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SERMONS.

BY

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WILLARD PRESTON, D. D.,

LATE PASTOR OF THE

INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.

WITH A

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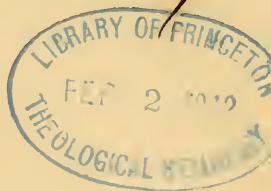
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Sermons.

I.

SIN, ITS NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES.

“That sin by the commandment, might become exceeding
sinful.”—Rom. 7 : 13.

THE leading object of the Apostle in this chapter, and indeed in much of his Epistle to the Romans, was to show the nature, design, and tendency of the law of God with reference to the sinner's justification and salvation, and its entire inefficiency as the means of either. The penalty must follow the violation; and that penalty must be endured either in the person of the violator, or in that of an approved and accepted substitute. But under the economy of grace, the law occupies a most important place. While it exhibits the character and government of God as nothing else can, it is the chief instrument to awaken and convict the sinner, and the only perfect rule of conduct.

In the text and immediate context, the Apostle refers to the law, as the means by which he was led

to know his real condition, to have any just conception of the true nature and real odiousness of sin, and by its application to himself felt that he was cut off from all hope. "For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin, by the commandment, might become (might show itself) exceeding sinful." What was thus true in the experience of Paul, in regard to the office of God's law, in developing the true nature of sin, and exhibiting its exceeding sinfulness, or dreadful enormity, is no less true of all others to whom it is properly applied. It becomes to all such the grand instrument of true conviction of sin. And this is the only way that the sinner can be induced to take one step towards securing his salvation. Till he sees his guilt, he will not feel his danger; and till he feels this, he will not apply for the remedy the Gospel prescribes. The lamentable truth with impenitent sinners is, that sin is viewed as a small thing; and not "that evil thing and bitter which God hateth;" or else, from its blinding influence, they have little consciousness of it. Where is the impenitent sinner who realizes that one sin exposes to eternal death, and unrepented of, insures that death? And yet this is the view which God has given us of sin. Without regard to numbers, or aggra-

vations of sin, he has declared, "The soul that sinneth shall die." To deepen our impressions of what sin is, will be the object of this discourse. And,

1. It is opposed to the infinite holiness and goodness of God: to God in his whole nature, relations, and authority as Creator, Benefactor, righteous Governor, and even more, if possible; to all the tender and endeared relations of Father, Friend, and Redeemer. Every act of goodness on God's part aggravates the sinner's guilt. Sin is the only thing that has marred God's universe; and could it universally reign, it would turn the whole of it into unmitigated, unending wretchedness, and even dethrone its Maker. Such is sin in its own nature and direct tendency—its very aims. What then can measure, what words express, what finite mind adequately conceive the sinfulness of sin, its intrinsic odiousness? Sin, not in any particular form which it assumes, or by which it is manifested, but sin in the abstract; not what it has actually done, but what it is in itself, and, unrestrained, is capable of doing? What sin has actually done, is another consideration from that which is here presented. We are now contemplating it as God alone is concerned, his infinite holiness, his relations to man, and man's relations to him. This was the particular view which Paul had of it in the text and context; which he had at his conversion, as he looked at it by the clear and all-pervading light of God's law, by which God exhibited his own nature, and by which alone

his nature and character could be fully exhibited. This view of it instantly extorted Paul's declaration, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." It was this view of it which made its application to himself the instrument of death, and utterly quenched every hope of life which he had before so fondly cherished.

It was not what the law threatened,—the mere penalty of violating it. It was not the mere consequences to him, personally, which gave him his views of sin, fearful and tremendous as they were; but specially, and I may add, simply, as the law showed him the inherent, infinite holiness of God; in other words, what God is, and not what he threatened.

Let this consideration be kept distinctly in mind, as it furnishes the principal ground of the application I purpose to make of this subject. All else that we shall add will be by way of illustrating this one point, and awakening a serious and solemn attention to it. Hence,

2. View sin as opposed, not merely to the sterner attributes of Jehovah,—his inflexible justice, his infinite holiness,—but of his mildest, and to men, most attractive attributes, which, as men are, are most likely to touch and move their hearts. Though there may be, strictly speaking, no good or real foundation for such a distinction in the Divine nature, yet as men conceive of them, and are affected by them, there is. Let us view sin, then, as opposed to the love of

God. And from the mere self-promptings of his love, what has God done?

Briefly, he has sought the sinner's highest happiness. Temporal good is but a slight expression of his love, rich, and varied, and constant as that is; he has sought his eternal welfare, and provided for it at an immense sacrifice and expense. I need not stop to show how. But sin is opposition to it all. It interrupts all the endearing relations of Father, Benefactor, Friend, Redeemer; returns the greatest kindness with the blackest ingratitude, or forgetfulness; and turns away with enmity or indifference from the offer of all the unspeakable glories of heaven. It mocks at the agonies of the crucifixion. It turns away the ear from the wonderful trusting prayer which the great Sufferer offered, even while death was sealing his lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It scorns his offered mercy. It tramples the blood of the everlasting covenant under foot. And yet the voice of Divine love calls and entreats the sinner, even the vilest, to return and live. O, is not sin exceeding sinful?

3. Consider the view which God himself takes of sin. We have been contemplating it as aimed at all his attributes, and particularly, as opposed to his mildest, and to man, his most attractive perfections. Look at it as he has expressed his views of it. He tells us it is the "thing which his soul hateth." He has expressed his solemn, unerring judgment of it, in

the penalty annexed to its commission, "The soul that sinneth shall die." And what is it for a soul to die? Not its annihilation. Not to be, were no death to the soul. It implies continued existence. But in what state? In what condition? God has given to this question a most direct and unequivocal answer. He has given it in words of awful import. He tells us it is to be "banished from the glory of his power;" to "go away into everlasting punishment;" to be "cast into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." And as though words were not enough, he has collected fearful imagery to describe it: "lying down in everlasting burnings"—being "cast into a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

But enough: that world of woe cannot be described; any more than the world of glory can be described. But one thing is certain, the representation cannot exceed the reality. In other words, the reality must equal what the obvious meaning of the language and figures employed to describe or represent it, denote. The contrary would imply the impious charge of a design to deceive. We can conceive of no anguish in the present state of existence, at least, that can exceed what such language and imagery express.

O, what an evil sin must be, or in the words of my text, how "exceeding sinful," which has called forth such expressions of God's holy displeasure! And how is the impression deepened, when we reflect that

the Divine displeasure and those awful threatenings of his word are not pronounced only against a long series of aggravated crimes, but for a single sin, one offence. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Or, as if to remove all doubt on this point, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And again, "He that offends in one point, is guilty of the whole law," *i. e.*, of violating the whole law. The law is as much broken by one transgression, as by many transgressions. God's authority is as much disregarded in the one case as in the other. Our next inquiry will illustrate this point.

4. What has sin actually done, and what the origin of all that it has done? These questions are answered in the following declarations of Scripture. All sin, and all its consequences, are comprised in the first threatening. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Hence, the declaration of the Apostle Paul, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for that all have sinned." "For the judgment was by *one* (*i. e.*, offence), to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." "Therefore, by the offence of one (or as it should be rendered, by one offence), judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Such is the account which God's inspired word gives us, on this subject. From that "one offence," the first sin of the first man, sprang all the misery of succeeding time ;

nor time only, but of an endless eternity! With the first-born of the human family commenced a train, a constant succession of crimes, in one department of sin only, which have hurried countless multitudes of our race into eternity, by the murderer's hand. As the race increased, crimes and iniquities of every form multiplied. Scarce fifteen centuries had rolled away, and the earth itself could not bear up under the weight of guilt which had accumulated upon it; and we hear its Creator, and the Creator of man, whom he had made in his own holy image, uttering himself in terrible anger. "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die. For it repenteth me that I have made man upon the earth. And it grieved him at his heart."

I need not say that the history of the world, after its resettlement, from the single family saved from the destruction of the flood, has been the same from that time to the present. We might, indeed, refer each to his own individual experience and observation, and gather many a painful proof of what sin has done, and is always doing. Who has not seen Death, with all his train of woes, in his terrible ravages in families; in his relentless severing of the strongest bonds of

affection ; in the agonies of his victims, and deep grief of surviving relatives? But it is sin that gave that destroyer of our race his power, and armed him with all his fatal weapons, in the various forms of disease and casualties. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.”

Once more. And this furnishes the crowning proof, and the most solemnly affecting illustration of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the world, the universe ever witnessed. You anticipate me. Yes, it was the humiliation, the sorrows, the death of God’s own Son! At the cross is concentrated the strongest testimony which could possibly be afforded of the intrinsic odiousness of sin, and its tremendous consequences. Had sin been less than an infinite evil, surely an infinite sacrifice had not been required to make an atonement for it. So reasons the Apostle, with reference to the only conceivable alternative for the Saviour’s death. “If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness or justification had been by the law.” That is, could any other arrangement or provision have been made, consistently with the claims of justice and the character of God, by which sin could be pardoned and the sinner saved, it would have been made. But there could be no such law, no such provision. The keeping of *one* law to do away the penalty for the violation of *another* law, were a nullity and an absurdity. Nor could there be any such obedience on the part of the transgressor, because,

as the Apostle adds, "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." And, indeed, no future obedience, were it perfect, could possibly make amends for past disobedience. Nothing, therefore, short of the death of Christ could be sufficient ground for the pardon of a single sin.

No, God's own dearly beloved Son, in human nature, must be the victim. He must die in man's stead, or there had been no salvation for him. And this is the current language of both the Old Testament and the New. Hear it, as recorded in the former, as though the mighty sacrifice had already been offered. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." I need not say that all this is confirmed in the New Testament. Of multitudes of declarations, I will recite but one. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." And all this for what? What the occasion of such deep humiliation, such amazing sufferings; the humiliation and sufferings of such a being, God's infinite, equal Son, taking our nature, and in it, enduring the cruel agonies of the Roman cross? Why all this? There can but one answer be given to this question; that answer is, Sin, sin! What then must sin be to have required all this to atone for it; to

render the sinner's pardon possible, that one sinful act could be pardoned, that one sinner might be saved?

Here, truly, is the crowning proof of its odiousness and awful consequences. One deliberate, candid look at the cross, supersedes the necessity of all other proofs. Were all the miseries of our world concentrated in one point, they would furnish but slight testimony in the comparison. No, and if to these we were to add the nameless agonies of the world of woe! God has here shown his views of sin, his infinite abhorrence of it; his own estimate of it. Ah, with such a lesson before us, we need not go to the other world and listen to the wailings of the finally lost! God forbid that any of us should ever learn what sin is in that world, where pardon can never be known.

Our subject suggests many distinct reflections. But leaving you to make most of them, I present the few following ones only.

1. The future punishment of the finally impenitent must in the nature of things be eternal.

God's word, indeed, has put this beyond all doubt, where that word is really believed. Sin is aimed at the infinite holiness of God and all God is. And this is the proper ground on which to estimate it. It must, therefore, be as great an evil as God is good and great. That he has power to restrain its consequences, or that the sinner is a finite being, affects not its nature. It is indeed the fact that he is finite, and cannot, therefore, suffer what it deserves at once, or in any limited

duration, that the punishment of it must be eternal. This conclusion is also sustained by the fact that none but an infinite being could make an atonement for it, or render it, in any case, pardonable.

2. The law of God is the only instrument of true conviction. That, and that alone, teaches what sin is. The very scenes of the crucifixion point to the law, and teach us why God's only Son died, not to weaken the force of the law; on the contrary, to support the law in all its rigid and inflexible exactions. Not to do away its penalties, but in himself endure them, and thus "magnify the law and make it honorable." "By the law is the knowledge of sin." No sinner can have any proper view of himself, but through the medium and by the application of God's holy law to his heart and life.

3. One of the first sentiments or impressions which has a favorable bearing on a sinner's salvation, or without which nothing has such bearing, is his approbation of God's law, in all the strictness of its requirements, and all the terribleness of its penalties. Like Paul, when it slew him, he must pronounce "the law holy, and the commandment, holy, just, and good." And this view, instead of abandoning to despair, save it be self-despair, leads to "Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Odious in its nature, and fearful in its consequences, as sin is, adoring thanks to our great High Priest, it may be pardoned, its deep pollution all removed, its

consequences to the soul be forever arrested. To them who make him their trust, his obedience unto death stands between them and death eternal. Go, sinner, whatever the amount of your guilt, and lay the whole burden of it before his cross. Go to-day—go now. Why will any of you increase that burden, by another moment's rejection of the salvation he so dearly purchased, for all who will cordially accept it. That burden must be cast there, or it will soon crush you into endless perdition!

II.

THE CONVERSION OF THE SOUL; OR, LIFE OUT OF DEATH.

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”—EPHES. 2: 1, 2.

THE terms *quicken* and *dead*, or life and death, are frequently employed in Scripture, as denoting, and even descriptive of the two states of nature and grace; in other words, the moral condition of the unregenerate and regenerate. With reference to these two conditions, the Apostle addressed the text to the Ephesian Church. They were once in a state of death, but they had been quickened. These terms are of frequent occurrence, as thus applied; and stronger ones cannot be well conceived. The word “quicken,” in the text, which, though supplied by the translators, occurs in a subsequent verse, in the same sense and application, showing that they properly supplied it,—literally means, *to make to live*, or make alive. It is used to denote the resurrection of the Saviour’s body from the sepulchre; and the resurrec-

tion of the dead, generally. It, of itself, implies a previous state of death. It is never used to denote, as some have supposed, and as our word "quicken" sometimes is used, an increased degree of life or activity; to awake from a sluggish or dormant state; which would imply a previous state of life. This is the Arminian construction of the word, as employed in the text and elsewhere, when applied to a sinner; and hence, it is held, that the text and similar expressions, only signify to give a new impulse to a principle of grace, as it is termed, or something naturally good in every man; and that regeneration is only giving this new impulse to the soul. This view not only disclaims the doctrine of the total moral depravity of the impenitent, but destroys the difference between regeneration and sanctification, which means progress in the Divine life. It is, indeed, true, that as nothing material can strictly apply to that which is immaterial, or the properties of matter express the qualities of the mind, such comparisons must be understood with certain qualifications, such as the nature of the subject demands. To show what some of these are, I remark,

I. Natural death destroys all the natural power of the body; but spiritual death leaves one in the full possession of all his natural faculties. He is still a rational being; and to be addressed by, and capable of feeling the force of, motives and arguments. It was Paul's practice to reason with sinners. He even

made Felix tremble, "while he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." And God himself said, to those whose sins were as scarlet, and red like crimson, "Come, now, and let us reason together." He even challenges sinners "to bring forward their strong reasons, and to plead together."

II. Natural death leaves all its subjects in precisely the same state. The deceased bodies of all are alike reduced to dust. The robust and the feeble, the beautiful and the deformed, soon become an undistinguishable mass. But the spiritually dead may differ in many important respects. They may possess a thousand different shades of intellect, and of moral character, according to their conditions and circumstances in life, the force of education, authority, example, temptations, and restraints, by all of which they may be differently affected. They may be, and are, in widely different degrees, actually depraved. Total depravity does not imply the greatest possible degree of wickedness. Numbers and aggravation of crimes or offences certainly enhance one's guilt. It was on the ground of this difference, the Saviour said, that it should be more tolerable for the cities of the plain on the day of judgment, than for the inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.

III. Natural death destroys the very principle of animation, and puts it beyond the power of the departed spirit to revive or resuscitate it. But spiritual death affects not the power of moral agency.

The most abandoned sinner is a free moral agent. Moral agency is as essential to sin, as it is to holiness; to disobey, as to obey God. Without it there could not be accountability. The want of it is the only reason why brutes are not accountable beings; and its possession the only reason why men are accountable beings. In these respects, therefore, sinners are not dead.

But, notwithstanding these qualifications of the text, which the very nature of the subject demands, there is a striking resemblance between natural and spiritual death; and my second object will be to trace this resemblance. And

1. The subjects of both are destitute of what may be termed a vital principle; the seat or spring of life; that which chiefly conduces to the preservation of life.

The question, in what consists this vital principle, I leave to the discussion of philosophers. We do not pretend to know. We contend only for the fact of that which is so called. Whatever, or wherever, it may be, or of what it may precisely consist, it is destroyed in the animal when the body dies, and that power alone which created the body, can restore it. So in a moral point of view, there is a vital principle, not less the effect of Omnipotent grace. It is breathed into the soul by the Holy Ghost, by which the sinner's heart is renewed. We call it a principle, because it operates and is permanent, giving a right direction to the faculties of the soul; bringing them

into a cheerful conformity to the Divine will; producing a love of the truth and a persevering engagedness in the service of God. But of this the impenitent sinner is entirely destitute. He may be firmly persuaded of the truth of the Gospel; may believe its doctrines; may be influenced by its precepts; pay an external observance to its enjoined forms. For men may have a form of godliness, without its power: may have a zeal for God without a true knowledge, or real love of God. They desire the happy consequences of religion, while they dislike that which constitutes true religion. They may desire the happiness of heaven, while they dislike that which makes heaven a happy place.

2. The resemblance holds, in that, as natural death destroys the power of external perception and sensation, so spiritual death is a destitution of spiritual discernment. Paul tells us that they only who are born of the Spirit, “do mind or apprehend the things of the Spirit; for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” “To be carnally minded is death.” So also the Saviour taught: “Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand, for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and

hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Here is both the fact and the reasons of that state, plainly declared. Notwithstanding, therefore, they have all the natural faculties in the freest exercise, both the Apostle and the Saviour declare the sinner entirely destitute of any spiritual apprehension, or proper discernment of Divine things.

3. Sinners are as unmoved, as to any saving purpose, by the calls and invitations, commands and threatenings of the Gospel, as the naturally dead are by the sounds of the natural voice. They are compared to "the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken! Behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." "Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord; and they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee, as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; their heart goeth after their covetousness." Were not this language descriptive of them still, where would you find an impenitent sinner under the sound of the Gospel?

4. Natural death reduces the body to a loathsome state. But sin, in God's sight, is the thing most loathsome. There is nothing in existence so much

the object of his abhorrence. This is the only thing he does not love. It is sin which has drawn forth all the maledictions of his law. It is sin against which all the perfections of God are arrayed. No wonder we find it written : "God is angry with the wicked every day." "Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." No wonder that at the final disposition of his rational universe, he should say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" which include all the finally impenitent. Everlasting banishment from God awaits all who die in their sins.

But the text introduces to our grateful and joyful notice another class of topics. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." But what is it to be quickened ?

It is to give a proper direction to the natural faculties of man under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, on the affections or the heart. This statement covers the whole ground. Here is the necessary Agent,—the Holy Spirit. If what has been said under the former topic be true, nothing short of Omnipotence can produce the change denoted by being quickened. And, I need not say to you, that this work is everywhere ascribed, in the Bible, to the Holy Ghost.

Here, too, are the particular subjects of his influence : the natural faculties. No new faculty is created by

the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. Understanding, memory, will, conscience, and the affections, exist as well before, as after conversion; in an infidel, as in a Christian. On this ground, every command and threatening, every invitation and entreaty found in God's word is placed. All the faculties of the soul are under a wrong bias. And that bias comes from the heart, where is lodged the mainspring of every moral action. That, of course, must be changed. The affections are wrong; wrong in their nature, wrong in their direction, and the object on which they supremely centre. The heart made right, all the natural faculties will at once be brought into proper operation. The man becomes a new creature. We cannot well conceive of a greater change than this. Here, we see, too, the whole difficulty in this great work, and the reason why God must perform it, if ever effected. It is the heart which governs the man; and, of course, he can have no disposition to change that, for it would be a disposition to change from that state which supremely pleases him. A disposition superior to the supreme one, which is absurd. God, then, I repeat it, must change the heart, or that change will never be accomplished. Our Saviour expressed the whole difficulty on the sinner's part, and the absolute necessity of God's agency in overcoming it, in two short sentences, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life;" and, "No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him." Nothing but a Divine influ-

ence can overcome the sinner's will. And does not reason drive us to the same conclusion? If this be the state of the sinner's will, a will under the entire control of a depraved heart, fixedly opposed to God and to holiness, he assuredly will perish if left to his own chosen way, if left to have his will. How most unreasonable is opposition, or denial of the doctrine of God's sovereign, omnipotent grace, in order to the salvation of such a being as man is; when it should call forth from the lips of our whole race, most adoring thanks to Almighty God for doing that without which the entire race would have perished. If anything were needed to deepen and darken the depravity of the human heart in its natural state, it is found in its opposition to that which is the sole possible ground of a sinner's salvation.

While this is one of the most important doctrines, and which, in truth, lies at the very foundation of the whole scheme of salvation, it is one of the most plainly and frequently revealed truths of the Bible. Salvation by grace is the grand theme of Divine revelation. Everywhere is the work ascribed to God. And in regard to scarcely any other point is there greater harmony and unanimity, I may not, indeed, say of sentiment or opinion, but of heart, among all Christians. It is true, indeed, that on few subjects are opinion and experience oftener brought into conflict with each other, than on the doctrine here presented. And yet, not a Christian exists, or ever ex-

isted, who dares to go to the throne of grace with any other feeling than that of entire indebtedness to God's free and sovereign mercy for the hope of his salvation.

