefiled, separate from sinners.* As he is, in our nature, set before us for an example ; suited to our capacity ; more perceptible to our minds, and more imitable by us, than the divine nature alone, could be, in our present state of weakness ; so he that serves God in newness of spirit, has the eye of his soul fixed upon his command and example, that his heart and life might agree thereto. His daily prayer to God is, that he would grant him more abundant supplies of grace, to enlighten his mind, incline his heart, and strengthen his executive powers, to yield an unfeigned, chearful and universal obedience to the commands of God, at all times, and to approve of, and comply with his providential will in all things: The rules that well-meaning men, the custom of others, and carnal reasoning prescribe, are set aside, and, with holy solicitude of soul, he repairs to the scriptures, and gives himself up to the authority of the divine command, ardently desiring to know, and do the will of God.

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Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he looks upon Christ and his law, that he may make it out to himself and others that he dwells in Christ, and lives and acts in the course of his conversation, after his example, and treads in his steps, by an holy, humble imitation of him. Neither will any measure of grace already attained satisfy him. He knows that he has not obtained a state of perfect holiness, any more than perfect happiness. Therefore he looks not back to his advances in the new life already made, *but reaches forth to the things that are before, and presses forward towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* His eye and heart are fixed upon the mark, that he may attain to a state of perfect holiness, in order to receive the prize of eternal glory.

3. THEY differ in their hope of acceptance. Most men that walk soberly, and in a measure of good order, hope for acceptance, not only of their persons, but of their services. Those that are destitute of a new heart, are often excited, from different motives, to many external branches of duty; but they have some worthiness of their own, which they ground their hope of acceptance upon; at least, they will make up a mixed righteousness, partly of their own frames and doings, and partly of

the obedience and satisfaction of Christ. They make their services the ground of their hope: these are the encouragements to look unto Christ that they might be saved. By their services they keep themselves so stupidly blind to their own deplorable case, as not to understand their sin, misery, danger, and helplessness; and therefore secretly encourage themselves that they have some recommending righteousness of their own.

IN opposition to this temper, he that serves God in newness of spirit, not only offers himself, but all his spiritual services to God for acceptance, only through the perfect righteousness of Christ; otherwise they could never *be a sweet savor unto God*. All holy services are acceptable to God in Christ alone. This a christian knows and rejoices in, as it pulls down the pride of the heart, and refers the great blessing intirely and alone to the free grace of God in Christ. Formal professors will make mention of the name of Christ in their religious worship; but they do it from an opinion of some worth or value in their services; and this opinion is the foundation of their offering up all in that sacred name. But the real christian, who serves God in newness of spirit, knows that neither he, nor his best services can possibly be accepted any other way than by
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and through Christ alone. He would not dare to venture; he does not desire to come to the Father, but by Jesus Christ, as *the new and living way, which he has consecrated, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.* When a christian does any spiritual duty, he abhors the thought of having it accepted any other way than the living redeemer has opened, by means of his crucified body, which procured this open way for us. Were he as much, and as constantly, engaged to serve God, in as spiritual, humble, holy, and heavenly manner, as ever any christian did upon earth, he would the more abhor the thought of presenting that service to God in any other way but by Christ: for he would not only be more sensible of the many and great defilements and imperfections of his service, but also, of the excellency of Christ, as a *merciful and faithful high Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people.* It is the infinite value of his obedience and sufferings that sanctifies and separates the best services of christians. And whatever they do in newness of spirit, they do it, not only with a conscientious regard to the authority and command of the Lord Jesus Christ, but with an humble dependance on him for assistance and acceptance.

4. THEY differ in their next cause. We shall readily grant that some, whose services are wholly in the oldness of the letter, have equalled, if not exceeded some real christians in the appearance of moral virtue; but there is no true christian virtue in any of their services: for SELF is the highest motive, the next cause, that puts all in motion. Pride of heart, the fears of hell, worldly honors, riches, or some other selfish consideration is the next cause, that has excited all the specious shew. And from some such motives as these, they may seem to *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God*. But, let them shine ever so much, and do ever so many works of this sort, works that might justly commend them to the esteem of others, as good neighbours, and good for society; yet none of these services are acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of God, because they are done in the oldness of the letter.

SPIRITUAL services have quite a different cause, which sets every wheel a going. When a person is quite taken off from, and dead to his former expectations of righteousness unto life, by the law as a covenant, and lives in a state of favor and acceptance with God, through the righteousness of Christ, faith is the next cause of his serving God
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in a new, holy, and acceptable manner. So Paul says of himself, Gal. ii. 20. A christian being dead to the law as a covenant of works, by faith he derives virtue and strength from Christ to bring forth living fruits of holiness and righteousness unto God: Christ lives in him as the head of vital influence, by virtue of that spiritual union which is between him and every real christian. This, this gives the believing soul a new spring of action. He that lives by faith does not act according to the dictates of the flesh, nor do his duties in a legal manner; but realizing invisible things and the fulness of Christ, he renounces carnal views, and is carried out after Christ, that *of his fulness he might partake, and grace for grace.* From a true discernment of spiritual things, the sense and temper of his heart and course of life is turned from the darkness of error, sin and folly, to the light of saving knowledge, and to all true holiness, Acts xxvi. 18. Faith is the next cause of purifying the heart, and rectifying the motives to practice. Hence those services that are not done in faith, or do not spring from faith, as their next cause, are not done in newness of spirit, but in the oldness of the letter.