And if experience were made the bond or ground of union, there would not be one discordant note between those who really bear the image of Christ. St. Paul, in the fewest words possible, expressed this universal feeling of Christians, when he exclaimed, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Where is a renewed heart which will not promptly and gratefully respond Amen, to that sentiment? To this he ascribes his first awakening; his first serious anxiety; his conviction; his repentance of sin; his first breath of acceptable prayer. He knows he would never have taken one proper step towards heaven, never would have raised himself from his death in trespasses and sins, nor from any proper motive have even desired to be raised from that state, but by the grace of God. By that his eyes were opened to see, and his heart softened to feel his necessities as a perishing sinner. And the song, "Thanks be unto God, by grace I am saved," which he was here first taught to sing, he expects to make his theme of glorying in heaven forever; or heaven would lose much of its glory. This subject is fruitful of many inferences addressed to the reason of men, touching their relation to God, his reasonable claims on them as rational creatures and free moral agents, the nature and extent of human depravity, their obligations and duties, and many other topics usually presented by

the discussion of it. But I have a different message in closing this discourse. One which immediately concerns the sinner's eternal salvation.

What has been true of all who are now in heaven of our race, and true of all who are on their way to that happy world, must be true of every sinner here, to whom that world will become his eternal home. We have no long process of reasoning to go through with, to reach the object at which I now aim; and, indeed, most thoroughly to convince the sinner's reason, were making but a small advance towards gaining that object. For the convictions of reason are a slender barrier to the deep-rooted, inwrought depravity of the heart, offer but a weak resistance to its workings, and furnish no effectual cure of that deep-seated malady which has seized upon the soul, and threatens its endless destruction. Would to God I could bring every sinner here to one single point; for, without that, his eternal death is as certain as his temporal: that point is a proper sense of his wretchedness and helplessness. On this point, little reasoning is required. The merest child is competent to this. Many a child has reached it, and saved his soul. And no one who is capable of seeing danger, was ever saved, who did not so see it as to feel his utter helplessness. It requires but little ability to be brought to that spot. The marvel is, that every sinner does not feel this.

What Paul said to Agrippa, when arraigned before him as his prisoner, "King Agrippa, believest thou

the prophets? I know that thou believest," I might, with the same confidence, I trust, address to every sinner in this house, "Believest thou the Scriptures? I know that thou believest." Who is there here that would not give an affirmative answer to that question? And what do they teach—not as a whole, but as the point under consideration is concerned? Why, that the sinner is dead—dead in trespasses and sins. In sin, indeed, not dead, but most active; "walking according to the course of this world; according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." But as spiritually dead, dead to holiness, dead to the love and favor of God, and dead to all right apprehension of eternal things; as dead to all these things, as the body is from which the soul has fled. If this is not so, then inspiration has employed, not merely an inapt, but a false comparison. If all that was meant by it was, that the sinner is greatly deficient—is not as good as he should be—is less active in the service of his Maker than he ought to be; that his spiritual discernment is too obscure, too feeble, even Oriental hyperbole would not bear out the Apostle in making such a comparison. Ah, inspiration never stretches the truth. Its teachings are exact truth. To the truth of this position, every one yields who is not an infidel. Believing this, is there a sinner here who does not see his danger? It is but to feel the force of what he sees or believes, to reach that only spot of safety. This felt, the sinner

instantly falls down at the Saviour's feet, with the only cry, "Help, Lord, or I perish!" But perish there, no soul ever did. It was the Saviour's mission to our world to save such: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." To raise from the death of sin, and breathe into the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, the breath of eternal life. This spot reached, and the soul is saved—not attained to, and the soul is forever lost.

III.

THE CHARACTER AND DESTINY OF THE SOUL

MAY BE DECIDED BY A SINGLE ACT.

“Yet lackest thou one thing.”—LUKE 18 : 22.

THE narrative in which these words are found, is recorded also, and in nearly the same language, by two other of the Evangelists, Matthew and Mark; thus giving it a high prominence among the many deeply important instructions communicated by our Divine Teacher in person. The individual to whom it refers is presented in several points of view, of no ordinary interest. He was a young man, a ruler, either of the Synagogue, or a member of the national council, called the Sanhedrim. He was an amiable person, and possessed great riches. He showed a very great desire to see the Saviour, and be instructed by him. He “came running to him,” and having arrived where he was, he took a most respectful posture before him. “He kneeled to him.” He accosted him in most respectful terms, “Good Master,” and addressed to him a most important question, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” The Saviour refers him to the

last six commandments in the Decalogue, or second table of the law; not as more important than those of the first table, but because compliance with the latter was less easily counterfeited, was susceptible of more direct, and as it were tangible proof, and hence more available for the particular object which the Saviour had in view in this conference with the young and wealthy nobleman. To this he promptly replied, "All these have I kept from my youth up." Had this been strictly true, he would indeed have been a perfect man; for it would have implied perfect obedience to all the Divine commandments. The Saviour knowing the young man's ignorance of himself, remarks to him, "Yet lackest thou one thing," and proposes to him a test, in the application of which he could not fail to see his own character as it really was, and conclusively establish it, either by instant compliance or the renunciation of the Saviour's authority. "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." To this he seems to have made no reply, but "went away grieved; for he had great possessions." From these he could not part, even for "treasure in heaven." There was, verily, much in that young man to approve and admire. We freely accord to him our praise. What he averred of himself, so far as it respected his external conduct, was undoubtedly true. The Saviour himself looking upon him, loved him. He loved his amiable disposition, his moral conduct, his external

regard for the law of God. Farther than this, the sequel shows, the Saviour's love for him did not extend. He preferred his standing and condition in the world, to that of being a follower of Christ; and chose the world in preference to heaven.

By the declaration in the text, "one thing thou lackest," it is not implied that he lacked only one thing. The test which the Saviour proposed, though directed more especially to a single trait in his character, was well calculated to try and disclose the whole of it. And it showed him utterly destitute of every degree of piety and true holiness. Just as St. Paul says of himself, "I had not known sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" the application of a single precept laid open his whole heart, and showed him his utter sinfulness. So in the case of the young ruler. His refusal to obey the Saviour laid open his whole heart, and demonstrated his entire sinfulness. Had he cheerfully obeyed, the evidence had been no less strong and conclusive in his favor. The obvious doctrine derived from the text, therefore, is this: the whole character and eternal destiny of the soul may be suspended on a single act. In proof of this, I remark,

1. That it is the obvious conclusion, derived from the narrative under consideration. We do not infer it from the fact of his being a very amiable and moral person, from his freedom from the grosser vices and offences, his commendable regard for the law of God,

the great respect which he showed for the Saviour, or the declaration that for these qualities the Saviour "loved him." All which, as was soon shown, was consistent with a preference for Mammon over God, for earthly over heavenly treasures; a supreme love of the world; consistent with entire destitution of true holiness, or real piety. Nor did these lovely traits in his character lay the least foundation of a claim to that grace of God by which a soul is converted, and constituted truly Christian.

And yet we are assured, that had he complied with the directions of the Saviour, "to sell all that he had, and distribute it to the poor," that act would have proved that he was a child of God. "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Let it be carefully borne in mind, that this act would not have proved that he was a child of God previously to its performance. The fact is evident that he was not; and his refusal to obey Christ demonstrated it. But it is equally clear from the Saviour's assurance, that on his compliance, he should "have treasure in heaven;" that regenerating grace would have accompanied that act; not for it, yet in consequence of it; not for any merit in the act itself, but solely of the Saviour's free grace. He surely had the right to make any act, which he pleased to require, the condition, means, or medium of communicating his saving grace. In this instance, none could have been more appropriate. It

was addressed to his strongest passion,—his supreme love of the world. The Saviour knew this before. But his intention was to show him his true character; to make him sensible of it.

Nor was this course with that young ruler a single or singular method with the Saviour. There are many instances of the same kind recorded of him. Almost all the Apostles were called and sanctified on their performance of a specific act. Two other instances, closely resembling that of this young man, and terminating like his, are recorded in the ninth chapter of Luke; and a careful reader of the Gospel will find many others. The whole character and eternal destiny of the soul may, therefore, be suspended on a single external act. It is an all-discriminating test, and shows decisively what a man is at the time of compliance or refusal.

2. The truth of my doctrine results from the fact, that the essential moral state of every man, as God sees and judges, takes its character from some prominent, supremely governing principle. This may lie out of the sight of men, and even often of oneself; but not of the omniscient God. He sees, in all cases, a connection between the internal and the external man; between motives and actions, principles and character, which is often concealed from ourselves as well as others. And yet it is not difficult for us, for every man, would he carefully and properly examine and scrutinize himself, his heart, and habitual con-

duct, to know what his ruling and governing passion is, what is the leading, predominant trait in his character. This is often so obvious that none can mistake it. Prevailing habits will show this. These are different in different individuals. They may arise from the natural temperament, from education, or custom, and from various causes. The following language of the Apostle expresses this fact, and is the ground of his warnings and cautions to Christians, which implies its existence, previously to their becoming Christians. "Wherefore, seeing ye also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Every man has his more easily besetting sin. Every Christian has some weak point in his character, which requires to be particularly guarded, and where he is most exposed, arising from some sinful practice, some governing propensity or disposition, previously to his conversion.

Now, that practice or disposition essentially stamps his whole character. Everything else is made subordinate to it; becomes tributary to it. The saving grace of God, where it is communicated, aims directly at that point, that practice, that propensity, whatever it may be. When that is overcome, the whole man is subdued. The case of the young ruler affords an illustration of this truth. The predominant trait in his nature and character was supreme attachment to his wealth; "for he had great possessions." The

Saviour, therefore, directed his command to that particular point, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." I repeat, not for that act, as an act, as though there was any merit in it; but it would have been accompanied with converting grace. And, which is the point now under particular consideration, and which affords an illustration of it, his supreme attachment to his property being subdued, his whole heart would have been changed, and his whole character would have been in harmony with that change. It would have showed supreme regard to Christ; and that would have controlled and governed the whole man. Attachment to his possessions was his stronghold. That stamped his character. It was not anything which was prohibited in the second table of the Divine law; so far, at least, as external conduct was concerned. Observance of them he had practised from his youth up. That stronghold broken, all else would have easily and cheerfully responded. And why may not the same be true of any other man, and in regard to any other sinful attachment, governing propensity, or predominant trait?

3. The truth of our doctrine is confirmed by the fact, that all the laws of God have one nature—one spirit. This spirit runs through the whole Decalogue. Perfect obedience to one of those precepts, would be perfect obedience to them all. No man could "love his neighbor as himself," in which the Saviour summed

up the whole second table of the law, without "loving God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength;" which the same authority tells us, comprises all the first table of the law. Hence, Paul cites but a single precept, and that the last in the Decalogue, as being the instrument of his deep and thorough conviction of his utter sinfulness and lost condition. Hear him: "I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." In the same chapter (7th Romans) he repeatedly speaks of the law of God, but the precept above recited is the only one which he specifies or particularly mentions in his own case. We have no evidence that he had more frequently or flagrantly broken that particular precept, than some or any of the other precepts. What is the necessary inference, but that they all possess the same nature and spirit, proceeding from the same authority? The Apostle James has made this very comment, and placed this very construction on this point. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law" (he is here simply supposing a case, for it never actually occurred), "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," *i. e.*, of violating the whole law of God. He gives a case, by way of illustrating his position: "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

There are different forms of violating God's laws. Nor do we say, nor is it true, that a violation in one form involves the same guilt, as a violation of the law in all its forms; or that the same degree of guilt is contracted in one as in another. But that the whole spirit of the law is violated in each and every transgression. Nor indeed is an external act necessary to the violation of any of God's laws. See this point fully and expressly established by the Saviour himself, in his Sermon on the Mount (7th Matthew).

Hence, repentance produced, as in Paul's case, by the application of either of the precepts of the Ten, is repentance under the authority of the whole law—in other words, the Lawgiver. It leads to the careful observance of all the laws of God, to universal obedience. The contrary of this was manifested in the case of our young ruler. He was evidently satisfied with the fact, that he had observed all the laws of God, contained in the second table, from his youth up; that is, he had not overtly violated them. And yet, he could disobey the Saviour, whom he acknowledged and addressed as "Good Master;" a teacher able to answer his important question, "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

He evidently had no proper conviction of God's claims to him—to his heart, and to all his possessions. True, he asks, "What lack I yet?" to which the Saviour replies, "One thing thou lackest." "Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou

shalt have treasure in heaven. But when he heard this, he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich." This showed that he had no true obedience. All his obedience to certain precepts, had been external obedience only. By his disobedience of one precept, there was no true obedience to any of the laws of God. By his lacking one thing, he showed that he lacked everything which could gain him acceptance with God. And to show him this, was the Saviour's object, by the test which he proposed to him. True, it was a severe test. But nothing short of that would have been sufficient to show the strength of his ruling passion. And what were his worldly possessions to promised treasures in heaven? What the whole world, and the loss of his soul? Or the cheerful sacrifice of the one to the salvation of the other? What infinite gain! Yet he chose to keep his possessions, and them only for a short time, and lose his soul!

My subject suggests several important reflections.

1. No natural accomplishments, however lovely and commendable, no amiableness of disposition, no exactness of mere external obedience, furnish any solid ground on which to place a hope of salvation. A more unexceptionable character, unsanctified by Divine grace, never perhaps lived, than that young ruler possessed. Yet this stood him in no account with reference to his salvation. The test by which he was tried, proved him utterly destitute of a single qualification for heaven. All that fair outside was without

the all-essential vital principle of holiness within. Even the holy Saviour could commend his amiable morality, his lovely disposition, his modest, respectful demeanor, and his expressed desire to know what he must do to inherit eternal life, while yet he saw him in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, with a heart totally opposed to the whole law of God, in its true, spiritual nature. Ah, the soul needs a better righteousness than all this; and, without that better righteousness, the soul must perish!

2. Great riches often prove a great and fatal snare. They were the means of ruining the soul of that young ruler. They seem to have been all that stood between him and eternal life. These he preferred to treasure in heaven. Who does not pronounce him, as our Saviour pronounced another, whose wealth proved the ruin of his soul, "a fool?" And yet, alas, what multitudes imitate his example! And multitudes, too, who are tried by no such severe test as that which was applied to that rich young man. All that is required of them is, "to use the world as not abusing it," under the influence, too, of a motive, which it would seem difficult not to feel the force of, "knowing that the fashion thereof passeth away." That soon they and all their possessions will be forever parted from each other. Such, however, are the strong, unyielding claims of that idol to the supreme affections of the unsanctified heart. Our Saviour draws this very inference from the case of that infatuated youth.

“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

3. Our subject makes a strong appeal to the young to surrender their hearts to God, before the world gets so strong a hold on them, as to render salvation well-nigh hopeless. This ruler, though called a young man, was not a mere youth. This is evident from his office, being a ruler, either of the synagogue, who was the chief speaker, or a member of the highest court among the Jews. Nor does the original word necessarily mean a youth, though comparatively young. But the world, in the sense of its more sober cares, had taken a strong hold on his heart; though this is not the only form of idolatry, or always the most absorbing and destructive influence of the world. Nor does it matter what form it assumes. Devotion to it will become supreme, if not prevented by the sanctifying grace of God—if the heart be not pre-occupied by the love of God, and the principles of the Christian religion. What stage, then, of our existence as favorable for having the heart so fortified as youth—and *early youth*? Let the young of this assembly remember, that there is no absolute security, no strong probability against the loss of their souls, but their immediate repentance.

Finally. There is one inference or reflection more,

to which I ask your particular attention. If the salvation of that ruler, whose case has suggested the foregoing train of thought, was absolutely connected with, and depended on, the willing sacrifice of his ruling passion, in cheerful obedience to the Saviour's authority; then the same result or consequence is suspended on a similar course, in the case of any other sinner. His case was not peculiar, or restricted to himself, personally or individually. It was set forth as a general example, intended for every case to which its general principles could apply. These principles are not applicable, exclusively, to the man of wealth, the avaricious man, or the man whose supreme, all-commanding object is the acquisition of riches. It is not restricted to the man of affluence. So says the Saviour, in the application which he makes of that case. It is trust in earthly possessions, little or much. Nor does the command which the Saviour laid on that ruler, literally to "sell all that he had, and distribute to the poor," imply the same sacrifice of others, certainly not in ordinary cases; though all one has should be held, cheerfully subject to God's manifest pleasure. The sacrifice which the Saviour required of that man, was not his possessions, but rather his ruling passion; only as the former was necessary to the latter.

That case, therefore, embraces every case of a wrong, sinfully-governing propensity, or object, whatever it may be. Neither wealth, however great, nor

any other worldly good, is inconsistent with a solid hope of heaven, though involving peculiar hazards; while supreme attachment to anything out of God himself, forbids all hope of salvation. The principles, therefore, laid down and illustrated in the case of the young ruler, apply to the ambitious man as well as to the avaricious man; the intense aspirant after the honors of the world, or the man who supremely covets worldly fame or applause in any department or pursuit of life or pleasure, as to the man who, in the language of Scripture, "has more than heart could wish."

These all-predominant traits, passions, or feelings, stamp the character of him in whom they are found. Now to "bring these (as the Apostle expresses it) into captivity to the obedience of Christ;" in other words, to make a willing sacrifice of these feelings, from regard to God's authority, shows an entire change in the individual; and a change, too, from a natural to a renewed state. This was the change which was implied in that ruler, had he obeyed the Saviour, "to sell all that he had, and distribute to the poor," and which was the foundation of the promise of treasure in heaven.

And now, by a proper application of the obvious principles, drawn from the case which has furnished them, we may learn two important things.

First, our own individual standing in the sight of

God. This is just as easily ascertained, as it is to ascertain one's prevailing, most prominent, ruling purpose or desire of his heart. What that is, the man is, in the sight of God. In the natural or unrenewed state, that purpose or desire was in regard or with reference to something other than God, his kingdom, or pleasure. In the true Christian, these things are reversed. God is supreme, and all things else subordinated to his known will. If this important point cannot be ascertained by a direct examination of one's heart, then let the life speak, and that will decide what is the prevailing, habitual purpose and desire of the man: whether the glory of God, or his own pleasure; the interests of Christ's kingdom, or his own interests;—a point most important to be settled; settled soon, settled honestly.

Secondly, we are taught by our subject, what the first step is towards securing eternal life. Sinners often are, or affect to be, ignorant what that first step is. If they are directed to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—Gospel directions—the direction is too indefinite to satisfy them. Or if they make the attempt to repent, the thought which chiefly or wholly awakens their regret or sorrow, in all probability is, some offence or sin of a peculiarly aggravated nature, while the heart is entirely overlooked. But this, if this be all, is the sorrow of the world, which leads to death. But let your attention be di-

rected most especially to the heart; for there you will find your supreme, prevailing, all-governing purpose, passion, or desire. And an honest inquirer cannot easily mistake that. Let this be the honest inquiry, and be honestly prosecuted; and the inquirer will not fail to ascertain it. The worldling thus engaged, anxious to know the fact, cannot mistake it. The aspirant after honors and worldly fame, cannot mistake it. The man of pleasure, in whatever form he most delights, cannot mistake it. The sensual man cannot mistake it. The intemperate man cannot mistake it. Whatever the ruling purpose or passion, it cannot be mistaken. That must first be subdued, overcome, or if it be anything lawful in itself, be subordinated, subjected to the will of God. There is no step previous to that. That step taken, and there is an entire and radical change in the man. It is commenced in the heart. God, who has been supplanted there, has there become enthroned. The sinfully-governing passion has given place to the supreme love of God, and desire of his glory; and that man, through grace, "shall have treasure in heaven." For, indeed, the grace of God has been the moving cause, the acting agency, in the whole process; and will complete the work unto glory. If such be the beginning, such will be the end. "He that hath begun a good work will perform it until the day of Christ."

But there is a solemn alternative. The converse of our position is true. If eternal life may be in God's sovereign grace suspended on a single act, so, likewise, may eternal death. There is a sealing act to every sinner's life ; and that act may be even unconsciously performed ; yea, taken before he leaves this house. Fall, then, now in penitence at the Saviour's feet.

IV.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

“This, thy brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

LUKE 15 : 32.

THUS closes the parable of the Prodigal Son ; a parable which has been blessed to the salvation of multitudes who, like him, were dead and lost. As affording a description of an unrenewed state, and an illustration of the process by which a sinner is brought to repentance, and into favor with God, it is nowhere surpassed, if indeed equalled, in the volume of inspiration. None has been, perhaps, so extensively the means of awakening the sinner's attention, and conducting him to a happy issue. The various and touching incidents contained in it, can hardly fail to arrest and interest the most indifferent and careless reader of it. God nowhere exhibits himself in all the fulness and freeness of his mercy, his condescension and compassion, in a higher degree or more impressive manner, than in the assumed relation of a kind and tender father, in which he is here represented.

One chief reason, however, why a perusal of this

parable so often fails to produce the effect designed, and for which it is so well calculated, undoubtedly is a misunderstanding or misconception of the end, or main points, which the Saviour had in view in putting it forth. While all regard it as a parable, and not a narrative of actual occurrences, many suppose that it had special and exclusive reference to Jews and Gentiles, as the two great divisions of the human family; that it contemplated them in their national capacity, as possessed of different privileges, sustaining different relations to God, even as the moral Governor of the world, yet at the same time, announcing his purpose to extend the offer and the blessings of salvation to the Gentiles; and hence as individuals they overlook their own personal interest in it. It is exceedingly natural for men to shield themselves under the cover of a general representation. It is so where it is intended for all of the same class. Much more so where the picture is drawn for different bodies, or distinct divisions of mankind, as Jews and Gentiles, under which terms are embraced our whole race. The argument to be felt, or to gain the sinner's ear, must be one of individual, direct, personal application. The above limited view of this parable, relieves from personal responsibility, and does away the whole force of the representation, as the individual sinner is concerned. It is indeed true, that the primary application of the parable was to the two grand divisions of mankind, Jews and Gentiles. But while this is true,

the undutiful or prodigal son is the proper representative of all impenitent sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles. There is not one mode or process of salvation for one, and a different one for another. It is an allegorical representation of the unrenewed condition of all sinners, and of what must, and actually does take place, with every one who has a proper view of himself, and secures his salvation. It has all the bearing on each individual, as though expressly addressed to him. These remarks equally apply to another cause or reason, why this parable fails to produce the desired effect on multitudes who read it.

The leading subject, or prominent individual in it, was a profligate, a prodigal son. It is regarded as an extraordinary case, both as exhibiting uncommon depravity of moral character on his part, and no less wonderful mercy on the part of God, here represented by the father. Men do not like to look at their own image, as reflected by such a mirror. Nor is it indeed true, that all sinners resemble the prodigal son in his particular course of conduct. We cheerfully award to multitudes of impenitent sinners, a just claim to exemption from the more glaring and prominent features of his moral character, and even of an unexceptional moral deportment, so far as the closest human scrutiny can guide to a proper conclusion. Yet, as the process of return to God is the same in all sinners, as marked the return of this prodigal son, their previous course is fatally wrong, and if not in like manner retraced,

must lead to endless ruin. The broad road in which all the impenitent are moving towards destruction, admits many deviations from a direct line. Their courses may in many respects be different, while all of them lead to the same wretched termination. There are, however, many points of close resemblance among all the impenitent. Their progress may not be equally rapid, but it is equally variant from the proper course, while multitudes, alas! fall not behind even him, in their career to a miserable end.

I have thus extended my preparatory remarks, that, if possible, all prejudice and obstacles to our own spiritual benefit may be removed, while presenting for special consideration some of the leading thoughts contained in this portion of inspiration. I have selected the closing sentence of it as my text with this view, and shall confine myself, not to what might be deemed peculiarities in the character or course of that once abandoned youth, but what is common to all the impenitent; and also to the process by which any are brought into a state of reconciliation with God, and secure eternal life. These present the general outlines of the present discourse.

1. The disposition of sinners, as far as they can, to dissolve all connection with and obligations to their Maker. This is the first noticeable trait in the character of the prodigal son. He wished to free himself from the very presence of his father; to break away from the restraints of his parent—the influence both

of his authority and his affection; his commands and his counsels. This is clearly implied in his request, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He knew he could not pursue the course he was bent upon, under the immediate eye of his father. He must leave his house. He must place himself beyond his sight. Vain attempt of the sinner, it is true, to place himself where the eye of Omniscience cannot see him! But is not all that true of the sinner, which was intended by this part of the prodigal's conduct? Is not the authority of their Maker irksome to sinners? Are not the language and the sentiments and feelings which our Saviour represented them as expressing true? "We will not have this man to reign over us." "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us." Is not this the language of every sinner's heart towards his Maker? They do not like to retain God in their knowledge. It is a check to their course of sin. A consciousness of the presence of God could not fail to destroy the pleasures of sin. Hence, no charge is more frequently brought against them than their forgetfulness of God. Such a consciousness and an uninterrupted course of sin, are utterly incompatible with each other. "Thou, God, seest me," if realized, would pierce the very heart, and fill it with agony. No words are more true, when properly understood and applied, than those which are here put into the lips of this prodigal son, expressive of his desire to place himself beyond

the presence and influence of his father ; or are more descriptive of the sinner's course, his departure into a far country. What multitudes evince this by their utter neglect of that book which contains the commands of God, as well as overtures of his love and mercy ! The character and claims of God must be painful to them. They wish, therefore, and most consistently, to know nothing of him, or of them. They cherish their ignorance of them, increased by every sin they commit ; and the deeper that ignorance, the higher the pleasure of sin. Thus they are constantly increasing the distance between themselves and God. A striking coincidence, this, between that part of the prodigal's conduct, and that of all impenitent sinners.

2. The accelerated progress of sinners in their departure from God, is forcibly illustrated by the conduct of that young man. He went into a far country, and probably with no intention of ever returning. And if you will trace him in his course, you will find him plunging deeper and deeper into iniquity. Every sinner may not run to the same excess of rioting. But every sinner is constantly making progress in sin. He is departing further and further from God. He is multiplying sins upon his head, and increasing the weight of his condemnation. He is rendering more entire his forgetfulness of God, deadening the sensibilities of his soul, stupifying his conscience, and hardening his heart. Who does not know this by his own experience, would he but pause to consult it, as he advances

in life—as years roll over his head, while he remains impenitent? Mark it in advanced youth over the period of early childhood; and again, in his manhood, compared with the days of his youth; and still at every advanced stage, as he approaches old age, and the very end of life.

The love of sin increases with the commission of it. God has expressed this truth in the following language: “Evil men wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” “After thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasured up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Even a temporary arrest in a course of sin, only serves, at length, to hurry the sinner on the more rapidly, when he has returned to it, like the man out of whom the unclean spirit went, for a little season, but the last state of whom was worse than the first. Who has not seen this, in many an instance, even of unsanctified affliction? How many have been raised from the bed of painful sickness, and apprehended death; been rescued from imminent peril; been bereaved of their dearest friends; but, after a short interruption of their usual course of heedlessness and indifference, have become but the more hardened? They take the longer and more rapid strides in their departures from God, and practise iniquity with the greater greediness. This, however, praise to sovereign Grace, is not always suffered down to a condition of utter hopelessness, as we shall

have occasion yet to remark, in the example of the prodigal.

Yet, 3. Sinners seek their highest happiness from this world. All do not, indeed, pursue the course of that young man. Their supreme object may not be gross sensual gratification, as was his. Instead of profusely wasting, they may be avariciously gathering. Instead of associating with the lowest, they may move in what the world denominates the highest circles. Instead of being reduced to beggary, they may roll in affluence. Instead of tatters and husks, they may be "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day." Nay, they may possess and manifest many commendable qualities. But this world, in some of its forms of attraction, is their imagined heaven. They have set up some idol, to which they pay their supreme homage. But the world, rich as many of its blessings are, cannot fail to reduce all its votaries to absolute want. This will as certainly be the wretched doom of such, as it was that of the prodigal. This world was never made to be the portion of an immortal being, or the friends of God had been immortal in it. The rich bounties and blessings were, and are, bestowed for noble purposes. God has gloriously manifested himself by means of them. And they furnish so many lessons to teach us his character, and so many motives to awaken our gratitude and love, and thus command untiring obedience. But are these the ends to which any sinner

applies them? The hearty consecration of temporal blessings to the end for which God bestows them, was never the sinner's act. Self, or selfishness, which may be acted out in a thousand ways, demands and receives all he is and has. No matter how employed, when this is the case, the soul is injured; is cheated of what it demands, and must, in the end, be rendered wretched. God has inspired it with desires which all the world cannot satisfy; and with power infinitely too noble and exalted for this world to afford a sufficient or appropriate sphere for their full and proper employment.

4. The amazing infatuation of sinners is another truth most clearly inculcated in this parable. We have already seen some of the proofs of this in the case of the prodigal son. It was seen in his impatience and restlessness under the restraints of the kindest parental authority; his departure from his father's house; his desire to be relieved from his influence and his sight; and, in fine, his entire abandonment. All this in its utmost aggravations, we repeat, is not chargeable on all impenitent sinners, though in its worst features, the picture is but too true a representation of multitudes of young men. But all impenitent sinners are at least infatuated. They all act without sound judgment, and contrary to the dictates of reason. And this is a state of infatuation. In this sense, it is said of the prodigal son, "He came to himself," an expression denoting a previous state of de-

rangement. It was, however, a moral, not a mental derangement. He was not deprived of the faculty of reason; but it exerted no proper control over his passions, or his conduct.

And is not this true of all impenitent sinners, though it may not be to the same extent of abandonment or folly? Is it not seen, at least, in the neglect of their highest duties and interests? in the supreme pursuit of comparative trifles? Is not this to be "beside oneself?" It is an insanity of the most alarming character; for the seat of it is the heart. Who is there that does not assent to the truth of the declarations, that the favor of God, the forgiveness of sin, and the eternal salvation of the soul, are matters of supreme and everlasting importance, and worthy of every effort to secure them? And it were the grossest contradiction, to say that an impenitent sinner, however moral his deportment, ever placed this estimate upon them, or ever put forth such efforts.

There are other points of close resemblance between mental and moral derangement. The subjects of both are averse to the only hopeful or possible method of cure, or restoration to a sound and healthy state. The mentally deranged do not regard their best friends. On the contrary, they are usually the objects of their strongest aversion. They reject their kind and affectionate proffers of assistance. But here, indeed, the comparison, in the most important respects, utterly fails. It is not merely the assistance, and

counsels, and entreaties of kindred and human friends, the morally insane reject. God is the sinner's only efficient friend ; and the benevolent Redeemer his only effectual physician. Nothing can equal their proffered kindness. God addresses the most solemn warnings at every step of their wanderings from him, and follows them with kindest entreaties, but they turn a deaf ear to them. The Saviour offers to heal them, and in every form of urgency presses their acceptance of his interposition. They reject his offer, they refuse his remedy. The Spirit adds, in most instances, at least, his gentle, perhaps awakening influences. They may have their moments of seriousness, of solemn reflection ; seasons, perhaps, when the world relaxes its hold upon their hearts. But these are not lasting,—they are of momentary continuance. They are like the mentally deranged man, whose intervals of sanity are succeeded by more violent paroxysms, they return with increased eagerness to their former course of life. Alas, how often has this been the case with the convicted sinner, who has suppressed or cast off his convictions !

Are not such beside themselves ? We have called this a state of infatuation ; the softest term that can be applied to it. God calls it madness. Hear him : “The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead,” “They are mad upon their idols.” He that lives and dies thus, our Saviour has

pronounced a fool. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and then, whose shall those things be?"—those things, whatever they may be, that cheat the soul of heaven. Such, and such like, are all those who can for an hour trifle with the amazing interests of their souls; neglect the means of securing immortal glory; prefer the pleasures of sin to the consciousness of its forgiveness, and the trifles of earth to the bliss of heaven.

This persevering rejection of the only mode of relief, is seen in the extremities to which often, and indeed more commonly, sinners are reduced before they can be brought to accept it. But this is a new feature in the history of the prodigal son, and we may, therefore, make it a new topic of brief remark.

5. He probably had no misgivings, none at least which he did not himself attempt to silence, till he was thrown into the lowest depths of want and misery. It was not on his first experience of that destitution which at length overwhelmed him, that he was brought to realize his true condition. He sustained himself as long as it was possible; even though in doing it, he submitted to the most degrading and humiliating hardships. It was not till driven to it by absolute want and hopeless wretchedness, that he came to himself, or had any rational apprehensions about himself, or seriously thought on the only proper or possible course by which he might obtain relief; or came to a pause in his mad career of folly and sin.

Ah, how like the more common course of sinners, who are ever brought to repentance! How often they try every expedient to gain relief from their wretchedness, before they will apply to the proper source; or are even brought to serious and solemn reflection and thoughtfulness! Disappointments, sickness, death of friends; truth brought painfully home to their consciences, by the awakening influences of the Spirit, and not unfrequently by the misery and wretchedness which have been induced by a course of iniquity, must first be experienced. "He flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." He can no longer endure the thought of it. This is the state of self-condemnation, often more intolerable than any other misery this side the world of unmitigated and endless despair! All true converts do not experience it to the degree of self-despair. They despair of all relief in and of themselves. So far as their own efforts, uninfluenced by the Spirit of God, or any aid by an arm of flesh can avail, they are forever lost to all solid hope of life. Hence, •

6. There must be a deep conviction of ill-desert, and of hell-desert. This was the prodigal's condition when he exclaimed, "I perish." And, though he added, "with hunger," it should be remembered that this is a parable, and the Saviour's intention in it was to represent the state of the soul, brought to a proper sense of its own necessities; its conviction of utter destitution of all that could afford it peace, or alleviate

its distress. His hunger only expressed the starving, miserable, perishing condition of his soul, as keen as the gnawings of hunger on his very vitals. His delusions were all banished. He saw himself as he was, a lost sinner, covered with guilt—going to the judgment—and if there in his sins, thence to eternal perdition. It is an allegorical representation of just what actually takes place with every sinner who has any proper view of himself. It was thus clothed to give it a deeper impression.

Multitudes, indeed, profess to be Christians, and go to the communion-table, who know nothing of such an experience, and even discard it as being no part of their mild creed, and easy course to heaven. Their dependence is placed on externals, as furnishing the necessary preparatory steps to a title to heaven, and not on the internal pains of deep conviction, which precedes sound conversion of the heart to God. But if this be so, the example furnished in this parable, as supplying any illustration either of the sinner's course, or God's method of bringing him to repentance, or affording any information of the process, is at least a most inappropriate one.

Thus have we traced that individual to the extremes of his wanderings and his wretchedness. Like him, every impenitent sinner is a wanderer from his Father's house. Like him, departs farther and farther, till overwhelmed with a deep and painful conviction of his helpless, hopeless, perishing condition.

This is no fiction—no picture of imagination. It is a delineation of most solemn and deeply interesting truths, drawn by the Saviour himself. They commend themselves to the experience of all who have passed from death to life. And I earnestly recommend their sober, serious perusal to all others who would know themselves, or ever secure the favor of God and their soul's salvation. There is not an invitation of the Gospel, which is not founded on our utter destitution of everything which the Holy Ghost can accept. Not a promise, not a solid hope of heaven which is not based on a deep and penitent consciousness of such destitution. This is the first symptom of encouragement in the case of any sinner. Left, indeed, at the point to which we have followed the prodigal son, and there still were no hope. But let us follow him still farther. His course is still the course of every one who reaches the same happy end.

7. There is a conviction of sin which is peculiar to true and genuine conversion. And it is this, perhaps, more common than any other particular exercise, that affords the first glimmer of hope to the subject of it. It does not depend on the painfulness of the exercise. For the most painful convictions do not always end in conversion. The Apostle John tells us of some who gnaw their tongues for pain, yet repent not of their sins. Conviction which follows or accompanies conversion, arises from a view of the heart, and a deep consciousness of its utter depravity; whereas convic-

tion which precedes conversion, arises from overt violations of the law of God. The former proceeds from a clear apprehension of the intrinsic odiousness of sin, the latter from dread of the punishment of sin. The one is accompanied with an unshaken belief of the total sinfulness of an unrenewed state, while the other is occasioned by a view of some of the more open and glaring sins which have been committed, while much is regarded as morally good. Another mark of genuineness of conviction arises from a view of the infinite holiness, goodness, and excellence of God. The thought of having offended a being of such a character and nature, produces a bitterness of grief, which can spring only from the converting grace of God.

Grief, arising from such views, is the effect of the "fire and hammer," God's truth, in the hand of the omnipotent Spirit, "which break in pieces the flinty rock." It melts and subdues the hardest heart. This would seem to have characterized the convictions of the prodigal in all his distress, from the exclamation which he made when his thoughts were turned towards his father's house, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!" and especially from the nature of the plea which he had already purposed to make at his first interview with him, "Father," which shows the affection of a filial relation, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Here was an expression of grief produced by a deep sense of the goodness, the holiness, and perfect excellence of his father, and a proper apprehension of the odiousness of sin, the depravity of his heart, and guiltiness of his life. No unrenewed sinner ever had such feelings as these; they are peculiar to a regenerated state.

8. Another distinct exercise in the mind of one brought to the condition in which we are now contemplating the prodigal son, is the impression of the fulness of the salvation which has been provided for sinners. This was distinctly expressed by him, and deepened the consciousness of his own wretchedness. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" It is indeed true, that a persuasion of this fulness of salvation which God has provided for sinners, does not, of itself, prove a personal interest in it. Nor was this all with the prodigal. The idea is clearly conveyed, that he might avail himself of it; that it was within his own reach; that what his father's servants so abundantly enjoyed, might be his own happy experience. This certainly implied a taste—a relish, as well as a desire for the same. But such a taste, producing such a desire, no merely convicted sinner ever had. He has no taste for those heavenly provisions. He may strongly desire to be made happy, but is utterly averse to that which alone can make him truly happy. As the prodigal saw and felt that his father's

house afforded the very blessings which he so much needed, and which were adapted to his miserable state of destitution, so the sinner, who resembles him in this particular, sees and feels that the blessings which the Gospel tenders to him, the spiritual blessings of his heavenly Father's house, are exactly suited to his condition, as "a wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" sinner. And this perception kindles in him a desire for them. He regards them as the only things, the only possession which can afford him the relief which he needs. The world holds out nothing which can afford it. Valuable as its possessions, in many respects, and for many purposes, may be, and are, they are insipid and utterly worthless as yielding what he needs. His soul is famishing. The bread of life is all that can sustain or relieve him. This may be the earliest experience of a converted soul. And though he may not believe himself to be converted, yet no unregenerate soul ever had that experience. Hence,

9. The supreme desire and strongest efforts of one brought into that condition will be, to possess himself fully of what he sees and feels to be so much needed by him, and so suitable and adapted to his condition, and so freely offered to him. In this state of things, the very first step is the forming of the most firm and unyielding purpose, to take and pursue the course which alone can secure the object. In

this, too, the case of that young man furnishes a proper example. Hear him: "I will arise and go to my father." His supreme purpose had been, to leave his father's house. It was now as strong to return to it. His former determination had made him resist, and break away from all restraints. He had set at nought his father's authority, and counsels, and entreaties, and continued on in his wanderings, till overcome by his wretchedness and misery. He had seen the infinite folly of his course. He now had as strong a purpose to retrace his steps. "I will arise and go to my father." This is the supreme purpose of every sinner that ever returns to God. A thousand difficulties may present themselves to his view. But his resolve is taken. The world may oppose, kindred may remonstrate, associates may importune and ridicule, and point the finger of scorn at him; Satan may assault, and the struggling remains of depravity in his own heart may resist. But his purpose is taken. It is unyielding. God's Spirit has moved him to it. His influence was the spring to it. An agency is exerted which can carry him over all obstacles—through all difficulties. He yields to it, while he feels the purpose to be his own. This resolution was everything to the prodigal son. His return depended upon it. It is not less essential in the case of any sinner. The least indecision were madness. Having taken this resolve, he follows it. There is no step which he will omit to take, no duty which he

will not attempt with all his heart to perform; no sacrifice he will not cheerfully make; no cross which he will not endeavor to take up; always looking to and leaning on the grace of God. He, indeed, attaches no merit to any of these things. This he views as his proper course, saved or lost. These furnish all the proofs of his own sincerity. He feels that God cannot and ought not to accept anything less. All this is peculiar to a regenerate state.

10. We have, in the example before us, a clear view or statement of what constitutes the most essential elements or all-essential property in true repentance. And this is one of the most important points in the Gospel economy of salvation. The Bible tells us of two kinds of repentance. The one connected with eternal life; the other, consistent with, yea, that leads to eternal death. The difference consists not in the degree of pain which is felt. The false may be the far more agonizing of the two kinds. It consists, at best, in mere remorse, which the damned feel, and will feel forever. It is not, however, my purpose to present the two in their several points of contrast. But simply to state the all-essential point in true repentance. It is contained in the very plea which the prodigal son resolved to make on his return to his father. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." This all-essential point lies in the expression "against heaven and before thee." Sin, properly

speaking, is an offence committed against God only. Offences, and most injurious ones, may be committed against men. But the sin of those acts has respect to God, and not to those whom we may have injured. Hence, the most ample satisfaction made to them, and restoration of the most cordial friendship, is no satisfaction to God, and no ground of his favor. That satisfaction is, indeed, demanded; and God will never forgive the sinner who does not make it to the extent of his power, nor will he forgive him who will not accept it. "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." God's laws extend to all the relations which we sustain, and take cognizance of all our actions. Hence, any act of injury, or just offence, against a fellow-creature, is a violation of his laws, incurs his displeasure, and the penalty of such violation. The distinction, therefore, which we have above made, is well-founded and evident, as to the point or fact of reconciliation with a fellow-being, and reconciliation with God. The former by no means implies the latter. Sin, therefore, must be repented of as an offence committed against God, as a violation of his laws, as incurring his righteous displeasure. The prodigal felt this, and showed this by the very terms in which he couched his confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee."

This Joseph felt and showed, when he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

David's language breathed the same spirit, and expressed the same sentiment, when before God he uttered his confession, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." This, with every true penitent, is the feeling of his heart; this his language in his confessions before God. The prodigal son had, indeed, most deeply offended and injured his earthly father; for although by "father," in this parable, God is represented, yet it is drawn from actual life. It is an allegory as to all the instructions which it was the design of the Saviour to convey by it, and which stamps it with such value and interest to us; but it was founded on facts of but too frequent occurrence in our world. Hence, in his confession, he was made to regard both his earthly father and his Creator; and the latter as eminently the one against whom he had sinned: "I have sinned against heaven and before thee." His offences against his earthly parent, he regarded as sins against God. This, too, is peculiar to a true penitent. It can proceed only from a heart renewed by grace.