5. THEY differ in their end. Men frequently do many things that are materially very good, from
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very bad ends, They may be constant in closet and family worship, and punctual in attending upon the public institutions of God's house; they may carefully observe relative and stational duties, and do all from fear of hell, or from some other carnal and selfish motives, and so do all in the oldness of the letter.

BUT he who serves God in newness of spirit, walks in all the commands and ordinances of the Lord out of a gracious respect to God. *Beholding the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ*; the glory of the divine perfections illustriously displayed and harmoniously exalted in the person of Christ, he has a supreme desire and design to honor God in all his gracious services. Seeing the excellence and amiableness of the divine character, he esteems and loves him above all, and seeks his glory ultimately in all he does, 1 Cor. x. 31. It is his great concern, as a christian, that in all common actions of life, and in all his use of gospel liberty with regard to things indifferent in themselves; yea, in all things whatsoever, whether of a civil or religious nature, he keeps the glory of God in view, as his last and highest end, and behaves in such a manner, as he in conscience apprehends, may, by his blessing, conduce to that noble end. So Paul lived, Phil. i. 20.

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And so every true christian goes forward, serving God in newness of spirit. In this way Jesus Christ is glorified, and the power of his grace eminently exalted. His pious and devout affections to God, soar up towards him, follow hard after him, and have an entire complacency in him, like the devout Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. What will it avail, says the christian, if God be the portion and happiness of other souls, if he is not mine; if I have not joined my self to him in an everlasting covenant? The christian's desire is towards him, and his delight is in him. He desires nothing so much as God. God is infinitely more to him than the refreshing dews of heaven, or the benign influence of the stars; infinitely more than the friendship of saints, or the good offices of angels. And there are no persons, no things, no possessions that he desires in comparison or competition with God. Under all his conflicts, he finds a sovereign relief in God as his spiritual strength and eternal portion. Others, who act from carnal ends, may do as many works of piety, righteousness and charity, as ever the prophets did of old, and they shall have their reward. If it be to be seen and honored by man; if it be the wealth or carnal pleasures of this world, that is their end, they shall have their reward. But the true christian has a nobler end, and will have a substantial and everlasting reward of grace.

6. THEY differ in their affection. Those who serve in the oldness of the letter, when they are the strictest in duty, are most lifted up in the pride of their own hearts. Men may have great eagerness in pursuing things that are good, when neither the manner nor end of doing them is good. Such was the zeal of Jehu, 2 Kings, x. 16. He was eager in executing the commands of God, but he did it in the pride of his heart, and therefore calls out, *come and see my zeal for the Lord.* It is no uncommon thing with some, to be puffed up with a conceit of their own religion. They complain of the badness of their neighbors and some of their acquaintance, who profess godliness, and wonder how they can keep up a hope of their interest in Christ. But as to themselves, how wonderfully do they live, and what mighty works do they do! “Come see my zeal! Observe how fervent I am in prayer! See how often I am quickened under sermons! Who can say that I do not do more than others, and especially more than such and such professors? They are cold; I am hot; they are idle; I am diligent; they are careless, I am careful in my practice!” Now, it must be confessed that some such persons do many things: they observe their hours of family prayer; they attend public worship; they approve of good preaching, and seem to take de-

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Right in the ordinances of God. But they are proud boasters, and magnify their own services, and think that God should take special notice of them, and are ready to take it heinously if they have not some marks of distinguishing favor. Now, there is no disposition in any man that God looks upon with greater abhorrence, than such pride of heart; and it is said, *he resisteth the proud*, i. e. he sets himself in battle-array, with indignation and disdain, against such self-conceited and self-sufficient souls.

Quite different from these, is he who serves God in newness of spirit. His temper and conduct, the ground of his hope and comfort, his knowledge of God and himself, and the means of his improvement in the divine life, all conspire to make and keep him humble. He is daily learning more of the emptiness of the creature, more of the fulness, sovereignty, power and grace of his Creator and Redeemer. He goes under an affecting sense of his unworthiness of any favor at the hand of God. He may plead his merit to men, as Jacob did to Laban, Gen. xxxi. 38—41. But having to do with God, he has a very low esteem of himself, as not deserving the least of God's mercies. *What is thy servant that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?* Whereas, when he served in

the oldness of the letter, he was ready to view his own character with complaisance, and look down upon others, now he knows so much of God's moral glory, so much of the purity and perfection of the law, and of his own meanness, that he shrinks to nothing before the eternal All, or as being less than nothing and vanity. The nearer he comes to God, and the more closely he walks with him, the meaner he thinks of himself, and the more deeply is he humbled for his sins, Job xlii. 5, 6, Self-loathing, and self-condemnation are the companions of his repentance, Ezek. vi. 9. He not only dislikes the former carriage of his heart and life, but he abhors himself under a sense of his vileness. And the more pure and spiritual his services are, the deeper sense he has of his own unworthiness, and of his insufficiency to do any good thing. And hence he is afraid of robbing God of his glory.