11. We see here the true estimation in which a real penitent regards himself. This is an exceedingly humble one. Listen to the broken-hearted prodigal: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." He was, indeed, a son, and often, in his wanderings and scenes of dissipation and crimes, had his father's heart yearned over and bled for him. But he had forfeited that standing. This he now felt. He knew,

indeed, that he might and would be restored to it. He knew that it was hard for a father, and such a father, from whom he had never received aught but kindness, to give up a son—a child. But such, too, is the view which every true penitent has of himself. He feels that he has forfeited all just pretensions to the relation and standing of a child. And yet he knows, too, that God receives him as a child; that he constantly bestowed his mercies upon him, even when in all his rebellion against him; that he never received aught but good, or what was intended for his best good, notwithstanding his abuse of it all. Besides, he has the express assurance, that he receives and welcomes all as his children, and makes them heirs to a most glorious inheritance who repent and return to him. It is this thought that sinks him in the dust. He is filled with shame at the recollection of his base and black ingratitude. There is nothing which fills the soul with a deeper self-abasement than this. It is the thought of God's constant goodness and mercy to him, not only in upholding him in life, but crowning that life with innumerable blessings, even in all his forgetfulness of him, and rebellion against him, rather than any other, that sinks him the lowest in his own estimation. This, too, is one of the most abiding feelings in all his after-life. What, so much as this, affords equal evidence of true piety? What furnishes stronger proof of growth in grace? What equally strong? It is the opposite of that which renders the sinner

most offensive and hateful in the sight of God. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts." O how is the grace of God magnified when it overcomes this pride! This is the view which the true penitent takes of it; and there is no posture, no place too humble for him to take. So felt the penitent prodigal, when he cried, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." So felt Job, as he exclaimed, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So felt Jacob, when he confessed, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." So felt Paul, as he penned the declaration, "I am the least of the Apostles, and am not worthy to be called an Apostle." Yea, "less than the least of all saints." So has felt and so feels every true child of God. There is no feeling so unbecoming, so unsuitable, so causeless, incongruous, and utterly inconsistent with what man really is, as pride. It is probably the most universally distinguishing property of the human heart. It is the very essence of selfishness. It does not always show itself in one's life. And its worst type is not seen, as exercised towards a fellow-being, but as cherished towards God himself, and as he sees it. And this is the reason why a true penitent thinks more humbly of himself, than he is willing to think of any other human being.

Hence, he esteems others better than himself. This is not true of any impenitent sinner, nor of most Christians, as it should be.

Again, the true penitent is willing and desires to labor in the service of God in any capacity in which he can be useful. The request of the penitent prodigal that his father would "make him as one of his hired servants," was expressive of this willingness and desire, as well as of his deep humility. To serve his father would now be his delight, as that service, even in the capacity of a son, had once been his abhorrence. This spirit characterizes all true penitents. Paul, on his conversion, instantly inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This showed his readiness to be employed by the Saviour in any capacity. No true Christian can be contented to do nothing for the Saviour. And surely he never made one to be idle. "Go work in my vineyard," is his standing direction. Some sphere of usefulness is appointed to every Christian. Nor does the extent of his usefulness always depend on standing or distinction in society, or on any lot the providence of God may appoint him. And there is none in which he may not be instrumental in advancing the cause of Christ. He can, at least, illustrate the meeker graces of Christianity. These shine with equal lustre in the cottage and the palace. They reflect the same beauty and hold out the same attractions by whomsoever possessed, if possessed in equal degree.

Finally, the conversion of any soul to God, is cause of adoring gratitude. So God pronounced it in the case which has claimed our attention. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Such is the judgment of him who knows the value of a human soul, and whose redemption from spiritual death and eternal perdition cost the richest treasures of heaven. This death is the condition of all our race by nature, and this doom awaits all who die impenitent. Well may there be "joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It was to effect this, that the Son of God himself "rejoiced, enduring the cross, despising the shame." The value of the soul is infinitely beyond all computation. How does all this world, and as many like it as Omnipotence could create, sink into perfect insignificance in comparison with it! And such a soul has each of us. A soul eternally to be lost, or saved in God's appointed way. Our subject is fruitful of important practical reflections. A few of them only can now receive our attention.

1. It affords a criterion by which every professor of religion may test his hope and standing in the sight of God. The process which marked the prodigal's return to his father, is the process of all who return to God and secure his favor. There is not one way for one sinner, and another way for another sinner, various as the means employed may be. Different

causes may operate to awaken sinners, and make them see and feel their lost condition. These are various and multiform. The painfulness of conviction, too, may be of different degrees. And no less different in degree, the satisfaction or joy which springs from an equally certain and sound conversion. The mere degree of pain in the one, or of joy in the other case, is not an essential point. But the genuineness and sincerity of repentance must be alike in all. Sin must be hated for its own intrinsic odiousness, as a violation of a just and holy law—an offence against a good and holy God. And these must be the supreme motives for avoiding it. This is that kind of conviction, and these are views which follow, and not precede, a radical change of the heart; this conviction the Christian retains through life, and if a growing one, it deepens with his growth. The maturest Christian is the most deeply convinced of the hateful nature of sin. The real penitent sees and feels that all his sins have been directly aimed against God. His cry is, “Against thee, thee only have I sinned.” “Father, I have sinned against heaven.” But we need not recapitulate all the essential points which marked the state and course of the penitent and accepted prodigal. I will, as I trust I need, only add, that his views and feelings and course have been ours, if we are Christians. And we cannot be more profitably engaged than in often reviewing them, if we would ascertain whether our hopes are well or ill-founded, true or false.

2. Sinners who are still impenitent may see what they must do, if they would be saved. But here I do not refer to the course which has just been noticed, and which, I need not repeat, they must pursue if they reach heaven ; but to a point which must precede the very first step in the path of eternal life ; a point, however, essential to the taking of that first step, and which never will be taken without it ; in itself no evidence of conversion, yet essential to it.

Like the prodigal, “they must come to themselves.” There must be a solemn pause in their career of sin ; seasons of serious self-reflection. Without this, the all-important resolve will never be taken, to arise and go to the Saviour. Multitudes are forever lost through inconsiderateness. Many, no doubt, are occasionally serious. It is impossible that a rational being should not be, who lives under the light of the Gospel. The moral nature of man demands it. He might as well arrest all thought, as always to exclude from his mind those great subjects which relate to eternity and his own immortality. The thought of death—the judgment—of heaven and hell, must sometimes pass his mind—and awaken some seriousness. But these subjects are quickly banished, and banished because they are painful ; and they quickly relapse into the state of self-security, resume the train of worldly-mindedness, or plunge deeper into the cares of the world, and thus furnish themselves with the all-satisfying plea, that they have no time to attend to their immortal interests. This

class, it is true, is composed of the better, or rather more respectable portion of sinners. And yet, that plea is false. It is not true of any man, that he has not time to attend to the salvation of his soul. God has given him all his time for that high purpose. And to him who does not spend it to secure this object, time and his very existence will only prove an eternal curse. But I cannot dwell on this point. Mark it. The sinner must come to a solemn pause, to a serious consideration of his condition, and character, and prospects, as a rational, accountable, and immortal being, destined to heaven or hell, or there can be no hope.

3. If there are any here who are now in the condition of serious, reflecting, anxious sinners, the way of their return to their Father's house is plainly pointed out by our subject, and the most encouraging motives are furnished to enter upon and pursue it. God has here presented himself in the overflowings of his mercy and compassion; yea, the deep yearnings of the tenderest Father's heart. Mercy and compassion and tenderness, which overlook and forever blot from the book of remembrance the most ungrateful conduct, the most glaring guilt, when sincerely confessed and repented of. "Arise" as you are, and where you are, and go to him. The course of the penitent prodigal must be yours. And if you take it, his experience, too, will be yours. To you, the distance is not great. "The kingdom of God becomes nigh unto

you." There is a spot of safety hard by the anxious sinner. He cannot mistake it. It is sprinkled with blood. The cross points it out. Fall at its foot, and you are safe.

Finally. How immense the change which repentance produces, in the nature, the character, the prospects, and endless destiny of him who is the subject of it! Before this, he is dead; dead in trespasses and sins; destitute of a feeling which the Holy Ghost can approve; possessed only of that which awakens his righteous anger; posting, unconcernedly on, in the broad road that leads to death eternal. But now, an object of God's everlasting favor, received into his family, made his heir, and a joint-heir with his only Son, to a glorious and unfading inheritance. Immortality, once the just occasion of his greatest dread, as he sent his thoughts into eternity, now among the choicest of revealed truths. And why may not all these be the portion of us all? Each has the same responsible trust committed to him; each the same immortal interest at stake; a soul of priceless value to save or to lose; and a short term only to decide which. The same salvation, on the same terms offered. The same process to secure it, and pointed out to all. In the language and with the heart of the penitent prodigal, say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." Say this, feel this, do this, and all is yours.

V.

THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S DEATH CONSIDERED.

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”—LUKE 24 : 25, 26.

THESE were the words of our Saviour to the two disciples to whom he had joined himself on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus, on the day of his resurrection. Perceiving the earnestness of their conversation, and the sadness of their countenances, he inquired the cause.

Having expressed their surprise at his supposed ignorance, they related to him what had just occurred in Jerusalem, “concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet, and mighty in deed and word before God and all the people;” how he was condemned to death and crucified. They also expressed their great disappointment in his not proving to be, as they had supposed he was, “He that should have redeemed Israel”—or the Messiah, indulging the belief that when he came, he would continue forever, or not die. But of his death they had themselves, three days be-

fore, been witnesses. They had, however, that morning, been thrown into great perplexity by the report of certain women, who were early at the sepulchre and found not the body, but had seen a vision of angels, who told them that he was alive. The report had also been confirmed by two of their own number, Peter and John, who had been to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women said.

It was at this point of their narrative, that Jesus uttered the words of my text: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

This may seem harsh language coming from the lips of the mild and condescending Saviour, and addressed, too, to two of his disciples. But the word rendered "fool," does not, as the English word with us, imply contempt. Its true meaning, as employed by the Saviour in this place, is immediately explained by himself,—“slow of heart to believe.”

It was, indeed, a reproof of their ignorance of what the prophets had spoken concerning him, and of their prejudices, which had perverted their writings, and therefore blinded their minds to his true character, and the great object or end of his coming to our world. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" These words furnish the topics of the present discourse. They express the absolute necessity of the

Saviour's death. My object will be to show the grounds of this necessity.

1. In order to prove and establish his Messiahship. This reason the Saviour himself assigned. Hence, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." These prophecies were numerous, explicit, and minute. It was this exposition and their application to the promised Messiah, to himself, in whom they had all met, and been circumstantially fulfilled, the force of which those disciples could not but feel, that caused "their hearts to burn within them as he talked with them by the way, and opened up to them the Scriptures." This prepared the way for their recognition of him in the act of breaking bread, when all their fears and doubts were banished, and their sadness gave place to joy, and with strengthened faith and animated hope, they returned to their fellow-disciples in Jerusalem. On the exact fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the sufferings, death, and resurrection of our Saviour, eminently rested the evidence of his Messiahship. Without this perfect coincidence of prophecy and fact, the proof had been conclusive that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, but an impostor. At least, this was an essential link in the chain of evidence. Hence their minuteness, and the carefulness of the Evangelists to note their application to him throughout the whole scene. There is not a recorded item in that bloody

transaction, or in their account of the burial and resurrection of the suffering Son of God, in regard to which they do not add, "according to the Scriptures," or "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," referring to some prophecy directly to the point.

But while this perfect agreement between what was predicted and what actually occurred, demonstrated that Jesus was the Messiah promised of old, which was all that was needed on that occasion, much more is implied in the words, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" They, in fact, embrace all the Saviour did and suffered to redeem lost sinners, and all that he is still doing in his glory, as Mediator and Intercessor, at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Nor was the fulfilment of those prophecies, important and indispensable as they were to prove him to be the Messiah, or the Christ, the ground of the necessity of his death. This lies far back of those prophecies. There was a necessity for his dying, entirely distinct from proving that he was that glorious personage, or to correct the mistaken notions of those disciples. A necessity on which those predictions were founded and which gave rise to them. Hence, I remark,

2. That Christ, or the second Person in the Godhead, who became the Christ by assuming human nature, had from eternity consented to become the sinner's ransom. This consent laid him under obliga-

tions, the obligation of a solemn covenant to do and suffer all that was necessary to accomplish the object proposed. That these obligations were voluntarily assumed, made it no less a matter of obligation, or absolute necessity. In this view he is everywhere presented and set forth in the Scriptures. St. Paul tells us, and it is the current doctrine of the Bible, when speaking of Christ as our great High Priest, "It is of necessity that this man have somewhat to offer;" that it behooved him to suffer, and by suffering to perfect salvation. He himself expressly recognized this obligation and necessity in the immediate view of the bloody cross. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour." This was the object of his coming into our world, agreeably to the stipulations of the everlasting covenant of redemption. But on this point we need not dwell farther.

3. As man's substitute, as taking the sinner's place, it was indispensable that he should endure the penalty of the law which was incurred by its violation. That penalty was death; death, in its most awful form, the death of the soul. "The soul that sinneth shall die." There is no fact more clearly or fully revealed, than the necessity of the Saviour's sufferings and death, in order to meet that demand, or the dreadful exigency of the sinner's case. It runs through the whole of the Old Testament, in significant types and express decla-

rations, from the very first announcement of the seed of the woman, on the fall, down to the writings of the last prophet.

It is the great cardinal doctrine of the New Testament. The Saviour himself often taught it. With direct reference to his death and resurrection, when he first met his disciples after his return from Emmaus to Jerusalem, "he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me; thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead." Hence, "his soul was made an offering for sin." And though he did not endure the same penalty as that to which the soul of the sinner was doomed, either in duration or exact kind, yet the agonies of his soul were his chief pangs, while the infinite dignity of his Person, in the union of his divine and human natures, rendered his sufferings a full equivalent to the endless misery of our entire race. Thus were "laid on him the iniquities of us all, and he became the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and his blood cleanseth from all sin."

Could there have been any other mode of salvation, surely, neither the Father would have permitted nor the Son consented to such humiliation and suffering. Justice itself would have forbidden it. "If there had been a law given," says St. Paul, "which could have

given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." It was impossible, so far as we can conceive, and the fact itself proves, to devise any other expedient or plan to secure the sinner's justification, than that of such a suffering substitute.

His character, and his office as Mediator, as the great atoning sacrifice for sin, by taking the sinner's place, laid him under the most binding obligations to suffer and die, just as he did.

Thus much for the mere pardon of sin. This, it is true, secured everything else, every step in the whole process, to the consummation of the whole work of perfect salvation. But we may particularize a few things. Hence,

4. The reward which was promised to Christ could not have been realized without his death. This, it is true, is a necessity in the nature of a condition. But when we consider who it was that accepted this condition, the obligation arising from it is immutable and inviolable.

That reward, indeed, was not promised to him as an inducement to undertake man's redemption. For that originated solely in his pure, disinterested benevolence. There was nothing, from without himself, which prompted to it, but a people were given him, whose salvation was to be the result of his interposition, and which could only follow his death. In this sense, the salvation of his people may properly be regarded in the light of a purchase, and consequently

of a reward. And so the Scriptures represent it. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves," said Paul, to the elders of Ephesus, "and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood." "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price;" and that price was his blood. "For ye are not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Hence, the promise, "He shall see his seed. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. He shall divide the spoil with the great, because he hath poured out his soul unto death." Hence, in this connection, but as affording distinct ground of the necessity, under which the Saviour lay, I remark,

5. The gratification of his infinite benevolence in the salvation of his people, which depended on his death. As his human nature was concerned, we can readily conceive the force of such a consideration.

But it will apply to him as Mediator, as both God and man. For although the benevolence of God, or the happiness which results from its exercise, admits of no increase or decrease, can neither be augmented nor diminished, yet it can be and is exercised towards different objects. It may be exercised towards one portion or order of his creatures, rather than towards another. Thus he has sovereignly discriminated between fallen angels and fallen men, and among those of our own race: God's benevolence,

indeed, in the broadest sense, or as an attribute of his nature, extends to all his creatures. In this sense, our Saviour said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And in this sense, he desires not the death of the wicked, but that they turn and live. Nor does he take pleasure in the sufferings of the finally lost. Yet he has a peculiar affection for those who repent, on whom his holy image is reinstamped. This he expresses in the strongest terms. To such, he says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." When Zion in her despondency said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," he replied, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee! Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." This is distinguishing love—love of approbation. He delights in them, and their eternal happiness is an object dear to him. It gratifies the strongest affection of his heart. But this could not have been shown—could not have been, had not Christ died. And for this he even rejoiced, in prospect of the bloody cross, its cruelty, its tortures, and its shame. He looked beyond the cross, and saw all his redeemed and blood-bought people perfected in heaven, and cheerfully endured its severest agonies. Again,

6. There was another consequence of his sufferings

and death,—the result of the obligations which he voluntarily assumed in man's behalf. This may be denominated his Mediatorial glory. This was not the glory to which he was entitled by his own immaculate innocence and personal excellence; nor the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and when he lay in his Father's bosom. It was a distinct and peculiar glory; a glory which awaited him as Mediator. As God, he was eternally possessed of infinite glory. But, as Mediator, he had not entered into his glory, when he uttered the words of the text, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" That glory was consequent on his sufferings and death, and his ascension, in his glorified human nature, to the right hand of his Father in heaven. Hence, we hear him repeatedly saying to his disciples, that he was not yet glorified; meaning, in the highest and most perfect degree. His exaltation commenced with his resurrection, but was not consummated till his ascension. The human nature of Christ enjoys a peculiar exaltation, and displays a peculiar glory in heaven. Great was the change, indeed, from the agonies of the cross to the peaceful slumbers of the sepulchre.

Jesus on earth had all the holy aspirations and anticipations of a man. He agonized on the cross as a man, though a man in union with Deity. As a man he must have welcomed the last pang which released his human spirit from his mangled body, and looked

forward, in the long hours of his awful sufferings, to the quiet and sweet repose in the silent grave. And as man, he probably came forth from the bondage of death, with the joyful surprise with which the saints will awake, at the sound of the last trumpet, and come forth from their slumbers in the dust. But his ascension and exaltation were not as mere man. The human was still united to his Divine nature, and will forever remain so. As he was the first-born from the dead, by way of pre-eminence, to die no more, so will he eternally remain, pre-eminent above every other creature in his human nature. His humanity will be the medium through which the glories of the infinite Godhead will be forever unfolding to the inhabitants of heaven.

Paul has clearly expressed this view in the following lofty strains: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

If it was an hour of triumph to his humanity when he rose from the dead, how transcendently more

glorious his ascension to heaven, when amid the welcoming shouts and hosannas of all the angels and the glorified, and under the full smiles of the eternal Father, he took his seat at his right hand on the throne.

He will, indeed, give up his Mediatorial kingdom, that peculiar kingdom which he received after his resurrection, when all power in heaven and in earth was given to him, when the last enemy, Death, shall have been destroyed, and all the redeemed received to heaven; but the connection between his Divine and human nature will, probably, never be dissolved.

Once more. The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ were absolutely necessary, in order that he might be a perfect Saviour. This is a necessity growing out of the necessities of those whom he came to redeem. Thus Paul: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

The condition of man in this life, is not that of a sinner only, though sin occasions all the evils to which he is subjected. He needs more than the mere pardon of his sins, more than the death of Christ, to make an atonement for sin. He has pressing necessities other than the burden of his weighty guilt. These exist where sin is pardoned.

The justified and sanctified, as they are in this life, are

subject to all the variety of crushing outward evils that others experience,—disappointments, poverty, sickness, bereavement of friends. Grace secures no exemption from these. The righteous and the wicked share alike in them. They need sympathy in their sorrows, support and consolation in their afflictions and trials, and these in a far higher degree than their fellow-beings can impart. They need “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Those who have been in circumstances properly to appreciate it, well know how much more grateful, more soothing, more comforting, and better adapted is the sympathy of those who have themselves been taught in the school of affliction, than of those who have not. Christians often need such a friend. And in Jesus Christ they have such a friend. One who, by his own experience, is perfect in all respects. True, he was not made the better by what he suffered. He was infinitely pure and perfect. He obtained no new information in regard to the wants and necessities of his people; nor better knew how to adapt his blessings to their condition and exigencies. He did not suffer in any sense for his own sake, but for the sake of those whom he came to redeem and train for heaven.

And what afflicted Christian is not comforted by the reflection that his Saviour has experienced the same or similar afflictions? Ah, how often has the rising murmur been suppressed, and the grief-stricken heart been soothed, at the thought of his far greater

sorrows and sufferings! How often has the assurance afforded support and consolation, that “we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted (tried) like as we are, yet without sin.” How complete, how perfect and suitable, in all respects, the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Saviour! That he might be all this to guilty, needy, dying sinners, he voluntarily assumed the most solemn and binding obligations. Some of these, and as the foundation of all the rest, he has already discharged to his death, and by his death. Others, he is still discharging in his state of exaltation and glory, and will continue to discharge, till he shall “present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” “Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?” since, not only the salvation of his people, but his own glory as Mediator, were suspended on his sufferings.

The subject suggests many practical lessons. We can, however, name but few of them. And,

1. And pre-eminently, adoring thanks to the Son of God, for his self-assumed obligations, his self-prompting love, his atoning self-sacrifice. On these hung all the hopes of our dying world. But for these, like the angels that fell, our entire race had forever perished.

But ah! we need the tongues and the glowing love

of angels that never fell, worthily to speak his praise. Nor can they sing as the glorified of our race will sing in one ceaseless repetition, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever. For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests." But this is a song, some notes of which must be learned on earth, or never sung in heaven. He that knows not a note of it below, can never join the choir above.