USE I. From what has been offered upon this subject we are called to consider what sort of services we do unto God? Although many of our acquaintance are gone to their eternal home, and have their state fixed for ever, the last year, yet, by the indulgent hand of providence, we have been carried through, and have this day entered upon a NEW year.

LET us reflect a little upon the obligations which God has laid us under, the last year, to serve him in newness of spirit. He has continued the manifestations of his love and grace in the offers of a Redeemer. He has indulged us with means that are well adapted to engage us in his service, and wisely disposed every thing in providence to that end. He has given us compassionate calls in the public ministry, and many helps and examples has he set before us. We have had a standing in the visible church, in the enjoyment of holy ordinances; the free liberty, comfort, and frequent benefit of his word and sacraments; faithful admonitions, reproofs and encouragements. We have had the blessing of relations, friends, habitations to dwell in, and many remarkable alterations in providence: We have had restraining grace, to preserve us from many errors, from terrors and distress; from many temptations; from many of the desires of a carnal heart, and from a seared conscience, as those have who are given up to judicial hardness. Manifold preservations of our bodies from wounds, pains, sickness and death. And how many wholesome chastisements and merciful sufferings? How many favors have our friends, our children; and our neighbors enjoyed, which ought to be to us as our own? What an interest have we had in the remaining

public welfare of the church and the state, under all the threatening aspects of providence to both? How has God's patience been exercised towards us, under our constant provocations and unprofitableness; and his mercies been renewed notwithstanding our abuses and great ingratitude? O if we should aggravate these mercies in our enlarged meditations; and should be sensible of God's hand in them all; would not the reflection constrain us, this new-year's day, to *enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise?* Should we not be *thankful to him and bless his name?* For *the Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.*

BUT what has been the temper of our hearts and the tenor of our lives, the past year, under all these mercies? Have not our proud hearts thought ourselves worthy of these favors, and more? Have we not thought diminutively of these salvations and blessings of heaven? Or have we not been greedily gaping after more worldly good, without rendering to God the fruits of what we have received? O let us awake and solemnly consider whether, under our many and great obligations, we have served God in newness of spirit; or whether all has not been done in the oldness of the letter? Have you done any
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thing in religion and civil life, from a new nature wrought within you, under the influence of the holy Spirit? Have you had the law of God engraven upon your heart; and have you set the example of Jesus Christ before you as a pattern to copy after? Have you offered up yourselves and all your services to God for acceptance, only through the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ? What has been your way of living? Have you derived light, grace and strength from Jesus Christ, in the way of believing, that so you might bring forth the living fruits of righteousness and holiness unto God? From a true sight and sense of the glory of the divine character, have you supremely esteemed and loved him, and aimed at glorifying his name in all things and above all other aims? Have you been daily learning the emptiness of the creature, the uncertainty of life, the vanity of the world, the fulness, sovereignty, power, excellence, love and grace of God your Creator and Redeemer? Have you lived under a heart-affecting sense of your meanness and utter unworthiness of all the mercy and truth, in which God has been passing before you? Have you lived in an utter dislike of the former carriage of your heart and life, and in abhorring yourselves for your own vileness?

LET us deal faithfully in all these enquiries, as we tender the welfare of our own immortal souls. Though we are brought to the beginning of a new year, it is not likely we all shall live to the end of it: Time hastens on apace, the motion of it cannot be stopped, and when it is gone, it cannot be recalled. Many are gone to the grave, and to their eternal home the past year, and doubtless many of us must go this. And O where shall we be found; how shall we appear, if it is found that we have acted our part from no higher principle than nature; from no better rule than good means, the custom of others, or our own un sanctified reason; with no better hope of acceptance than what is founded on our own sinful services; or, at most, a mixed righteousness, partly our own, and partly Christ's: with no better religion than what is founded in self as the highest motive, and lifted up with our doings in the pride of our own hearts? O let us seriously, and without loitering, consider of these things. Now the last year is finished and gone, we cannot promise ourselves another year, or month, or day, or hour. Let us not therefore count how many years or days we have to live in the world; but, while we do live, get the matter well settled that we serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

II. WOULD christians enjoy a happy new year? Would they, to this end, serve God in newness of spirit while they live? This they certainly desire; and to attain it, they must walk closely with God.