My dear friends, can all of you sing it?

2. Our subject places the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth on the most immovable foundation. True, we have no doubt on this point. But multitudes utterly reject him in that character, and from arguments which they profess to draw from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the very source from which Jesus himself derived the proofs which established his Messiahship. "Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself,—proving that he was the Christ," or Messiah. The most prominent topics in all the Bible, from Genesis to the last prophet, and in all the New Testament, are the sufferings and death of Christ. This was expressly stated in the first promise of a

Saviour. The seed of the woman "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

And this was the uniform belief of all the Jewish writers themselves, till he came to our world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

How astonishing, that those very writings of the prophets, which furnished and consummated the proofs of his being the Messiah, should be regarded by that people as proof of his being an impostor! Verily, "blindness hath happened unto them, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. The veil is upon their heart; even unto this day, when Moses is read." Idle the notion that the Messiah is yet to come. No moral impossibility can be greater.

3. Our subject teaches us the nature and ground of true resignation under trials and afflictions. The only perfect example is that of our Divine Lord, who, in all his unparalleled afflictions suffered patiently, meekly, and most resignedly. We may deprecate impending evils. For he did in the immediate agonies of the cross. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But this was not possible. For he had voluntarily assumed obligations which made those agonies absolutely necessary. Men, indeed, are seldom called to do that. For they can seldom know in such a case, what God's will is. But when known, the same disposition should mark our course and conduct which shone so conspicuously in the Saviour. The known will of God furnishes our only rule and proper motive.

In most cases, his will in regard to an event that is feared, can only be known by its actual occurrence.

4. Christians in their trials and afflictions may look forward to the recompense of reward to sustain and cheer them, and as a motive to a patient endurance of them. In this, they have the example of their Saviour. In the near prospect of the bloody cross, the dreadful conflict of his great, and for a little moment, exulting foe, and under the crushing weight of the guilt of a world, he had respect to the glory into which, in his humanity, he was about to enter. This example Paul held up to Christians, for like support and animation, in their far lighter trials and conflicts. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. For, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." This sustained and comforted martyrs for the Saviour's sake. This placed Paul "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." It was this which caused him to glory in all his tribulations, and triumphantly to exclaim, in the near prospect of his death, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is

laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day." A like crown awaits all who love his appearing. Nor does the source of this joy lie wholly in the future. Christ now has the precious balm to bestow and apply, which extracts the pain and heals the wounded heart. He can turn our present grief to joy, and our lamentations to praise.

Finally. Our subject enforces active and untiring devotedness in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. What has he not done and endured to lay us under everlasting obligations to him? If we send our thoughts back to the ages of eternity, we shall find him voluntarily offering to become the ransom of a race to be, and to be involved in ruin. At the appointed time he came. But why rehearse events and facts so familiar to you all? We can never forget them, till we forget all our hopes of eternity; till we quench every desire for the glories of that inheritance which he purchased by his death. What less, then, do we owe to him, than the cheerful consecration of all we are and have in his service? or how else vindicate a title to the blessings which his death alone could secure?

One solemn reflection, and I close, viz., the awful alternative of a failure to secure an interest in a salvation so dearly purchased. "Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

And yet, an hour's delay to secure that interest, may prove a final forfeiture of heaven and all its glories.

An hour's delay may prove too long a postponement to save the soul of any sinner here. Death has but to strike his blow, and the soul is lost! "What is your life! It is even a vapor, that appeareth but a little time, and then vanisheth away." On this hour, for aught any of us know, may be suspended our endless destiny.

"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

VI.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST, A SOURCE OF GLORY.

“Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.”—JOHN 13 : 31, 32.

THE great object which brought the Son of God to our world, and for which he became incarnate, was now immediately to be accomplished. Judas had just gone out to gather a band of soldiers, and consummate his treachery. After delivering most important instructions to the eleven disciples, and instituting that sacramental ordinance which was to be a perpetual memorial of him in all the future ages of the Church, they went forth to the tragic scenes which awaited him, and which were closed in the bloody agonies of the Cross.

But let our thoughts dwell a moment on what occurred immediately after Judas left the consecrated spot where the Saviour met his disciples the last time before his death. He who was to betray Jesus had been pointed out. He had received the sop which marked

him as the betrayer, and had gone forth to perpetrate the blackest crime which ever stained the annals of the universe. O who can conceive the deep and awful solemnity of the moments which followed! What overwhelming amazement seized the minds of the eleven! They seem, too, to have been moments of silent, solemn meditation with Christ himself. But behold the calmness, and even joy, which beamed from his countenance when he broke that silence, and uttered forth the words of the text: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him! If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." Words more important, more cheering, more full of deeply interesting instruction, never fell from his sacred lips. All this glory was to attend and follow his death. Five times does he express this glory of himself and his Father in this short sentence. Who can hear these words pronounced without emotion? To what Christian, especially, do they not afford subjects of the sweetest, most intense and joyful meditation? For they connect his own glory with the glory of both the Saviour and the eternal God. The connection is indissoluble. The death of Christ is the source of it all. Wonderful words!

A full analysis of the text would require a distinct consideration of the three following questions.

I. How was Christ, as the Son of man, glorified by suffering death?

II. How was God, as God, glorified by that event?

III. How did God straightway glorify his Son?

But we may embrace them all under one proposition, observing the distinctions above indicated as we proceed, viz., that God, in all his persons and relations, was glorified by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And

1. His death was the accomplishment of the one great object of his incarnation and mission to this world. This object was to make it consistent for God to pardon and restore to his favor our race, a race of rebels against his government. This rebellion commenced with the fall of the first human pair. Their apostasy became the source of the universal corruption of all their descendants, involving them in eternal ruin as well as temporal death. For "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

But we need not trace the streams which have unceasingly flowed through every generation from that overflowing fountain, and will only remark, that the remedy which God proposed, and even reflecting reason alone can approve and regard as adequate, was an atonement, by a being of sufficient dignity and merit, to confirm, in the estimation of the intelligent universe, the infringed government and violated laws of Jehovah. And where should we look for such a being? Not among our own apostate race. For "no man can, by any means, redeem his brother, or give to

God a ransom for him." Not to holy angels,—for they were as unwilling as unable. They had no eye to pity, nor arm to save. God's own and equal Son alone could effect this mighty work. Hence, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." And, "forasmuch as the children are partaken of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death," and thus he became "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." No being, therefore, less than an Infinite One, possessed the necessary prerequisites for the office of such a priesthood; and even he must become man, that by his death he might redeem man, who had incurred the penalty of death. This mighty work was accomplished when the Saviour expired on the cross.

If, then, there is glory in the greatest work which the Infinite God himself ever performed (for redemption stands at the head of all his works), then, indeed, was "the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in him," when that work was finished by the sufferings of the cross. But,

2. Christ was glorified, and God was glorified in him, when he died, by the most overwhelming proofs which all the circumstances attending his death afforded of his Deity. All these showed that he was "God manifested in the flesh." He had before asserted this to the very court that condemned him, and for which he was

condemned, as a blasphemer, to the cross. “What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy. Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Jesus answered, I am. What think ye? They all condemned him to be guilty of death.” By another Evangelist, we are told that the charge was, that “he made himself equal with God.” And how was the truth of that claim and declaration made out by all the circumstances of that awful scene? Would God as it were array the whole creation, to testify, as with a thousand voices, to what was not true—to the grossest falsehood, the greatest blasphemy lips could utter, had not Jesus Christ been his equal Son? Hear this testimony more solemnly, more convincingly given, than words could express. “Now, from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom; and the sun was darkened, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose.” Consider, too, the manner in which his spirit took its flight from his tortured body, after three long hours of agony. “Jesus, when he had cried with a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.” That loud voice shows that he did not expire from exhausted strength, from bodily inability to endure still protracted agonies. The tide of life was in full flow, till the instant of his

death. The words which the Evangelists use on this point, show this, though our translators employ the same. Mark and Luke employ a word which literally means "to breathe out." John, "to release or give up." Matthew, "to dismiss." He dismissed his spirit. All denoting a voluntary act. How like his own words, when speaking of his death, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." This is the language of Omnipotence, and is one of its highest exercises. And the death and the resurrection of Christ proved that he possessed that attribute. Thus was the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in him, by his death.

3. This glory was secured and manifested in what soon followed the death of Christ, and to which his death was a necessary prelude. To this he alludes in the words of the text, "God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." And on the third day from that, he rose from the grave. Here, if so I may say, is displayed a glory, far surpassing that which even shone around his cross. Hitherto, his own predictions, and those of inspired prophets, had chiefly centred on his death, and scarcely more than intimated his resurrection. On the cross he was glorified as the "Son of man." Hitherto, his Deity was veiled in humanity. But now, he gloriously exhibits himself as the "Son of

God." This is the view which St. Paul presents of his resurrection, when he says, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead." How glorious, beyond all power of expression, is that lately suffering "Son of man," now showing himself the "Son of God," amid the wonders and miracles of his resurrection! Though glory attended his crucifixion, how is even that eclipsed by that of his resurrection! How great, especially, the contrast we cannot help drawing, between his quiet slumbers in the sepulchre, and his rising in the majesty of his omnipotence, from the slumbers of death! With the grave, we associate weakness as well as gloom. But what power was here manifested, power inherent in the Son of God himself, and of himself put forth, according to his own declaration, "I have power to lay down my life, and power to take it again!" How vain all the precautions and care of his cautious enemies and guilty crucifiers, in making the sepulchre sure, in placing a great stone at its entrance, and sealing it, and setting a watch to guard it! How easily were all these overcome, nor human agency employed. Angels at his bidding came, and rolled back the stone. Here, too, were wonders, and even miracles wrought. That stone was removed without hands. There was a great earthquake. The graves which had been opened at his crucifixion, now ushered forth their dead, who went into the Holy City, as we are expressly told, "after his resurrection."

But we cannot dwell longer on this scene of majesty and glory. But in close connection with it, add,

4. That the text was strikingly fulfilled, but forty days after, when Christ ascended to heaven. This was his exaltation and glory, in his reunited Deity and humanity, to the right hand of the Majesty on high. How different this scene from that which had, but six weeks before, been enacted near that very spot! That spot, which then witnessed to the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of man, now the spot of his exaltation and triumph. His ascension was indeed glorious, as now he bade adieu to all his sufferings; his very body released from the humiliation and confinement of the grave; now forever immortal, yet still forever to be united to his Deity. But how much more glorious his triumphant entrance into heaven! Now was fulfilled and realized that exultant prophecy and ecstatic song of David, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

We can almost see him with his immense train of holy angels ascending and entering the wide-opened portals of heaven, and hear the shouts of all the redeemed, as the King of glory made his way to the

eternal throne. Such strains were never sung in heaven before. Angels, indeed, celebrated his birth. They rejoice at every new triumph of his grace on earth, even at the repentance of one sinner. But that world never resounded with such transcendent joy, as when the glorious Captain of salvation entered it, and took his seat on the throne at his Father's right hand, having and exercising all power in heaven and in earth, and exalted head over all things to the Church.

How strikingly does the Apostle Paul contrast these two states of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

There he now sits, and rules, and reigns, and will continue to sway the sceptre of universal dominion, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

5. Jesus Christ was glorified in his death, and straightway was glorified, as by that event he gained a complete victory over his great adversary and all

the powers of darkness. What might have seemed, to short-sighted men, and even to his most malignant and powerful enemies, the hour of his own vanquishment, was the hour of his victory. Satan had put it into the heart of Judas to betray him. This was his first direct step to his death. The whole plot was devised, and with that malignant artfulness by which he is distinguished. It succeeded. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, was forthwith condemned and sentenced to the death of the cross. Those fallen beings had exulted before, in the fall of the human pair, and as they no doubt believed, the eternal ruin of all their posterity. But never before was there such a shout of triumph in those regions of blackness, as when the Saviour hung writhing and expiring on the cross. But their exultation was short. Before this, Satan was permitted to tempt and annoy the Son of man, to bruise his heel, according to the first prediction of him. But now that promised seed of the woman had bruised Satan's head; had entirely subjected him to his power and authority. Satan was crushed by the cross, which he had instigated his allies to erect as the instrument of the Saviour's death.

Hear St. Paul's account of it: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Thus, what was Satan's victory, proved his subjugation, and insured the final ruin of his dark empire, by the very means by which he thought to crush the kingdom of Christ. It was indeed a glorious achievement to conquer an enemy who had, with almost entire success, been disputing the empire of our world, for more than four thousand years. But the cross struck the sceptre from his hand. Thus was the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in him, and was straightway glorified when the Saviour yielded his life on the cross.

6. God is glorified by the death of Jesus Christ, as by that event, his whole character has been brought prominently to view. For God to glorify himself, is to display his perfections to the view of his intelligent creation. This, it is true, is in no slight degree effected by his works and his providences. Thus, in the 19th Psalm, we read, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge," *i. e.*, of God. The works of creation demonstrate some of God's attributes—particularly his omnipotence—and afford no small evidence of his wisdom; and not a little is received and experienced of his goodness and general benevolence, by his providences. Paul, indeed, tells us, in his Epistle to Romans, that enough of God is known from creation, to silence every excuse of the heathen, and to condemn them for not paying him supreme worship. "Because that which may be

known of God is manifest in them (more properly to them), for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." The power, and wisdom, and general benevolence of God are, indeed, glorious attributes, and worthy of being eternally celebrated. But it is no disparagement of these natural perfections to ascribe a pre-eminent glory to those of a moral nature, such as his love and mercy, his goodness, truth, and justice; and these, especially his love and mercy, could never have been known to us, but for the death of Christ, by which they have been brought into exercise. Nor is there less scope or less demand for the exercise of all his known perfections, both natural and moral, in the salvation of sinners, than of the former in the creation of the world. Hence, without any such distinction, we read, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." And for God to appear in his glory, is meant, to display his perfections. Nor is there a known attribute of his nature which is not brought into requisition in the work of saving sinners. St. Paul has clearly expressed this view in the following words: "To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." By "the manifold wisdom" of God, is meant his whole character, as brought

to view by means of the Church; in other words, in saving sinners. Nor is this great thought less clearly expressed in the text, in which it is affirmed, that "God is glorified in Christ, by means of his death;" in other words, the death of Christ, by which an all-sufficient atonement for sin has been made, has made it consistent for God to offer eternal life to sinners, and has removed every obstacle to the freest exercise of his love and mercy, and even his omnipotence, to secure their salvation, limited only by his own sovereign pleasure, or, as the Apostle Paul expresses it, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." This is the great leading truth throughout the Scriptures. In confirmation of it I will quote a single passage. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin (a sin-offering) for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteous of God in him." Nor need we dwell long on the question, what Divine attributes have been called into exercise, in the salvation of sinners, by which God is glorified? We might rather ask, which of his attri-

butés has not been required and manifested in that mighty work? Which of his works exhibits proofs of greater wisdom and knowledge?

Our entire race were under sentence of eternal death. How could they be saved, and God's truth supported in his word that had gone forth, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die?" God, too, "is of one mind, and changeth not; the thing which he hath said, shall it not come to pass?" Here, then, were difficulties which Infinite Wisdom alone could solve and remove. Omnipotence itself could afford no relief. For that attribute could not be arrayed against another. Justice and mercy were to be *reconciled*, and not destroyed; the plan which Infinite Wisdom devised accomplished this end. So that we now hear it proclaimed, that "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Christ." It was the contemplation of this great truth which caused Paul to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" God, then, is glorified by the manifestation of his wisdom. But his wisdom has only devised the plan, agreeably to which the sinner might, consistently, be saved. It of itself saves no one. Multitudes are daily perishing notwithstanding it, and in the knowledge of it. But in the overflowing of his compassion and benevolence, God did not stop here. He resolved the actual redemption of lost men; the infinite riches of his grace could not have been manifested short of this. His love and mercy were brought into the freest and

fullest exercise. Hence, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." What could manifest the Divine glory, if not that love which could give up God's only begotten and dearly beloved Son to die for a race of rebels? And where is the power of God more signally displayed or more indispensably required, than in the work of man's salvation? It is usual, indeed, to refer to the work of creation as affording the highest proofs of omnipotence. But a moral creation affords proofs not less striking—the creation of spirit, the new creation of a sinner, than his formation at first. We cannot, indeed, with any propriety or truth, apply the terms expressive of difficulty or facility to an Almighty Being, as we do to men, in the accomplishment of what to them may be more or less difficult. But the power of God is nowhere in his word set forth in such strong and glowing language, as when it refers to the conversion of sinners; this change is not only everywhere ascribed to the power of God, but to his mighty power—the exceeding greatness of his power. "That ye may know" (said Paul to the Ephesians), "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." And even after the sinner has been created anew in Christ Jesus, Omnipotence alone can secure his progressive holiness, and ultimate perfection and salvation: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

Thus are all the known attributes of the infinite God brought into exercise in redeeming and saving sinners; and all this in consequence of the death of Jesus Christ. And herein is he glorified. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." This was done by the love manifested in the gift and death of his Son; his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation; by the wonderful success which immediately followed the preaching of the Gospel, and the display of all the Divine perfections, in the continued success of the Gospel, and indeed every conversion from that day to this.

To God, then, we owe the work; to him should we ascribe all the glory of man's salvation. In him originated the purpose; by him was devised the plan; he furnished the victim, that victim his only Son, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." God appointed the means and provided the necessary agent (the Spirit), and pledged all his perfections to render them efficient. By these means and this influence, God has gathered to himself a people from among the apostate race of man; converted rebels into submissive and obedient subjects; has his Church, and will continue her existence with the highest prosperity and glory, a glory which the world has never witnessed until the last convert is made, the last soul is admitted to heaven. The whole work is God's. His own glory has been displayed in it. In it he has brought himself to

view; displayed all his perfections; has manifested, to an infinite degree of fulness, his love, his mercy, his wisdom, and his power; and to celebrate these will call forth the song, and constitute the bliss of all the glorified in heaven forever.

Let us now make a practical application of the subject.

1. How honorable—how safe—how happy, the true Christian. He is a child, an heir of the great, omnipotent, glorious God. None can pluck him out of his hands; and all things shall work together for his good. God has purposed, has promised, and pledged all his perfections to secure this. He has connected his own glory with the Christian's immortal and glorious destiny. What is earthly royalty—earthly riches—all the world, compared to this? Who, that seeks true honor, would not be a Christian?

2. What a high privilege that which the followers of Christ are permitted to enjoy,—the privilege of celebrating that love, and commemorating that death, under every circumstance, and by specially appointed means, fitted to command our thoughts, and impress our hearts. This was the kind purpose of our Saviour in the institution of the sacramental Supper. It directly refers to that event, in which originated every hope of our fallen world,—the death of its Redeemer. Properly observed, there cannot be conceived more powerful, more wise, more kindly directed means of the Christian's sanctification. Thus observed, he never

gains a nearer access to his Saviour, till called to see him face to face. From the Cross beams forth a love which cannot fail to kindle love in return in a heart that ever felt its power. The world, that powerful enemy of the Christian, whose friendship is death, is never placed so low in his estimation as while thus engaged. Every Christian grace is brightened and strengthened. The love which binds to Christ, will bind together the members of his household in still stronger bonds on every such occasion. Crosses will be more readily taken up, and more cheerfully borne; and labors for Christ be more faithfully performed.

3. The fact that God has indissolubly connected the salvation of men with his own glory, is the only ground of human hope. The Christian—the most eminent Christian—has no other. Left to himself, he would never take another step towards heaven. He would yield to the very first and even weakest temptation to sin, nor put forth an effort to resist it, or to regain the position from which he had fallen. All his springs are in God, and from him cometh all his expectation. The work is God's, not to the exclusion of man's own agency, but by giving direction and force to that agency. The Christian is never more freely, as well as cheerfully active, than when God acts upon him; then "he works out his own salvation, when God works in him, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." His own experience easily solves what seems so mysterious, if not absurd to some,—Divine

agency and human freedom. Yes, this is the Christian's only hope. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." His only security is the pledged perfections of God. While he relies on this, he can appropriate the language of Paul to himself, "When I am weak, then am I strong." "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

4. Nor is there other ground of hope that another sinner will ever be converted. This is seen, and felt, and adoringly acknowledged, "when God appears in glory to build up Zion." How are the feeblest means thus blessed! With what power do the truths of God's word, which hitherto have been heard with indifference, then fall on the sinner's conscience and reach his heart!

But, let not the sinner, under a false conception of the bearing of this important and fundamental truth, seek to excuse himself for his indifference. Because he will not come to Christ, unless the Father by his Spirit draw him, only proves the deep depravity of his heart,—the deeply-fixed opposition of his heart to God and to holiness. This is his guilt and his condemnation; and the more fixed his opposition, the deeper and more aggravated his criminality. Nor can sinners force their consciences into an acquiescence with the wishes of their wicked hearts, or to sanction one of their false pleas and excuses. Such pleas and excuses are as illogical as they are unscriptural. Who ever heard, in any other case, or on any other subject,

that the greater one's opposition to what is right, the more excusable for retaining and cherishing his opposition? Strange perversion of what men call reason, that the more unwilling sinners are to come to Christ for eternal life, the more excusable are they for keeping at a distance from him!

O could they feel that in and of themselves they are undone and lost forever, there were indeed hope for them! Till they feel thus there is none. This is God's very method to bring sinners heartily to accept his offered mercy. It is thus he glorifies his Son, and glorifies himself. It is the first indication of his favorable movement towards them. Their first cry is, "Lord, help, or we perish."—Amen.