WILL you ask what it is to walk with God? I answer: it is a living with and to God, in the world and in the church. He who walks humbly with God, practically acknowledgés the glory of his perfections, and his relations to man; his power, wisdom, goodness and grace, as Creator, preserver, Redeemer and sanctifier: he resigns himself to God, as his owner, and subjects himself to him, as his Governor, walking in the awe of his sovereign power, majesty and grace: This includes a practical sense of his glory in his holy perfections: it includes being his children and friends in Christ; esteeming, loving his glory above all, and our happiness in the enjoyment of him. It includes subjection to his authority; taking his wisdom and will for our guide, and his law for our rule. We live as in his presence, with desire and delight; we see him in his creatures and daily providence, and sincerely attend upon him in the use of those holy duties, in which he has appointed us to expect his grace. To this end we are to read the word of God with great diligence and attention; to hear it
preached

preached with great care and affection; to attend his other institutions with great care and devotion, and to be much in fervent prayer to God, for light, grace and life to walk with him. Besides, if we walk with God, our dependance is upon him, and we take all our mercies from him. It follows, if we walk with God, the greatest business of our lives will be with him and for him. We shall begin the day with him, and entertain him in the first and sweetest of our thoughts. We shall mind the business of the day, as in his presence; resolve to do no work but his, no not in our common affairs. Hence we shall look about us, and discern the opportunities of serving God, and of the best improvement of our talents:

O what atheism is to be found, even among those who profess to walk with God! Where there is no supreme love to God, no fear, no holy delight, no serving him in newness of spirit, there is atheism in the heart. You may speak much of God and religion, and be but atheists while you go up and down under the name of christians. Who are atheists, but those who have impious, slight, or contemptuous thoughts of God?

BUT if you would serve him in newness of spirit, you must know, love and honor him, and do
every

every thing to please him: And doing this is what every true christian is desirous of, and concerned about. And indeed what is more suitable for all men? For

1. To walk with God and serve him in newness of spirit, is an employment suited to intelligent creatures. The faculties of the human soul, and the powers of the body, are composed for this service by the infinitely wise Creator. Though there is an amazing estrangedness from God, and enmity to him, this is but the disease of nature, and turning it against its proper end. What can be more fit and proper, than that we should love and serve God with uprightnes of heart, and gladly accept of all that communion with him that our natures are capable of? What can be more suitable than to seek God as our portion, and his glory as our last end? Now, nothing is plainer than serving God in newness of spirit, and walking closely with him in order thereto, is but the improvement of our reason, and employing it for and upon the noblest object.

2. To serve God in newness of spirit, and to walk with him thereto, is the highest and noblest life. There is something so great and good in these

holy services, that if I should be called to view such a rare soul, it would seem as if I was called to see the face of an angel, or a glorified soul. The sight is so rare, that it seems more than the sight of a thousand princes in their worldly glory. O happy soul that really serves God in newness of spirit, though he should be neglected and contemned by all about him. By faith he sees God and that glory, which saints in heaven see by intuition: he sees that through a glass, which they see face to face. He sees the glory of the Creator, the eternal King, the upholder, disposer and ruler of all worlds. He sees him in the methods of his providence, and what he cannot see through, he admires, and waits for the time when it shall be opened to his view: He sees by faith the world of spirits; the hosts that attend the throne of God; their devotedness to God; their ardent love and zeal, their cheerful obedience and shining glory. These views with many others, are more excellent than all the delights of this world. And these beams do so penetrate the heart and enlighten the mind, that the person is changed more and more into the divine image from glory to glory, and the Spirit of God and of glory resteth on him.

3. It is the best preparation for death. As a new year is now commenced, we have one year the less

less to travel in our way to the eternal world; and doubtless death may seize some of us before the commencement of another year. Now, what can be more suitable preparation for death, than a close walk with God, and serving him stedfastly in newness of spirit? If our souls are taken up with things that are the most excellent, we shall be dead to the things that are below; more weaned from all that in this world which is the most desired by a carnal heart. We shall have more peace of conscience; and what a happiness will it be, when death comes, to be able to say with the apostle, as in 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. and 2 Cor. i. 12. Such a testimony of conscience is a precious cordial to a dying person. Strictness in the service of God, with a gracious regard to his glory, will be exceeding sweet in the last review. And besides; hereby we shall be more acquainted with God, have more holy boldness to go to him in prayer, to trust in him, and expect salvation from him. O the happiness to a dying christian, if he is able to say, "God has often manifested his love to me, by his attracting and assisting grace: I am going, by death, to see him face to face, whom I have often seen through the glass of ordinances. I am going to live with him in heaven, whom I have served in newness of spirit on earth. I am not going to an enemy, nor to a

stranger, but to my Father's house, to that God who was the spring, the ruler, the guide, the strength and comfort of my life." O happy preparation for death, when it is but the passage to that glorious God with whom we desire to be, and to that place where we would fain dwell for ever !