VII.

VAST NUMBERS OF THE HUMAN RACE TO BE SAVED.

“After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”—REVELATION 7 : 9, 10.

THE scene of the vision which St. John here had, was laid in heaven. The vision was evidently a representation of the actual future triumph of the redeemed. The language of the text is clear and explicit. He saw the redeemed of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, before the throne of God and the Lamb, clothed with their celestial robes, and palms, the emblems of victory over all their enemies, in their hands, and singing the song, everywhere in this Book ascribed to the finally saved. in heaven, saying, “Salvation unto our God, and unto the Lamb.” Their number he represents as a great multitude which no man could number; embracing all the redeemed of our race.

And it is this latter statement—their immense number—which I propose to make the leading topic of the

present discourse : “ A great multitude, which no man could number.” This number is great, not only in itself, but as compared with the rest of mankind,—the finally lost.

The relative number of those who are saved, as we have sometimes contemplated the subject, is evidently small. This has appeared from our Saviour’s reply to the question which a certain man put to him, “ Lord, are there few that be saved ?” We have, however, in the contemplation, occupied a point in the annals of time far back even of the present day. For the question had respect to the then present time, nearly two thousand years ago. The answer, however, which the Saviour gave to it, was equally applicable to that and all previous time ; nor less so to all time since, and will be down to the period of the Millennium. During all ages of the world to the millennial day, the number of those who successfully “ strive to enter in at the strait gate,” who effectually “ seek salvation,” and those who, among the professors of religion, are the real children of God, all told, have been, and will be, comparatively small. From the days of Adam to those of the latter day of glory, the world of perdition has been, and will be, far more rapidly and numerously filling up, we have abundant reasons to believe, than the world of glory. Not only have populous cities, for the universal wickedness of their inhabitants, been destroyed, and many an idolatrous nation and kingdom, no less extensively corrupt and abandoned, been swept

away in righteous anger; and a whole world, that had been peopling for fifteen centuries and a half, more than a quarter of its whole existence as the habitation of man to the present time, been, for the same heaven-provoking cause, drowned by a universal flood; but in every age the people of God have been exceedingly few, and, at times, scarcely a witness for the truth.

But the period is approaching when this relative proportion will be reversed; the period will come when the aggregate of the redeemed over the lost will be immensely great, even exceeding all computation. That period, John, in his vision, saw, as related in the text. The consideration of a few facts will make this statement clear and evident.

1. The way is now preparing for a more rapid increase and multiplication of Christians than at any past age, not excepting that of the Apostles. The Gospel is more extensively disseminated. A greater number possess the means of salvation. And this benevolent enterprise, this mighty work of placing the Word of God in the hands of our entire race, is daily increasing in energy and extent; and it will continue to receive fresh impulses till the work shall be accomplished. True, the population of the earth is increasing also; and, as yet, there are unquestionably far more births into the world than into the kingdom of Christ; and more souls lost than are saved. Yet even here there is to be made an important abatement in favor of the saved; in the countless multitudes of

souls taken to heaven in their infancy. And probably these, in every age, have composed the larger portion of those who have gone to heaven. But we speak not of those now on earth, but prospectively, and in consequence of the rapid and rapidly-increasing spread of the Gospel. And when this has become universal, the means will then be possessed, and, we are assured, will be blessed to the universal establishment of the Saviour's kingdom.

2. The greatest opposition and hindrance to the spread of the Gospel, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, which it has ever experienced, are yet to be utterly put down. These are the three combined powers of Paganism, Papacy, and Mohammedanism. The two former have always been combined, and in harmony with each other in the opposing influence which they have exerted against the propagation of real Christianity. And though the latter is diverse from the former, in many respects, yet all its influence has been deadly in its opposition to the Gospel of Christ. The period of their destruction is yet future, but it will come, as certainly as God's word is true. Nor do we believe that period is distant. Two of them, viz., Paganism and Mohammedanism are even fast yielding now. The former offers but little opposition, and generally, none at all, to the introduction of the Gospel into its dark regions. Missionaries, with the rich treasures of the Gospel, are scarcely opposed anywhere, and cheerfully welcomed into most of its dominions. And already has

the cross of Christ achieved many glorious conquests. And Mohammedanism not only offers no opposition to the introduction of the Gospel, but freely admits both its messengers and its friends to all the civil rights of its own subjects, and has recently decreed universal toleration. And, as for Papacy, though it will, in all probability, make a more violent and furious resistance than ever before, to the dissemination of the Gospel in the nations under its control, and wherever else it can, yet it will be its death-struggle. The great master-spirit, the Apocalyptic dragon, will come down, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that his time is short." Yet even now, during the short period, the few years past, that God has granted the opportunity, hundreds of thousands of copies of the Word of life have found admission and extensive circulation, and not a few friends, within its dark domains. All this opposition will yet cease; those powers will all be utterly overthrown; every hindrance to the Gospel wholly removed; and then shall converts to Christ be multiplied, and the Word of God grow as never even in Apostolic times.

3. The Jews, as a people or body, are yet to be converted to Christianity. As yet, the veil which has been so long on their minds and hearts, and been so impervious to the light of the Gospel, has been taken from, comparatively, few. But we have the fullest and most express promise of God of their ultimate conversion—a conversion more general than is indi-

cated in regard to any other nation or distinct people on the earth. Inspiration has employed the language of *universality* with reference to them. "Blindness, in part, hath happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." There is no promise of such universal bearing in all the sacred volume to any other nation. Hence, their conversion is not to be a long process. Whether the prediction that "a nation shall be born in a day," have special reference to them or not, as I do not suppose it has, but to the rapid spread of the Gospel, generally, at particular periods, as in the days of the Apostles, and still at a future time, that nation is certainly embraced in it. I need only add further on this point, their conversion will greatly augment the number of the finally redeemed. But I remark,

4. That there is still in the future, but whose commencement we believe is not distant, a most happy and glorious period of prosperity to the kingdom of Christ on earth. That is the period so long looked and earnestly prayed for, called the Millennium, from the fact that it is to continue a thousand years. That prosperous and happy time is thus set forth in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand; and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which

is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years; and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon it, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." It is proper here to remark, that the events to which your attention has already been directed, viz., the universal propagation of the Gospel, the overthrow of the Pagan, Papal, and Mohammedan powers, and the conversion of the Jews, will be, of course, contemporaneous with the beginning of the Millennium.

These glorious events will be the ushering in of that day of blessedness to the Church and to the world, and constitute the first and most important step in a long series of conversions during many subsequent generations. We are not, indeed, to suppose there will be no wickedness in the human heart during that period. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But, we are led to believe from the following, and many other declarations of like import, "that then the wicked shall not be;" that all, whose happy privilege it will be to live at that time, will be converted, till near the close of it. For, at its close, Satan is represented as being "loosed a little season;" and "as going out to deceive the nations, and to gather them together to battle." After the close of the thousand years, it may not, indeed, be immediately, but after that, converting and restraining grace will be withheld, and wickedness will break forth again. But that is not a point for our present consideration, except that it will be for a little

season only. Our concern, in this discourse, respects the numbers to be finally saved; that "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues." In addition to all the millions previously saved, what a countless host will be redeemed! what an immense harvest of souls will be gathered during those thousand years! Imagination itself is inadequate to the conception of their number. Everything will be propitious to the increase, support, and prosperity of earth's population. The whole period one of uninterrupted peace; the earth yielding an increase never before known, and probably (for there are strong intimations of it in the prophecies to that effect) the age of man greatly extended. How many then will be finally saved to one that is lost, notwithstanding that, at the present time, and in all past ages of the world, the relative proportion has unquestionably been greatly the other way! Think of a thousand years of vastly increased population all ascending to heaven, as the glorious purchase of the Saviour's death, as they are removed from earth!

But this is not all. If what is strongly probable, prove in fact to be reality, even that number will fall immeasurably short of the multitude of the finally redeemed.

In the prophecies of Daniel and these Revelations of St. John, which furnish the chief information of what is still to occur in our world, years are not reckoned

literally, as with us, that is, three hundred and sixty or three hundred and sixty-five revolutions of the earth on its axis to a year; but *prophetically*, termed so from the fact that the prophet Ezekiel, by the direction of the Almighty, has told us that "each day" is to be reckoned "a year." Daniel obviously followed this mode of computing time, as is easily shown from the date and the fulfilment of several of his predictions. I need, and indeed can only remark on this point, that this is the common opinion of the most reliable commentators on the prophecies. The same mode, it is as commonly believed, was adopted in the prophetic revelations of the Apostle John. He has even used the very terms which Daniel employed in his measurement of time: as "time, times, and half a time," denoting three years and a half; elsewhere, the terms forty-and-two months are used to denote the same time. In another place the same period is denoted by "a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days." All which different modes of computing time are intended to measure the same period, not only of duration, but with reference to the occurrence of the same events; neither of which could have happened in that short space, if literally understood; but which did actually occur (those of them which have transpired), at the time stated by those different modes of expressing it, prophetically understood; that is, a day for a year, and reckoning thirty days for a month, or three hundred and sixty days for a year, as months and years

were reckoned when those prophecies were written. Now, if this be correct as to the above different modes of expression to measure time, is it not correct, also, and does not analogy require that the thousand years of peace, prosperity, and happiness, which await the Church and the world, mentioned, too, by the same writer, and in the same book of Revelations, should be reckoned and understood in the same way? If one of those notations of time, or rather, if all the others are to be understood prophetically, can there be any good reason assigned why the period denoted by "a thousand years" should not be reckoned prophetically also?

If not, then, instead of a Millennium, a literal thousand years of prosperity and happiness, which the Church is to enjoy before she completes the full number of her redeemed subjects, and becomes a glorified and triumphant body, there are to be three hundred and sixty times that number of years of such prosperity and happiness on earth.

"There are," as has been remarked by another, "but three ways in which the phrase, *a thousand years*, can be understood here: either literally, or according to prophetic use, where a day stands for a year; thus making a period of three hundred and sixty thousand years; or, figuratively meaning, a long but indefinite period of time." But there is no more or better reason for understanding the "thousand years," *literally*, than understanding "a thousand two hundred and

threescore days, literally, or forty-and-two months." Perhaps it must be left for the event alone to determine which of the above constructions is the intended one. But while there is nothing to urge against the longest period, namely, three hundred and sixty thousand years for the world's jubilee, and especially the Church's repose and prosperity after a long, dreary, and oftentimes bloody period, there is, in the very fact of her past depression and persecution, an additional reason to those already stated, for believing the "thousand years," a symbol to denote three hundred and sixty thousand literal years. Whose mind, whose imagination even, can now conceive the number of the finally saved and glorified! Had all past generations been forever lost, how small the number in proportion to that of the saved! Well might John call it "a great multitude, which no man could number," in his vision of them before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The subject suggests some reflections of interest.

1. The true Christian will rejoice in view of the fact, that such an immense multitude of immortal souls will be saved from this apostate world. This joy springs from several different causes. One cause of it is the assurance that *all will be saved*, whom it shall be consistent with the infinite perfections of God to save. Paul's language embraces, if it were not intended prominently to express it, where he tells us, that "by the Church is made known the manifold wis-

dom of God;" a phrase which denotes the whole assemblage of his perfections; not his wisdom, or a single attribute; but *all* his attributes. God will save all he consistently can save. Beyond this, supreme love forbids the Christian to go. And in this assurance his desires and joys sweetly harmonize and mingle together. Another cause of joy to the Christian, that such multitudes will be saved, is the gratification of his benevolence. Short of immediate communion with God, there is no higher joy to the real Christian, as his fellow-beings are concerned, than he experiences in the assurance of their salvation; none, certainly, this side of heaven. Every Christian feels something of that on every instance of conversion here. It is his richest source of satisfaction when he sees those instances multiplied, as in a season of revival.

It is another cause of joy that the Church is yet to possess that holy freedom, that undisturbed peace, that prosperity on earth, of which she has been deprived, and where she has experienced so many long periods of darkness, depression, and deep affliction. For the Church the world was made and has been preserved. But for generations, thus far, and especially during many of them, she has not had a peaceful possession of her own. But a blissful jubilee is before her, even on these mortal shores.

2. Our subject repels the reproach often expressed, more often, probably, felt, against the compassion and

mercy of God, in the supposed fact, that so few should be saved. What though a vast majority of mankind have, in past ages of the world, been lost; and what though a larger proportion of the present, than of any past generation, should be lost, and even among those who possess the Gospel,—how is God answerable, or his mercy to be reproached for that?

He has made man a free agent. Had he not, he could have established and exercised no moral government over his race. They had been incapable of it. Look on the world on a small scale. Let this congregation represent it. And in all the points in which our subject now presents itself, this congregation is a world in miniature. And now let me ask, if every sinner here should be left to his own chosen way, and eternally perish, is there one here who would dare reproach God for it? Not a sinner here, or elsewhere, could bring his own conscience up to that point of bearing.

And in the last day, that tribunal within him, if he perish, will sanction, in tones louder than a thousand thunders, the sentence which consigns him to the place of hopeless despair forever.

But how many soever may sink to perdition before that prosperous and happy period shall arrive, which is in certain prospect before the world, the results of that period will show multitudes saved to a single soul lost. And in celebration of the Divine justice as well as mercy, the song will be sung by all the inhabitants of

heaven, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy!"

Once more. Our subject urges to the most devoted and persevering service in the cause of Christ.

The mighty work indeed which is to be performed before "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ;" the powerful opposition to be overcome, and the labors to be performed in the promulgation of the Gospel throughout the world, can be accomplished only by an Omnipotent arm. At the same time, it will not be accomplished without human agency co-operating with Divine. While God has his essential work to perform, Christians have their appropriate sphere of action. One of the last signs which will betoken the near approach of that most happy period to the Church on earth, is the universal spread of the Gospel. This is to be done by human hands, and human lips; while Divine truth, energized by the omnipotent Spirit, will give to that truth its regenerating and sanctifying power. The Church must furnish, send forth, and sustain those who are to preach the Gospel to every creature. This commission of her Great Head performed, then will the seventh angel sound his trumpet, and great voices be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," and the joyful ascription ascend from every part of it,

“ We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.” As preparatory to this, every Christian must be baptized anew, and receive a fresh anointing from on high, and a spirit of genuine revival pervade every branch of the Church. United, fervent, persevering prayer will procure that unction ; will bring down that Spirit. This is what an Apostle meant, by “ hasting to the coming of the day of the Lord.” O were this the state of every Christian and every church, how soon would immortal souls, now perishing in their sins, be rapidly gathering into the kingdom of Christ ! Alas ! it is not so ; and the enemy still triumphs. But who shall first awake ? To this question, what response will ye make ?

VIII.

THE SOUL—ITS IMMORTALITY AND CONSEQUENT VALUE.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul.”—GENESIS 2 : 7.

IN a strict philosophical sense, man is composed of three constituent parts,—body, soul, and spirit ; the first consisting of mere inert matter ; the second constituting his animal life ; and the third his intellectual, moral, and immortal nature. This distinction, however, is not uniformly, or even generally, observed in the Scriptures when speaking of man. For while the term soul is often employed to denote the whole man, the last two, viz., soul and spirit, are still more frequently and interchangeably used to indicate the same spiritual, indestructible nature or being of man ; examples of which are too familiar to require recital. The Apostle Paul, however, has expressly observed this threefold distinction, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians. “I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” *i. e.*, his coming in their

death. This, too, is clearly intimated in my text. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground"—meaning his body—"and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," *i. e.*, gave him his animal existence; "and man became a living soul," an intelligent, moral, and immortal being. This idea is farther suggested and sustained by the epithet "living:" "man became a living soul." The word living is often applied to God to distinguish him from idols; by which is denoted the eternity of his existence, both past and future. As applied to man, it, of course, denotes only his future, eternal existence. For he had a beginning, but he will never cease to be. He is not an eternal being, but he is an immortal one. His existence will run on parallel with the existence of God himself. Death cannot extinguish it. For "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" which was the Saviour's argument with the Sadducees, to prove the immortality of man's existence. Hence, in his future state of existence, we find often applied to him the terms, "eternal life," "eternal destruction," "eternal joy," "eternal punishment," "eternal glory," and "eternal damnation." However equally incomprehensible God's eternity is to the highest archangel in heaven as to the weakest child of Adam, yet not so in regard to man's continued existence, of which we can as easily conceive, after millions of ages have rolled away, as of his existence the next year, or even to-morrow. He will

be the same thinking, conscious being that he is now. No change will ever occur to extinguish thought or destroy consciousness. We have no reason to suppose that he will ever possess more or fewer or other faculties than he now has; and while these remain, his personal identity will also remain. But if these faculties eternally continue, they will be eternally employed. If they cease to be exercised, they cease to be. If they are eternally employed, they will be eternally expanding and gathering strength. In regard to the freeness of their exercise, the death of the body will produce a great change. This gross, material tenement is a clog—a weight. But a body is not essential to the existence of the soul, nor to the exercise of its faculties. While the connection exists it must necessarily prove an embarrassment, a hindrance to their exercise. But this connection is of short continuance. Then, every obstruction, every hindrance to unlimited expansion will be removed.

Let us, then, contemplate man in relation to the eternity of his existence; this eternal destiny, the great concern of us all. And,

I. We may well be filled with admiration, and exclaim, What a being man is destined to become! Verily, the present is a state of mere infancy. What we here pronounce maturity, is indeed but a small advance on the feeblest childhood. What was Solomon, the wisest of the human race, in his highest mental vigor, intellectually considered, compared with what

he now is? What is he now, compared with what he will be?

And yet every human being in existence, or to receive existence, will exceed what he now is by an illimitable degree. We may exalt the standard of comparison still higher, and adopt that of the brightest seraph in heaven, and if we compare with him, an heir of eternal life, even the infant of a span, the latter will far transcend the present standing of the former in grasp of intellect, in intensity and amount of happiness, or what that standard will be, at any given period of that seraph's existence. Think then, my hearers,—and how vast the thought!—think what mighty beings we are destined by our immortality to become. Saved or lost, we shall be giants in intellect at least. Nor will our advancement be marked by the same tardy steps in our future progress as in this life. The first ray of light from eternity will, no doubt, suddenly and immensely expand every faculty of the soul. Think of the faculty of memory, that vast repository of human knowledge, on the acquisitions of which the other faculties chiefly act! What a storehouse would the mind of even a youth be, were all the thoughts which ever passed it at once recalled, and in far greater vividness than when first conceived. Something like this has often been experienced and expressed in the dying hour. Almost the whole of one's life has been crowded into that hour, and not a little has been discovered, from an opening eternity, to expand the soul,

and fill it with unutterable joy, or with awful agonies, accordingly as it was prepared or unprepared for its departure out of this world. Not seldom have some of us witnessed this, while standing around the dying bed. Much more will this be true of the power of memory when the soul enters eternity, or it will not be true that we shall then "know, even as we are known."

This, to some, may seem a picture of mere fancy. But no fancy can ever reach the reality. It necessarily results from the nature of the soul, its powers and capacity, and its immortality. No argument can be based on sounder or plainer principles. Our conceptions of the human soul are infinitely too low. Every revolving age in eternity will be enlarging them. And hence no man will ever fully comprehend himself.

II. In that world in which all intelligent beings are destined forever to dwell, there are but two essentially different places of existence. Each, therefore, must forever dwell in one or the other. These places are more commonly denominated heaven and hell,—the place of happiness, and the place of misery. The transactions of the last day, as described by the Saviour himself (see 25th of Matthew), forever settle this point. The whole universe of intelligences is declared to be present,—angels and men, the righteous and the wicked,—and to stand on either hand of the Judge. To those on his right hand he addresses the welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Upon those on his left hand, he denounces the awful anathema, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Of these states, we scarcely have, in this world, even the faintest conception. In some favored moments the eminently pious man enjoys some foretaste of heaven, and especially in the dying hour. The far more common experience is that of a ceaseless warfare between the flesh and the Spirit,—the old and the new man—the remains of depravity and the influence of grace. Although there may be seasons of a peace which passeth understanding, that is but a meagre earnest of the joys of heaven. The world soon presents itself, either in the form of pressing cares or fascinating pleasures, and the vigilant adversary seizes the opportunity to urge compliance with its manifold temptations. Ah, the life of the Christian is made up of sinning and repenting! There is no moment when the former is not true of him, nor a moment when the latter is not demanded. His most holy exercises and employments are polluted with sin. Alas! this life affords a poor type of life eternal in heaven. The best society here bears but a faint resemblance to that of the holy angels and spirits of just men made perfect. But heaven, the eternal abode of the righteous, is free from sin, and all that can tempt to sin. Nothing that defileth or maketh a lie can enter that holy place.