III. To them who never did any thing in religion, but in the oldness of the letter. Let me beseech you, while you are yet in the way, and whilst the spirit of God is striving with you, in his word and ordinances, to lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and be at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. You are fond of gifts : I do now, in this assembly, before God, angels and men, make you, any of you, every one of you, the free offer of a new-year's gift ; the greatest gift that ever was given, the greatest gift that can be given, the unspeakable gift of God's love, the Lord Jesus Christ. Accept of this transcendent, this all-comprehensive gift, and all blessings shall come upon you. Accept of this gift, and you shall be willing and able to serve God in newness of spirit. Accept of this gift, and then if you enter into a new world, as doubtless some of you will, before this year is ended, death will have lost its sting, and shall be swallowed up in victory. The Lord Jesus Christ
will

will purge away all your sins, which gives death all its terror. You could then resign your breath, and all your cares; you could cheerfully lay down your body, and soar to heaven above, where all things are new.

BUT until you accept of this unutterable gift of God's love, you will do nothing but in the oldness of the letter. The love and grace of Christ will not have the command of your heart; nor will you discern the moral glories, nor relish the enjoyments nor the work of the new Jerusalem. But you will be lulled asleep and intoxicated by the ensnaring wiles of the devil: he will hold you fast, like captives of war taken alive; he will domineer over you, and drag you down to his regions of darkness. O piteous condition! Good had it been for you had you never been born; much better, infinitely better than to die refusing the unspeakable gift of God's love. If you perish under the righteous sentence which this sin deserves, you will curse the day of your birth, like that in Jer. xx. 14, 15. Your doom and destruction will be exceeding fearful, Isa. lxvi. 24:

DEARLY beloved friends, whose salvation I long for: if you will not receive this wonderful gift of
Christ

Christ, who is this day offered to you, I am afraid you will be in hell fire before the next new-year's day comes about. You may take pardon, grace and salvation from Christ now, if you will. You have no reason to suspect the gracious nature of God, who does good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. But you are your own destroyers. Satan is not readier to move you to neglect the free gift of God to day, than you are to do it yourselves. There is nothing hinders your acceptance to day, but your own wicked choice. When you have a free offer of Christ, what hinders your acceptance but a WILL NOT? You do not like the contrivance of infinite wisdom. You do not like the infinite purity, righteousness and truth of God. And nothing seems more to embolden you in sin, than that Christ is come to redeem and save sinners. What! must Christ wait upon you another year for you to abuse the offer of grace? Will you presume, after the many offers of Christ which you have had, you shall live to despise him another year, if you will not accept the offer of this gift to day?

O what a pity it is that you should do that against yourselves, which neither earth nor hell can do. You cannot be destroyed without your own consent,

content. And will you be worse to yourselves than devils can be? O this will make you your own tormentors in hell, to think of it, that this new-year's day, 'as well as many and many a time before, you had the free offer of a glorious Christ, as a new-year's gift, and you would not accept it. O what a griping thought will it be for ever, that this refusal was your own choice; that you were warned and called many a time, and that this day you were urged to accept of Christ, but you wilfully refused. You had a price in your hands, but had no heart to improve it. O how it will torment you, among ten thousand other tormenting thoughts, to remember this day, when you had a repeated and pressing call to accept of the unspeakable gift of divine grace, and you would not. O how can I leave you, my friends; my heart is troubled to think of leaving you in the rejection of Christ! O that you would *bear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, said Christ, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for who-so findeth me, findeth wisdom and life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord; but he that sins against me wrongs his own soul; and they that hate me love death.*

S E R M O N




SERMON XXVI.

The Blessedness of Christian Liberality.

A C T S XX. 35.

-----*Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

OME have thought these words refer to what is written Luke vi. 38. *Give and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.* Or that, chap. xvi. 9. *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* And both these scriptures promise a plentiful and ample reward to works of charity, either from the hand of God more immediately, or his blessing us in

in a more mediate way, by his providential dispensations, taking care to distinguish acts of mercy.

OTHERS, and perhaps, more justly think that this was a saying of our Lord, used on some particular occasions, and familiarly known among his disciples, though omitted by the evangelists in the history of his life. However, whether the account of it is from ear witnesses, or by immediate revelation, we are assured from an inspired apostle, that Christ spoke words similar to these; and may be soon satisfied of their truth.

THE only design I have in choosing these words is, to prove that there is a greater happiness, and a more signal blessing derived, from doing acts of charity to the poor, than in receiving benefactions from others, or from increasing in worldly riches. And after proving the proposition, I shall attempt some application.