“These are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Nor, on the other hand, does this world bear a more striking resemblance to the world of eternal woe and misery. “The wounded spirit,” whose agonies often exceed all other pains which are known on earth, may bear, indeed, some resemblance to the gnawings of the worm that never dies, and the anguish of unquenchable fire. But the natural workings of sin, the cause of all the misery in the universe, are here held under restraint. It is only necessary to remove these to kindle the very fires of hell in the soul. The very conviction of sin, if unrelieved, would here produce a living death. What wretchedness more intolerable can be conceived by mortal, at least, than that which is produced by the combined action of hatred,—especially hatred of God,—remorse of conscience, and utter despair of all relief or mitigation? Something of this has sometimes been experienced in this world, and pointed out the sufferers as the veriest of wretches. They have been driven, by their insupportable misery, to put an end to their mortal existence, willing to risk the torments of hell itself to be relieved from their

present tortures. Such was Judas. But such instances, from such a cause, are comparatively rare. For there is much in this world to mitigate the mortal pains arising from sin, in even the vilest. Sin is blinding and hardening, as well as soul-destroying. The sinner has no just conception of its nature and consequences. The various pursuits of the world, its cares, its pleasures, and numerous temptations, which are yielded to, engross the thoughts, absorb the heart, render callous the conscience, and keep the sinner from ever thinking of his moral condition, or sending a serious thought into eternity. He feels not, because he thinks not. The influence, too, of the really religious portion of the world imposes restraint, and modifies the evils of sin. The good mingle with the bad. And though the former derive injury from the contact, the latter experience relief from misery, which otherwise were inevitable, however little credit the good may get for it. But in eternity none of these influences can be put forth. All restraints will be removed. The righteous will be forever separated from the wicked. There is an impassable gulf between heaven and hell. Sin will then be seen in all its odiousness, and guilt realized in all its crushing weight, and utter despair settle deep on the soul.

III. In eternity there will be no essential change in moral character or condition, in either the righteous or the wicked. There will indeed be the change of progress from one degree to another in both; a constantly

enlarging capacity for augmented happiness in the one, for increased misery in the other. The righteous will be eternally mounting upward towards the infinite God himself in knowledge and happiness. Nor can continued reflection on sin, and the foolish as well as criminal forfeiture of the salvation which was offered to them, and endless happiness which they might have secured, fail to deepen despair. Despair is a feeling which can never reach the lowest possible depth. Its indulgence has the power of self-augmentation; and that feeling will know no respite. Besides, the lost will be eternally increasing the cause of their misery. Their hatred of God will be ceaselessly burning in their hearts, and sending forth new blasphemies. Our Saviour, in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, has clearly intimated that the view which the finally lost have of the glorified, will prove a new source of misery to them. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." No more, probably, is meant by their seeing the happy inhabitants of heaven than their knowledge of their bliss. And that they should be happy by the very means which they themselves slighted, and which only awakened their enmity, will fill them with the keenest anguish. How often has it been seen in this world, that the anger of sinners has been excited to a high pitch, by seeing their nearest kindred and best friends made

happy by a religion which they themselves despised. It has dissolved the strongest natural ties, changed love to hate, and even led to persecution unto death. "Brother has delivered up brother, the father the child, and children their parents, and caused them to be put to death,"—and often has the prediction been verified, that "a man's foes have been they of his own household."

These feelings of enmity, and all other sinful feelings, the finally impenitent will carry with them into eternity, and forever cherish without the possibility of gratifying them. Yes, they will be denied the satisfaction of even gratified revenge. For there is a momentary satisfaction, at least, in the gratification of the worst of passions. Thus Satan exulted at his seduction of the first pair. Higher joy was kindled at the destruction of the old world; but raised to the highest pitch at the crucifixion of the Saviour of the world, till he saw that by his death on the cross, his own empire received its deathblow. Lost sinners too will forever be realizing the impotence of their rage, and toss, and roar, and gnash their teeth, at the thought, that not one wish of their hearts can ever be gratified. And if this were all, O what a hell!

But we can pursue these general topics no farther.

The subject offers many considerations of a practical and deeply interesting character.

1. It stamps an infinite value on the soul, the immortal soul. What in all creation can compare with

it? Numbers cannot express its value. The material world is nothing placed by the side of it. Worlds have been created for it; and worlds will be dissolved when they can no longer contribute to it. God enstamped his own image upon it, and when that image was lost, his own Son came to our earth and died to restore it. All the angels in heaven are ministering spirits for its salvation. All power in heaven and in earth is exercised in its behalf. Estimate all these, and then you may presume to fix its value. Who is not overwhelmed with amazement at the very thought of an attempt? We can only exclaim, in the language of the Saviour, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2. How worthless, and infinitely worse than worthless is this world, as furnishing objects and employments of supreme desire and pursuit! For far nobler ends has man been made. This life is but the beginning of his existence; long as we sometimes, in our shortsightedness, pronounce it, it is no more than a state of infancy. Death is a mighty advance towards his maturity. Yet even there he has but just begun to be. Where duration is unmeasured and unending, and progress unceasing, what but ever-blooming youth will mark its state!

This world has significantly been called, "the nursery of man, the cradle in which souls yet in swaddling-bands are rocked for immortality;" and when the last-born of the last generation of our race shall have received his final destiny, this world will be blotted

out. What folly and madness then to make anything which it contains an object of supreme desire and pursuit! "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Once more. What immense importance does our subject attach to all the means of grace, and the soul's salvation! What deep and awful solemnity throw around all the opportunities for securing its salvation! What value it puts upon the Sabbath, with all the hallowed influences which that day brings with it! The light it sheds on our dark and sinful world. All the seasons of prayer, public, social, and secret! On the precious, world-weaning, world-crucifying, heaven-exalting ordinances of the Gospel! On every page and sentence of God's revealed truth! Where can true wisdom be found, if not in such an improvement of them as to secure the prize and crown of immortal glory? Where is folly seen, if not in their neglect?

Each of us has such a soul, and its eternal salvation or endless perdition depends on a diligent improvement or criminal neglect of the appointed means. Yes, on this single point is depending, whether we shall eternally vie with angels in bliss, or be forever sinking deeper and deeper in woe! Let this solemn truth be imprinted on every heart, as it is irrevocably fixed in the book of God's everlasting decrees: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. But

unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil."

A single thought, and I close. But it is a thought which passes beyond all temporal things; nor limited to any definite period of our immortal existence. Let each fix it on himself, after time with him shall have ended. Yea, and let him accompany his soul down through successive ages of eternity; always the same rational, conscious being, possessing the same personal identity that you do to-day; and what are you to become? What, as an intellectual being, with a capacity expanding beyond every assignable limit? Yet this is not the most important view to be taken of this subject. There may be greatness of capacity, vastness of intellect, without real dignity or moral worth. But those qualities alone were a curse, and not a blessing. Such is the great leader of the fallen hosts. But remember, that you are a moral being as well as an intellectual; a subject of God's moral government, destined to eternal happiness, or endless misery, and this forever on the increase. If you are a Christian, O think what you will become in heaven, nor ever attain a height which you will not transcend! Who, save the infinite God can measure the dimensions of the immortal soul, even of the last and least heir of glory, in the endlessly revolving ages of eternity! But alas! will you remain impenitent, and die in your sins? O the fearful

alternative! Nor may we suppose such a lost being to remain stationary in misery. Progress is the great law of human existence, which neither death nor hell can annul or obliterate. The capacity for suffering will forever be enlarging. And not the brightest morning star that rebelled and fell from heaven, will, in any determinate period, reach a point in wretchedness, which you, if lost, will not surpass. What a tremendous thought! Believe not that this is fancy. We gather these views from God's own revealed truth, and the very nature of the immortal soul.

And now, which of my hearers, with such an alternative before him, can consent to remain in unrepented sin another hour? Which of you will reject the offer of eternal life, which is now once more made to you? Which of you delay another hour to secure the prize of immortal glory? Who venture another step towards eternal ruin? Will any of you now in your sins do it? Alas! I fear all such will leave this house, in this respect, as they came to it, but not without aggravated guilt. I fear the aged man who now has no interest in, Christ will do it, and do it till he drops into his grave. I fear the middle-aged, whose thoughts, if now for a moment diverted from the world, will do it, and the world continue its strong hold on their hearts till death forces them to leave it. O, and I fear, too, these dear youths will do it, and continue on in the giddy whirl of pleasure, till, alas! they are drowned in perdition!

IX.

THE REDEMPTION OF MAN, GOD'S GREAT WORK.

“Deliver him from going down to the pit. I have found a ransom.”—JOB 33 : 24.

MAN'S redemption is the great crowning work of the infinite God. From whatever point of view we contemplate it, it clearly stands at the very head of all his revealed or known works. Great and stupendous as is the material universe, though it embrace worlds and systems of worlds far more numerous and extensive than human observation brings to view, or human science has revealed, or even fancy can conceive, and notwithstanding all the proofs which they exhibit of the power and wisdom and other natural perfections of Jehovah, the work of redemption stands unparalleled and alone.

My leading object is to show the unparalleled greatness of man's redemption in two or three particulars only. And,

1. This, and what was necessarily preparatory to it, so far as we know, or have any reason to believe, is the only work which has brought the entire Godhead in its personality clearly to the view of his intelligent

creation. We know of no world of anterior existence to our own. Many fanciful conjectures have been indulged; but they are mere vague conjectures. Whether other worlds, previously to what we call the universe, existed, and have been destroyed in some age of past eternity, or may still exist unknown to us, in some part of infinite space, we certainly have no information or plausible hint; and the conjectures, however they may delight or expand the imagination, are for the most part idle speculations and fancies.

They are not required to enlarge our views of the greatness and majesty and glory of God. For on all hands and by the most imaginative, the work of redemption is regarded the great crowning work of Jehovah; and that we have reason to believe is confined to our world. Nor have we any knowledge of any other race of intelligent creatures than our own, except the angels. They had an existence previous to that of our race. They are believed to be denoted by the "morning stars, and sons of God" who "shouted for joy" when this world was brought into existence. But how long they existed before that period, we have no knowledge, nor means of knowing. Redemption, with that which was necessarily preparatory to it, is, I repeat, so far as we have any knowledge, the only work which has brought the entire Godhead in his personality clearly to the view of his intelligent creatures.

In what else than in the work of redemption, do we

have any knowledge of this great truth? We have no intimation that even the angels knew of this distinction in the Godhead, till, on the fall of man, the glorious news of his redemption was announced in heaven. They could know nothing of it from their own condition or prospects. It was not necessary to the confirmation of the sinless in holiness. And for the fallen of their race, no redemption was to be made—none was intended. They had sinned beyond recovery—they had fallen to rise no more. And so far as it was possible to conceive, only the work of redemption could require a revelation of this personal distinction; the appropriate departments of such separate, distinct operations. It was, at least, only the eternal covenant of redemption, which was a covenant between the three Persons in the Godhead respecting man's salvation, that demanded this revelation, or assigned to each Person his peculiar work. Must not that work, then, stand at the head of all God's works, which thus demanded, and which brought to view the whole Trinity in unity? And while each had his separate and distinct department of operations, all harmoniously co-operate. While the great plan is one, each has his own peculiar work to perform. In this surely God is seen, as seen in nothing else. But I cannot dwell longer on this topic, and remark,

2. That in no other work has God made so full a revelation and discovery of his own nature and character, his perfections, both natural and moral, as in

that of human redemption. His power indeed is manifested in the simple act of creating, or bringing something into existence, where nothing existed before. His omnipresence and omniscience are also brought to view in upholding and superintending his works of creation—nor less his wisdom, and even goodness in his providence. But what is thus brought to view of God, are his natural perfections; those perfections which have respect to what he creates, either of a material nature, or at most, of moral beings who are confirmed in eternal holiness at the instant of their creation, or to be forever passed by. Here, indeed, another Divine attribute is brought into exercise, namely, justice. But this is a natural attribute, as exercised towards such beings, by which their happiness is secured, beyond the possibility of forfeiture, so long as they preserve their integrity or holiness. This is the case with sinless angels, and eternally will be, since they have been confirmed in holiness.

It requires fallen beings to bring out the moral perfections of God, whom it is his intention to save. How else could his mercy be brought into exercise, and manifested, one of the dearest attributes of his nature? Mercy must be exercised, to be known; so that had there been no fallen beings to be redeemed, mercy could never have been known. It depends not on a mere declaration. But for man's redemption, not an angel in heaven had known that mercy was an attribute of God; for we have no reason to suppose that

any other fallen race existed whom he intended to redeem. Fallen angels were forever left to perish. We are not authorized indeed to exalt, in point of importance, one Divine perfection above another. They are all infinite and equally dear to God; all equally essential to the perfection of his character. But certainly no Divine perfection is equally celebrated in these Scriptures, as the Divine mercy; not because it is dearer to God, but because its exercise implies that of many other perfections. We have a striking example of this in that remarkable interview which Moses was permitted to have with the Almighty, recorded in the thirty-third chapter of Exodus: "And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he (the Almighty) said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Here, grace, mercy, and goodness, are employed to denote the same disposition or perfection of God, but in such an extensive sense, as to be equivalent to the Divine "glory;" a term which denotes the display or manifestation of God's whole character. The terms mercy, grace, and glory, are often thus employed in the New Testament. You can scarcely open to the Epistles without finding examples of this.

And I here ask, which of the Divine perfections is not brought into exercise in saving sinners? Not his

moral only, but both natural and moral. By what act of creation is the omnipotence of God, more signally displayed than in the sinner's regeneration? It is an act of creation: "created anew in Christ Jesus;" and is set forth as the effect of the "exceeding greatness of God's power." If we might admit degrees to Omnipotence, it requires a greater energy to regenerate a soul, than to create the material universe, or give existence to the soul at first.

3. The greatness of a work is often and properly denoted by the difficulties and obstacles to be overcome in accomplishing it. And here the work of human redemption exceeds in magnitude any other work ever accomplished, undertaken, or devised. God's omnipotent sovereignty could accomplish all things else. A word, a volition, could instantly bring a world into existence. In this manner worlds were brought into existence. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." But mere sovereignty could not effect man's redemption. God, indeed, could, by a word, new create the sinner, instantly subdue his rebellion, and make him holy; and his omnipotence, as already shown, is put forth to do this. But not omnipotence alone. Had this been all, his character as a moral governor would, in the eyes of all his intelligent creatures, have suffered impeachment. He had a moral government and a moral character to vindicate

and maintain. His truth, his word was at issue,—his justice, so to speak, at stake. His declaration had gone forth, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” This awful threatening could not be taken back. Man had incurred the penalty of death, and death must be executed on him or on one in his own nature. That nature must be sinless; perfectly holy. But where, among the human race, can such be found? Nor was the immaculate holiness of that nature all that was required, to be, in his own person, a substitute for the race. He must possess a dignity infinitely above a mere man, however holy; and authority to vindicate the claims of God, and answer all the demands of the law; restore it to its original inviolability. Not man only, not a creature in all the universe, not the most exalted creature omnipotence could create, could possess the necessary qualifications. Human he must be, to take man’s place and suffer in his stead, for the penalty, death, must be endured; and infinitely above human, to render that suffering sufficient and available.

Let it suffice to say, God’s own Son—the Father’s equal—himself truly God, took human nature, all holy, into union with his Deity, and paid that penalty on the cross,—thus magnifying the law and making it honorable, yea, adding a peculiar glory to it, in the eyes of the whole intelligent creation; thus “when we were without strength, and without hope,” in due time “Christ died for the ungodly.” “For God spared not

his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." When such a Being, and *only such*, could remove the difficulties in the way of our salvation, and he, for that purpose, thus condescended to undertake the work, what can stamp it as great, beyond all other works, if not this? It derives its character from the infinite greatness of God himself; his own omnipotence, wisdom, and mercy combined. This implies the greatness of the sacrifice made to effect the work; and we need not make that a distinct topic of remark.

Finally, I add but one thing more, as its crowning glory—its final results. Here are inseparately united the highest declarative glory of God, and the supreme and endless happiness of an innumerable multitude of intelligent beings.

There are two sources of this glory of God. The one is the transcendent honor placed on his Son. This was an object of intense desire on the part of that Son, while in the world, and sustained and animated him in the immediate view of his bloody and cruel death. Thus in his last recorded prayer with his disciples, in that trying hour, we hear him saying, "O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee, before the world was." Under the same solemn and awful circumstances we hear him again: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." The other source of Divine glory is the honor and blessedness bestowed

on those whom his Son redeemed by his death. God is glorified by every manifestation of his perfections through his saints.

It is the glory which the Saviour himself imparts to them, a glory which they reflect. Thus in the same prayer from which I just quoted, we read, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Of this glory of the saints in heaven, it is impossible in the present state to have more than the faintest conception. To be made one with the Father and the Son, what is it? Who can tell us what such perfection is? Who but those who are already glorified? Nor are there but two from our race who yet know, in their own persons, what it is, unless we include those who came out of their graves at the resurrection of the Saviour, and instead of returning to their graves ascended to heaven. For it is, or is to be, a state of perfection, both internal and external; of the body and of the soul. And only those who have been translated know what that is, and cannot know till in the resurrection they receive like glorified bodies.

What a change this must be! How different from the forms they wear here! Ah, how different from them as laid away in their graves! These are some of the final results of that deliverance, by our great and glorious Ransom, denoted by the language of the text.

These, however, are but individual cases, what each who shares in that deliverance shall be. Think, then, of the multitudes, the innumerable company, as they are gathered together, when the full results of this great work of redemption are made known; when all the ransomed, of all ages, and nations, and kindred, and tongues, are collected in those everlasting mansions prepared for them! Not till then can the final results of redeeming grace be fully known. Is there, then, anything known as yet, even in heaven, to compare with this greatest of all God's works? We know but little here, what the omnipotence and benevolence of God can and will effect. Everything we do know denotes a grandeur and a glory, which baffle any finite intellect to grasp or conceive. And yet, all that is made manifest to us are but intimations of what is to be. The greatness of the eternal plan, which in the Divine mind embraces all the infinite greatness of the Divine Ransom, on whom all rested as its foundation; the equal Spirit, equal in every Divine perfection, the agent in its accomplishment; the greatness of the new moral and spiritual change wrought on all the subjects of his special influences,—all, all that is here known of these, and I repeat, as now known in heaven, are but intimations of what is to be, when the work of redeeming grace is consummated; when heaven has received all its inhabitants, and the destiny of every intelligent creature is eternally and unchangeably fixed.

And now, let me ask, as a practical application of

this subject, what is the bearing of these truths and facts on ourselves, our present condition, and our prospects for eternity? Will any of you say that the deep interest which God has felt and manifested towards our race concerns you not? Of no concern to you, that the triune Jehovah entered into a covenant, with direct and special reference to man's redemption, his "deliverance from going down to the pit," his rescue from endless perdition? That none but God's only Son, and his equal, could effect this, and that he actually came to our world and laid the foundation for this, in his blood? No concern to you, that none but the Omnipotent Spirit can effect that change, and produce those qualifications, which fit the immortal soul for pure and endless happiness? Nothing, that all this has been effected at a sacrifice which only the infinite God could make? the expenditure of treasures which heaven alone could furnish? Is it then nothing to secure immortal bliss? to be an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, to the glories of his kingdom?

Ah! and is it nothing to avoid endless wretchedness? For this is the only alternative of failing to secure that. And let it be borne in mind, that this wretchedness will be in proportion to the bliss of heaven, and what it cost to provide that heaven. This is the very argument of the Apostle: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" This language implies more than merely the impossibility of escaping the miseries of the world of woe. It includes the idea

of an aggravation of misery, answerable to the greatness of the salvation procured and proffered. Nor are the opportunities of securing, yet slighting, this great salvation, without most serious consideration. Alas! then, what must be the doom of us, if we leave the world uninterested in it? What a giant in sin, what a monument of wrath is the sinner among us, the youngest child here, to become, in the future endless ages of eternity, who, amid all his opportunities of salvation, shall die in his sins!

If there is power in any motives which can be addressed to the human mind, we might well suppose that those would possess an irresistible force, which the present subject furnishes; motives which make their appeal to the strongest and most active principles of our nature,—our hopes and our fears; hopes and fears, not limited in their realization to our present brief existence, but which derive their chief, their highest importance, from the eternal future, nor our entrance on that future, far distant; motives derived from the unspeakable glories of an eternal heaven, and the unutterable miseries of an endless hell,—on the one or the other of which states we will soon enter, and *which*, depends on this short and uncertain life. If we know but little of the eternal future, we at least know enough of it, if we believe God's word, or regard only the monition of our own consciences, to fill a reflecting mind with awful solemnity and the deepest anxiety. That future is yet to be a present period

with us, and we are soon to enter on its opening scenes. Is it not wise to prepare for them? Is there any folly so great as neglecting that preparation? To-day the opportunity is afforded to make it. The text points us to a great Deliverer—an all-sufficient Ransom. That Deliverer, the omnipotent Son of God; the price of that ransom, his precious blood. He came and shed that blood to deliver us “from going down to the pit,” the dark, deep pit of endless despair and woe, on the very borders of which some here may be standing. And why remain longer in a condition of such imminent peril? A condition in which death has but to strike his blow, and all is lost—the soul lost forever! I have only to add, that another message has now been delivered to meet us in the last day.

X.

CHRIST, OUR PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING.

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”—Acts 5 : 31.

IN the great plan of human salvation, three things were absolutely necessary in order to its accomplishment, viz. : instruction, expiation, dominion. In other words, he who should undertake this great work must, in his own person, be a prophet, a priest, and a king.