FOR proof of the proposition, consider

I. THERE is more sensible delight in acts of charity to the poor, than in receiving benefactions from others. A cheerful using what a man has in works of charity, exhilarates the spirits, and when

it is done with a ready mind, it is the pleasantest work in the world. Even proud men find a peculiar pleasure in having the character of being liberal to the poor. Nay, the covetous and niggardly, are ambitious of being esteemed great benefactors: they would fain be held in reputation as petty deities among their neighbors, that all may bow to them, and live by their influence. This is the top of that ambition they aspire to. And if the name of being benefactors is delightful to the proud, doubtless the being really liberal and eminent in acts of charity, will be more agreeable to the upright in heart. The ostentatious love to have their charities taken notice of and applauded by their fellow creatures: but the christian's delight is to be liberal in a more private way, knowing that their heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, will reward them openly. To descend to particulars

I. THERE is more worth and dignity in the pleasure of charity to the poor, than in hoarding up or laying out for self. The pleasure of getting and growing rich, relates only to the body, the meanest part of the man; and whilst we place our happiness in an increase of wealth to leave to our children, we know not but all our hoarded wealth will fall into the hands of fools that will soon bring it
to

to nothing. How often has it been seen where great estates are left to children, they are spent in idleness, intemperance, rioting, drunkenness and debauchery, which are the disorder and disgrace of human nature.

BUT these things cannot be said of that which is cheerfully given for the support of the poor. The money laid out in this way, is safely laid up in good hands; and being given in a right manner, we feel ourselves to be what we ought to be, and to do what we ought to do: this is an agreeable sensation in our inmost, in our noblest part; it is manly pleasure; yea, it is angelic pleasure, who delight to be ministring spirits. It is a pleasure that none can despise without reproaching themselves; a pleasure that results from a temper most worthy of human nature; a pleasure which cannot be despised by any, without reproaching themselves.

2. THERE is more solid peace in the pleasure of giving to the poor, than in laying up and getting worldly riches. He who has the greatest pleasure in worldly good, is only running round in a circle; he has nothing new to entertain him, nothing great and good to increase the joy. Nay, he who has much of the world, and craves more, and no heart

to improve it for God, increases sorrow to himself; the trouble of getting, and the fear of losing, will naturally keep up anxiety of mind.

SOMETHING better is still wanting to make us happy: we cannot find happiness in silver or gold. He who sets his heart upon the world will never think that he has enough, but enlargeth his desires as hell; he spends his labor for that which satisfieth not. But there is a way of having abundance, and no sorrow with it; no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment of it, no guilt contracted by the abuse of it; to have it, and have an heart to do good with it, and to serve God with it; to lay it out in works of piety and charity, has solid satisfaction in it. While others are vexed with fears or are mourning the loss of worldly goods, the open handed and charitable have something desirable and entertaining in the reflection. They may reflect that God will place it to accompt, as lent to him; he takes it kindly as if it was done to himself, and he would have them take the comfort of it, and be as well pleased as ever any userer was, when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. The fruit that Christ gives the truly charitable and liberal, is *better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and his revenue than choice silver.* That wealth which is let out in works
of

of piety and charity, is let out on the best interest, and the best security : it will turn to better account, will be of more value, and yield more solid peace than improving it otherwise.

3. THE pleasure of doing good and distributing to the poor is more abiding, than that of getting and hoarding worldly riches. The pleasures we have in worldly glory and wealth, are very uncertain and precarious : the objects in prospect are liable to be taken or withheld from us ; and it cannot be long before we must have done with them forever. Covetous men think happiness consists in worldly riches ; but this cannot be true, for *riches make themselves wings and flee away, as an eagle towards heaven.* They are not a portion for the soul : they do not afford the happiness they promise. Those who hold them never so fast, cannot hold them always, cannot hold them long ; either their riches will soon be taken from them, or they will be taken from their riches. They have in themselves the principles of their own corruption, their own moth and rust. They are wasting in their nature, and if griped to hold them, are like a snowball laid in the bosom, soon dissolved and gone.

BUT money rightly laid out in acts of piety and charity is abiding in its good effects. The pleasure
of

of having disposed of it this way is a lasting pleasure. Hence the wise man calls such *durable riches and righteousness*. i. e. Those who have God's blessing upon their honest gain, and have an heart to lay it out in works of piety and charity, have riches that will endure. The incomes of such charities are better, more abiding than gold. Such liberal souls have springs of pleasure within themselves, and they must part with themselves as soon as with the pleasure of doing good.

II. THERE is not only a greater pleasure in giving to the poor than in receiving benefactions : but there is more true honor in liberally giving, than receiving. Any kind offices by the command of our Prince, we should esteem honorable to do. How eagerly do men generally pursue what they take to be the will of their Sovereign ! and a sense of the honor of being entrusted is one motive. But there is no such honorable employment as the service of God : it is doing the will of an infinitely great and glorious being ; it is a service of righteousness and true holiness. Now, one branch of this service is alms-giving : this is a service of righteousness ; a due debt to the poor. Here then is great honor, suited to noble spirits that will not stoop to the drudgery of covetous worldlings.

III.

III. IT is more God-like. As God is infinitely good in himself, so he is of infinitely abounding compassions; *his tender mercies are over all his works. He is good unto all; he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* The wicked as well as the righteous, those who are enemies to him, as well as those who love him, share in the beauties of his providence. Herein the liberal imitate the great benefactor of the world. To be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence, to be ever merciful, and give to them who are in want; to draw out our souls to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted souls; to shew this mercy with cheerfulness, and on all proper occasions to give liberally, and to be generous in communicating to the necessities of the poor; I say, to be thus liberal in giving, is to be God-like; it is to imitate him whose open hand supplies the wants of every living thing.

IV. DOING acts of charity is attended with more signal blessings from God. There is a blessing in this life promised to those who are liberal to the poor. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him to the*
will

will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing : thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. Liberality is a branch of godliness which has the promise of the life that now is, and is ordinarily recompenced with temporal blessings. Such men may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God. In the worst times it shall go well with them. *He who watereth shall be watered also himself.* God will certainly return it in plentiful showers of blessings : *the merciful shall find mercy,* and the kind shall be kindly dealt with. *He that gives to the poor shall not lack.* If he has but little, said Henry, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing. If he has much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its growing less ; he and his shall not want what is given in pious charity. And again ; there is a reward of grace promised in the life to come, and is reserved for those who are bountiful to the poor in pious charities. The royal Judge will say to them, *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* For the tokens are found upon such, to whom this kingdom belongs. So our Savior says, *when thou makest a feast, call in the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompence thee : for thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection*

religion of the just. God owns and honors pious charities, and will graciously reward them another day. Those who from love to God and their neighbor, submit to this proof of love, shall have treasure in heaven.

FROM these things it appears that there is a greater happiness and more signal blessing derived from doing acts of charity, than from receiving benefactions from others; or increasing worldly riches.

USE I. Hence you may learn the reasons why many that might do abundance, do little or nothing in acts of charity to the poor. It does not arise from doubts and difficulties about when, or where they should give; nor whether they are proper objects of charity; but the power of sin, and the want of grace, which makes their hearts backward to that noble and blessed work: Could we remove the backwardness of the heart, it would do more in drawing out men's money in liberal contributions for the poor, than resolving any case of conscience they may pretend to have about it. The reasons why there is no more done in this christian duty are plainly these following, viz:

I. UNBELIEF. Did you really believe God's word, that he will reward the works of pious cha-

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rities

rities to the poor, in this life an hundred fold, and in the world to come life eternal. Men think there is nothing certain but what they have in hand, and therefore are laying up treasure on earth, and trust to that, rather than trust the word of God. Whereas, if they really believed the promises of God, and realized a judgment to come : if they believed they would lay up treasure in heaven, and make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and study to be rich in good works. They would send their wealth to heaven, before they go themselves, and lay up a good foundation against the time to come. Then they would know something of their indebtedness to God, who not only honors them as his almoners, but will reward them according to their liberalities. Had they faith, they would see that liberality is the surest way to be rich, that he who saveth his money by covetousness, looseth it, and he who scatters it abroad for Christ's sake, saveth it. True christians find that it is more blessed to give than receive, and therefore are not weary in well-doing, but as they have opportunity, are ready to do good to all men.

2. A selfish spirit. Self is an insatiable appetite that devours all before it, and has very little to spare for good works. Self must have so much a year

to add to an estate ; so much a year to pamper the appetite ; so much a year to gratify pride ; so much a year for needless visits, or some other selfish end, that there is very little left for the poor. The world and the flesh must have so much from them annually, that it is no wonder God has so little out of their goods, to maintain the poor. Selfish men are the most miserable persons in the world ; they rob God of his due, rob the poor of their due, and rob themselves of all the benefit of those good works of piety and charity which they might do, and all to please sinful self. It is matter of dread to think with what horror they must give up their accounts to God, when, instead of so much cheerfully given to support the gospel, and so much to support the poor, it will be so much to gratify pride, so much to please the appetite, and so much for covetousness.

3. **THE** want of love to God and our neighbor. If men really loved God above all, they could not be close handed and hard-hearted to others. I may safely refer it to you, to judge whether you would not be very liberal to the poor, if you loved your neighbours as yourselves ? Whether you would find money to lay out on pride, or pleasure, or farms, while so many of your poor neighbors are in pinch.

ing want? The great reason why so little is done in acts of charity, is the want of love. Who can expect that those who are given to pleasure or covetousness, should give much to relieve the poor? Men in general seem to care but little for any thing but self. And it is an easy matter, where self is at the bottom, to make an hundred excuses to save themselves from generous distributions for the support of the poor. Besides, they make to themselves a religion which cost them nothing, and to quiet their consciences with that. One drops now and then a small matter, and wipes his mouth with a few hypocritical prayers and good words, and thinks really God is obliged to him. Another thinks he shall be saved because he is of this church, and another because he is of that. One hopes to be saved because he is of this party, and another because he is of that. And thus many, who do not love their neighbors, who are covetous, luxurious or carnal, hope for heaven, by flattery and mere pretence. They readily join with the outside of religion, but when they hear of selling all and giving to the poor to follow Christ, they go away sorrowful.

II. LET the poor consider whether they do not cut themselves off from the blessing of giving to others, by their own sins. You are hoping for something

ſomething from the liberality of others, and doubt-
leſs you ſtand in need. But have you not brought
your poverty upon yourſelves? Perhaps, if you had
behaved properly, you might have had wherewith
to give to others, and to have had the bleſſing of
many ready to periſh come upon you. Have you
not been ſlothful in buſineſs? The ſlothful is bro-
ther to him who is a great waſter. No wonder, if
that is the caſe, that *poverty comes, as one who tra-
velleth, and want as an armed man.* And if you
will pleaſe yourſelves with idleneſs, you may expect
to be diſpleaſed with want. But perhaps your po-
verty comes by intemperance. Might not many
poor have had wherewith to give to others, were
they not gluttons or drunkards? The world is full
of examples of this ſin. And if you are among
the number, no wonder you are poor; for *the glut-
ton and drunkard ſhall come to poverty.* Or perhaps,
pride has made you poor. This ſin ſacrificeth
God's mercies to the devil. Have you not laid out
much for pomp, to ſet forth yourſelves to others?
Some in needleſs drefs and time-waſting viſits, or
in fine clothes? In this caſe you may be left to ſuf-
fer. Had you not liſted yourſelves up above your
rank, you might have had a competency, and ſome
to ſpare; but now you are brought low by the
humbling providence of God. Or perhaps you
have

have been guilty of unjust gain. If that has been the case, remember that ill-gotten wealth often brings a secret curse with it. Or when you had something to spare, you were unmerciful to the poor, and that is often cursed with poverty; for withholding more than is meet, tendeth to poverty. If you were uncharitable to your poor neighbours when you might have helped them, you thereby have weakened your interest and forfeited the blessing of God. If your poverty is come upon you in either of these ways, it should be very humbling to you, and then your poverty may be a mercy.

III. LET those who have a competency of these things, realize the blessings of being liberal to the poor, and shew it this evening by the openness of their hand to the poor among us. Be it so, that some are in great poverty through pride, idleness, fraud, or intemperance; yet they must be relieved in present necessities. Remember your heavenly Father sends down his blessings on the evil and on the good, the just and the unjust; and you are to imitate him in your liberalities. It is true, poor christians are to be considered more than the devil's poor, and doubtless those who have the distribution of your charities will prudently consider that matter. But, as you urge for charity sermons, I hope you
will

will not make them a cloak for covetousness, but minister with a very open and liberal hand.

You cannot be justly offended, if I recommend to you the example of that worthy Gentleman, † whose remains you followed to the grave the past week: The poor among this people—the poor in other places—poor ministers—other poor christians and other poor people are witnesses that to his power, yea, and beyond his power, he was willing of himself. He did not gather to hoard up, but to do good and communicate, and found that sowing plentifully was the way to reap plentifully—May his only son and heir inherit the largeness of heart that his father did, and the other children enjoy the blessing promised to the generation of the upright. O that God would remember his covenant with them in the days of their youth, and establish unto them an everlasting covenant!

WE believe he is now inheriting the promises; and if the wealthy among you would leave the favor of the upright behind them, let them go and do likewise.

IN

† JAMES CLARKSON ESQ; *who died October 5th, 1773, and was buried October 8th. at Evening.*

IN order to it, beg for a generous, charitable heart. View God in his poor, needy creatures, and think of his abundant love to you; and let a sense of his love to you, excite your charities to others. Who has made you to differ in your outward attainments from your poor neighbors, who are pinched with hunger and cold? Who has distinguished you from them, by the gifts of his providence, which you partake of? It is not from any worthiness of your own, that you have an affluence, when they and their poor families are crying for bread. Doubtless, if you duly consider your bountiful Benefactor, you will be very liberal in your contributions to the relief of the poor about you:

ESPECIALLY, if you believe the saying of our Saviour in the text. It is the want of faith which makes men mean-spirited. Did you really believe that it is more blessed to give than receive; did you realize the true and abiding pleasure; the honor and peace, and signal rewards of liberality; we should have little need of all these methods of persuasion. Your minds and hearts would be strongly engaged in this excellent service with great alacrity. Your laudable and fervent zeal herein, would raise a noble ambition in many others, to follow your good example: Three or four guineas, if you are rich,

rich,

rich, you will look upon but a little money for the poor to receive from you, if you believed that God would reward it an hundred fold in this present life, and in the world to come life everlasting. But if you can spare but a little, be it a dollar or less, according to your power, only do it in faith and with a generous heart; an heart that would gladly give thousands if you had it, God will value it above all the superfluities of the sensual world. Now therefore let me prevail with you to act up to the character of believers. Shew a pleasing readiness and propensity of mind in contributing to relieve your poor neighbors in their necessitous circumstances. Let your affluence afford a suitable and sufficient supply to their necessities. Remember, the providence of God may change hands, may raise them up, and cast you down; and if it should be so, he will incline their hearts to return the favor, and out of their plenty, to relieve your wants.

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