The fall involved mankind in darkness and ignorance. However bright and capacious the intellect of the progenitors of our race, in their original state of holiness, their first act of disobedience obscured it; direct, Divine communications were interrupted and withheld, and as sins multiplied, the obscurity increased, till, on subjects, especially of the highest importance, of everlasting moment, utter darkness ensued. The first ray of light, the first beam of hope, as it came from a throne of mercy, was scarcely visible, even to the first offenders; and it required many subsequent revelations to render the first intimation of mercy hopefully intelligible, even to those few who most eagerly sought for more knowledge. The

great mass of mankind had sunk into the grossest ignorance. And even down to the advent of Christ, the Apostle Paul, with reference to the plan of salvation, styles it a "mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, had been hid, even the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations, but was now made manifest to the saints." And I need scarcely say, that, after all the light which has beamed from heaven on our world, ignorance, "through the blindness of their heart," still abounds, even throughout all Christendom. He, then, who should undertake the work of salvation, must be a Prophet; which, in its largest sense, means an instructor on all subjects connected with that work, as well as a predictor of future events. And Jesus Christ was such a prophet. But instruction was not all that was required. Ignorance was not man's depravity. They were not only blind, but dead in trespasses and sins. There must be ample satisfaction to God's violated law. In other words, there must be an atonement for sin, before sin could be pardoned, or any interest be made for one who had incurred the penalty of that law. But this was the office of a priest, and particularly of the high priest. Hence, the institution of the ancient priesthood, and the appointment by the Almighty himself, of a high priest, whose office it was to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and make intercession for the people. But all these things were mere figures. But the law, says Paul, with reference to that institution, "the law was

a mere shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect." They were mere types of One who should afterwards appear, and offer an infinitely more costly and efficacious sacrifice for sin, by pouring out his own blood. Need I say, that such a High Priest was the Lord Jesus Christ? "who needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice;" "for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." "He died once for all." Here, then, are two of the essential offices of a Mediator in the person of Jesus Christ.

But these, had these been all, could not have availed to the salvation of the sinner. An infinite flood of light might be poured into the mind; the blood of the God-man might be shed, and all in vain, had no more been done. Jesus Christ must have been invested with another office, must exercise other prerogatives. He must have power to subdue the heart and will of his enemies; to rule in and over them; to protect and finally bring to heaven those who were given him, as his reward; in a word, he must be a king, having everything under his entire control, necessary to the perfect accomplishment of the great object of his coming into the world,—the salvation of lost sinners. He purchased the gift of the Holy Spirit, and directs his saving operations to those who become the subjects of those operations. He commissions and sends forth every angel who ministers to

the saints. He rules supreme, as Mediator, over all the works of creation and providence. He is Head over all things to the Church. Thus the three offices, of Prophet, Priest, and King, all meet in his person; a union that never existed in any other, even in the fairest types of him.

These offices were essential to him, in the character of Mediator. These he commenced to discharge soon after the fall, on the first intimation of mercy, and were all exercised in the regeneration, sanctification, and salvation, of the first soul of our race that was received to heaven. He communicated to that soul all the necessary knowledge, and, by his Spirit, inspired the faith which looked beyond the types and ordinances, and especially, animal sacrifices, which existed in the family of the first man, and probably immediately after his fall, to the antitype, to the Messiah who was to come, promised in the obscure words, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." All the saving efficacy of those sacrifices was wholly derived from a prospective view of a Saviour to come; just as Abraham was justified by his faith. In like manner, they were kept by the power of Christ, as Mediator, through faith, unto salvation. But all this mediatorial administration of the Son of God, was enveloped in great darkness, till he actually made his appearance in human nature. Then commenced a new dispensation—

new, not because it did not exist, even from the beginning, but new, because it was then more clearly manifested. Nor did it shine forth in all its brightness and splendor, till after the Saviour ascended to heaven, and sent down the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And yet the Spirit had been in the world, from the sanctification of the first soul. The same remarks will apply to Christ in the character of a Prophet. He was always the author of all saving knowledge through inspired men. And even after his own personal instruction, the plan of salvation was very imperfectly understood, even by his chosen disciples. His death shook their faith, and after his resurrection they still cherished the belief that he was to be a temporal prince, and restore the kingdom to Israel from their subjection to the Romans. Nor did the Apostles fully understand the subject till "the day of Pentecost had fully come." As to his regal authority, his universal dominion, as Mediator, they had no conception, till they heard him say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This dominion was repeatedly ascribed to him by his inspired Apostles. Paul proclaimed him "Head over all things to the Church;" and that, in his mediatorial character, "He will reign, till he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet;" and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then cometh the end, the end of this world, when he will deliver up the kingdom, that is, this universal domi-

nion, "to God, even the Father," from whom, in his official superiority, he received it; "that God may be all in all."

Such is the character, the threefold character of him who came into our world to seek and save lost sinners. Divest him of either, and this object could never have been secured. Mankind would have remained in all their ignorance of the way of life, would have continued under all their crushing guilt, to sink at death to endless perdition. But we are in this discourse more particularly concerned with his office as a King. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and remission of sins." This passage presupposes the needed instruction and an all-sufficient atonement; that is, the discharge of his offices as a prophet and a priest. These, however, would have availed nothing, had he not been "exalted to be a prince;" in other words, had he not been invested with regal authority. And, let me add, all these offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, are discharged towards every one who becomes personally interested in the salvation which he has provided. Repentance, forgiveness, and eternal life! He has procured all these blessings, and they are his to dispense. He is the author of every truth essential to, or connected with, this salvation, and the sovereign conductor of its whole process, from its origin to its completion. True, the Spirit has his peculiar work to perform. But the Spirit, by the eternal covenant of

redemption, in all his official operations, is under the entire direction of the God-man, Jesus Christ. This he himself has told us, in the most explicit language, in one of his last interviews with his disciples before his death, and with direct reference to it. "It is expedient that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove (or convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He will guide you into all truth. He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and show it unto you." What he said to those disciples is equally true of all.

This subject is suggestive of many practical reflections. The first and most irresistible one is, the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have rightly considered him in his regal character, his office as King, as having universal dominion, then is he, as Paul declared, "over all, God blessed forever," to which he appends a solemn "Amen." Manifestly, he possesses a knowledge and a power which belong to God only. The Apostle made that declaration, with direct reference to him, in his state of incarnation. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." This argument, as a necessary

inference as well as explicit declaration of Scripture, is conclusive.

Secondly. If Christ is a King, then he has a kingdom, and a kingdom implies subjects.

This suggests two principal inquiries, to the consideration of which we shall devote the remainder of this discourse. The first inquiry respects the nature of Christ's kingdom. There are two senses in which he is a King in his own person. The one is that in which he has a universal dominion. This he has by covenant with the Father. In more definite terms, Christ, as Mediator, is invested with supreme authority over all things, in the entire universe, which bear any relation to his great Mediatorial work. He is supreme in the kingdom of Providence. Not an event occurs, in this relation, which is not by his direction—nothing, from the fall of man to the decisions and results of the final judgment. This was by covenant. The Father, as the covenant Head of the glorious Trinity, with respect to the work of redemption, committed all things into the hands of the Son, "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

It was to this Christ referred when he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This is the kingdom which he will deliver up to God, the Father, from whom he received it, when the object for which he received it shall have been accomplished. There will then be no occasion for his exercising this universal dominion or government. Every

subject of grace will have been confirmed in glory, and every enemy will have been subdued. There will be no more providences to direct. Every agent will have accomplished his work, and the Holy Spirit will have fulfilled his important mission, and the eternal destiny of the moral universe unchangeably settled. But there is another kingdom, which Christ has set up in our world, and of which he is the supreme and only Head or King. This kingdom is not of this world. Thus he said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered, but now is my kingdom not from hence." While this kingdom is, in all its principles and laws, a peculiar kingdom, its true subjects constitute a peculiar people. The Saviour himself said to his disciples, as the representatives of all the subjects of it in this world, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." They become subjects by birth, but it is a new birth; a being born of the Spirit. In a word, they are Christians. It is a peculiarity of this kingdom, that it has no territorial boundaries. But all are the acknowledged subjects of it who obey its laws and submit to the authority of its King, of whatever name and wherever they may live. There are, indeed, at present, two distinct branches of this one kingdom; or, from the peculiar relation which they bear to the Saviour, and to each other, called a family. "For this cause," said Paul, "I bow my knees unto

the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." One branch of it, therefore, is in heaven, composed of the holy angels, and "the spirits of just men (already) made perfect." They are one family, because God is their common Father; they resemble each other, and will one day be united by indissoluble bonds, and dwell together forever. Of this kingdom, Jesus Christ will be its King forever. He will never give up that kingdom, but forever occupy the throne. The saving effects of his threefold character, as Prophet, Priest, and King, will have been accomplished. No longer will they need his instructions to teach them the way to heaven; they will have reached that happy place, their everlasting home. No longer will they require the application of atoning blood, or intercession of their Great High Priest. Their sins will all have been washed away, and the Father will love them for their own sakes. Yet will their Great Prophet still and forever be unfolding to them new truths, and developing new mysteries of the infinite Godhead; truths and mysteries of which they here had no conception, nor power to grasp. This office of Prophet, in this respect, will never be laid aside.

While, too, as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, in purpose, and actually put to death on the Roman cross, Christ will forever be the glorious object of their adoring gratitude and love. Hence that new song, sung in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that

was slain, to receive power, and riches, and honor, and glory, and blessing." But the period will never come in eternity when he will not be the King of all the glorified. In all the revelations by himself to John in Patmos, and by inspired Apostles, he is always represented as on his throne. They will not then, as now, require the exercise of his regal authority and power, to defend them against their enemies. All their enemies will be forever shut up in a prison, whence there will be no escape. But he will forever be their glorious Head. Besides, dominion over his saints is a part, and a chief part, of his reward; and he can never yield the one without relinquishing the other. And this cannot be. No! it will be the highest joy of all heaven, that Jesus is on the throne, and will never leave it. The lustre of their own crowns will be borrowed from the glories of his.

From this most interesting subject, for none can possess a higher, what is a proper improvement of it on our part? We have given, though most imperfectly, a sketch, an outline only, of the whole character of Jesus Christ. For his threefold offices involve his two natures, divine and human, and all the glorious attributes of the one, and sinless ones of the other. All those offices imply privileges, obligations, and duties, peculiar to each. As a Prophet, to whom shall we go, in all our ignorance, for instruction on subjects of infinite moment, but to him? To him who is, emphatically, in his own language, "The way, the truth,

and the life." Who else has taught what we must believe and do, to obtain eternal life? Those instructions are all contained in the volume of God's word. How should we prize it, and study it, and make it the man of our counsel!

As a Priest, to whom look, to be relieved from the overwhelming, crushing burden of conscious guilt, and the tremendous curses of God's broken law? He has made the all-sufficient atonement. He has himself assumed it all. The sacrifice was himself, in the person of the God-man. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Even "where sin hath abounded, grace," through him, "doth much more abound." What blessings, this side of heaven, where no sin can enter, so great as a sense of sin forgiven! And how we all need and shall need, short of that world, the daily, and hourly, and constant application of that atoning, cleansing blood!

What an unspeakable privilege that we have such an Almighty King, if we are indeed the subjects of that kingdom, which he set up at the amazing expense of his blood! Dominion was given him, that he might conquer and subdue every enemy of his beloved people as well as his own, and conduct them safely and certainly to the world of bliss and glory. Daily they encounter foes, before whom they would fall, but for the interposition of his invisible, but omnipotent arm. They are beset by temptations by which they would certainly be overcome, but for his omnipotent grace. It is only because he is the King of Zion, that "the

gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church;" or that one soul ever reached or ever will reach the kingdom of heaven.

But it was not merely to bruise the Serpent's head, the great enemy of man, or simply to hold the Christian in his way to heaven, that Christ exercises his regal authority; that the Father gave him "all power in heaven and in earth, and made him Head over all things to the Church." There are other exigencies into which Christians are often thrown, which require its interposition.

There are trials, perplexities, and difficulties, which are the usual lot of Christians, which demand the aid of an Almighty Being to comfort or sustain under them. It is the regal prerogative of the Saviour to afford these, and all needed good. It is because he "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," that we may look to him in every time of need, and if with a proper sense of our dependence and necessities, may look with confidence. In his relations to us as a King, and ours to him as subjects of his kingdom, then, how careful and constant should be our observance of his laws; obedience to which alone can prove our right to his protection and blessings.

But if the Saviour must possess and exercise the prerogatives of an Almighty King, to carry his own subjects forward to heaven, how, without the exercise of a power to create and govern a world, are sinners to be brought into his kingdom on earth? An Almighty

arm alone can wield that "sword which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." He only who has the hearts of all men in his hand, can conquer those hearts. But this he will not do, till the sinner throws down the weapons of his rebellion and submits. Till this is done, all the power in the universe cannot save him. Here is the only hope of salvation to any sinner in this assembly. "Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Cordial submission, or that awful doom, is the only alternative. Amen.

XI.

CHRIST, AS MEDIATOR,

GOVERNS THE WORLD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
CHURCH.

“And gave him to be the head over all things to the Church.”

EPHESIANS 1 : 22.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the Personage here referred to, under the figurative expressions of “Head over all things,” was the Lord Jesus Christ, and to him in his Mediatorial character. The language implies the existence of a kingdom of which he is the supreme and sole Monarch. That such a kingdom has been established, our Saviour himself declared in his examination by Pilate, and in reply to the questions which he put to him: “What hast thou done?” “Art thou a King?” “Thou sayest that I am a King.” But, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.” The Mediatorial kingdom is a kingdom of a peculiar character. Peculiar in its principles, its government, its laws, its subjects, and in its final and eternal results. It has

no territorial limits, but it is coextensive with the earth itself. Nor is it confined to the earth, either as it respects its subjects or its agents, in carrying forward its operations. There is a branch of it in heaven, although in a widely different condition from that which is on earth. All the glorified of our race are still the subjects of it, and will continue the subjects of it, until all the redeemed of earth shall be gathered to them, until "the end shall come, when Christ, its sovereign, shall have delivered up this kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all." What change in the condition of the glorified will then take place, we are but imperfectly informed. The expressions, "Then shall God be all in all," evidently denote a degree of exaltation and glory, from the fuller and clearer manifestations which God will make of himself, than had been previously enjoyed. Holy angels, too, belong to this kingdom, as agents or ministers of Christ, in carrying into effect his purposes of grace on earth. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Fallen spirits, too, if not appointed, are permitted agents to do his will. But we are now concerned with that branch only which is on earth, and in regard to that, not as to its nature and moral character, but as it respects two propositions which lie on the very face of my text.

I. That Jesus Christ, as Mediator, governs the world ;
and,

II. That he governs it with special reference to the Church.

I. Jesus Christ, as Mediator, governs the world. And by the world we mean, those parts of the entire universe which have any connection with, or bearing upon, the Church. But we shall in this discourse restrict our remarks to what, in the limited and common acceptation of the word, we call the world,—this earth, in its entire management, embracing the government of all its inhabitants, and directing all the events of Providence. This is that peculiar kingdom, which Christ received of the Father, in consequence of his acceptance of the office of Mediator. But on this proposition I need not dwell very long. There is no reason why he should not have such a kingdom, while there are many reasons why he should, independently of what Divine revelation has taught us.

All the arguments which prove his Deity, prove also his infinite qualifications to govern and manage such a kingdom, and even the whole universe itself. Why then should he not have the entire control and management of everything in the universe, and especially in this lower world, which has any connection with the great object for which he came into this world, and to secure that object laid down his life? Do not the amazing sacrifices to which he most voluntarily submitted, entitle him to such official exaltation? We might therefore reasonably expect to find many very clear intimations of this in the Scriptures,

both in the Old and the New Testaments. And we do find them there. The redeemed of our race are repeatedly called his people, as constituting a distinct kingdom, and under his entire control. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "Behold," saith Jehovah, of the same glorious Personage, "I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." And, speaking of the future calling of the Gentiles, he says, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee."

In the twenty-second Psalm, which expressly describes the sufferings, and death, and subsequent exaltation and reign of the Messiah, we read, "He is the Governor among the nations." So, also, in Micah, speaking of the birth of the Saviour, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that shall be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." And Isaiah, without any qualification, penned the following remarkable prophecy: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father (or Father of Eternity), the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government, there shall be no end." No limit as to its duration, or his authority in its administration; for both ideas are contained in

the expression, "Upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even forever." Accordingly, we often find him governing nations, and directing the events of Providence as the supreme ruler. An attentive reader of the Old Testament must be too familiar with many striking instances of both, to require them to be particularly recited, and especially, as the same fact of the Saviour's Mediatorial universal government and authority is most explicitly declared in the New Testament. Thus Christ, after his resurrection, proclaimed to his Apostles, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This does not mean, that he then first received that power, contrary to what has just been proved from the Old Testament; nor that he had not, from the very fall of man, exercised supreme dominion and authority over this world; but only a public and more express announcement of it at the completion of his sacerdotal work, or the consummation of his priesthood; and as a part of his exaltation in his human nature, in his Mediatorial capacity, for his sufferings. St. Paul evidently gives this construction in his Epistles to the Philippians, where he thus writes: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the

cross. Wherefore, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Surely, no dominion can be expressed in terms more unlimited. But the text and context contain terms not less so. Speaking of Christ's resurrection and subsequent exaltation, the Apostle writes, "And set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church." Hence, we find that when he shall have accomplished all the objects of his Mediatorship, he will give up his kingdom to God the Father, from whom, as Mediator, he received it. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son, also, himself *i. e.*, Christ, (in his mediatorial character), be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." What bounds, then, can be set to the

dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, not as it respects his Deity, but his Deity united to his humanity? In other words, in the character of Mediator? This is but a summary of the proof of his universal dominion. But it is sufficient to establish the truth of our first proposition,—that Jesus Christ, as Mediator, governs the world.

II. Our second proposition was, that he governs the world with special reference to the Church. The proof of this, both express and implied, are numerous. If you look at the proof of his universal dominion, his government over the world, which have already been adduced, you will in every instance find that they are connected with his Mediatorship; in other words, he rules and governs the world with special reference to the kingdom which he came into our world to establish. The salvation of Noah and his family, in the universal destruction of the world, universal with that single exception, was with no other view. That family then embodied the Church, although no express covenant was made with it, or with any of our race, till the age of Abraham, and the hundredth year of his age. Yet it had its germ in Noah, and he and his family were saved for no other reason. For although he was a righteous man, God might have translated him, as he did translate Enoch, and then have exterminated the whole race. But they were preserved, because they were virtually the Church!

With the same view, the inhabitants of the plains

were destroyed ; for although Lot was not the Church, in the sense that Abraham was, yet he was an important branch of it. But come down to a later period, and trace the whole history of the Hebrews, after they constituted a distinct people, and indeed all the movements of Divine Providence which led to their establishment as a distinct nation, and at every step we are furnished with the most convincing proofs of a supreme regard to that people, simply as God's chosen, covenant people. They had no claims, in themselves considered, even to protection, over any other nation of the earth. But they were the covenant people of God. They constituted, in their successive generations, the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and every providence marked his regard for them. He governed the other nations with direct reference to them. They were often, to all human appearance, on the very eve of destruction. But in every such instance, though often severely and deservedly chastised and punished, yet they were delivered and saved from destruction.

If need be, God miraculously interposed ; and their very punishment was their salvation. Enemies were arrayed against them. Powerful nations, influenced by the most inveterate hatred towards them, and apparently possessing ample means to crush and utterly exterminate, were raised up against them. But when they had gone the length which the great Head of the Church, in his sovereign wisdom, saw fit, for the best good of his people, to teach them their de-

pendence, to bring them to repentance, and to recover them from their defection from him, and reinstate them in their obedience to him, those nations were all punished, and finally, utterly destroyed. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve him, shall perish," has always been an established principle of the Messiah and great Mediator's government over our world. Their existence or continuance on earth a single generation, with all their movements, their motives, and course of policy, is with direct reference to his own redeemed people or Church. The Saviour himself has pronounced the piety found in her, the only preserving element of this fallen world. "Ye are the salt of the earth." These affirmations are all most abundantly sustained and confirmed by the history of the Church since its existence. There is not an exception in the existence or downfall of any nation. And we confidently refer you to their history, as written by the pen of inspiration, for the truth of this assertion. Look at it, in the few points of it in the time of the Pharaohs; the generations of the Canaanites; the monarchs of Babylon; the reign of the Persian kings, and Grecian and Roman emperors. The hand of Providence is distinctly seen in all their operations and movements, in the closest connection with the condition of God's people. They were often severely scourged by them; but that was intended for and issued in their reformation, and saved them from utter extermination. But they were often protected

from one quarter against threatened and apparently inevitable destruction from another quarter, and sometimes most unexpectedly. And when, at length, that ancient covenant people of God were finally abandoned, the Church did not cease. On the contrary, her bounds were greatly extended. The Jews were not rejected until the Gentiles were called to take their place in the Church. With this great leading principle of the Divine government over the world in view, this uniform course of Providence with special regard to the Church kept constantly before us, which marked the history of the Church, as well as of nations with reference to the Church under her former dispensation, we shall perceive the same undiverted attention of her great Head, under the new or Gospel dispensation. Behold the proud, and powerful, and mighty Cæsar, reducing, well-nigh, the whole inhabited earth to one mighty empire; and for what other purpose, as the great leading one, but to extend also the empire of the Redeemer; to prepare the way for an equally extended propagation of his Gospel! True, this was not the intention of those who governed that extensive empire. For some three hundred years they were the bitter enemies of their Christian subjects, and for many ages before, of God's only covenant people. They did what they could to crush the Church. But they struck not a blow which did not result in her best good. In reading the history of her bloody persecutions, we have often trembled for her safety and even preservation. But our fears have been

groundless. Our sympathy might well be awakened; but not less our admiration at the wisdom, and power, and goodness of her ever-watchful sovereign Head, and from the whole view feel our confidence in him strengthened, as we reviewed every step and event of her history. Sometimes, when the Church was not safe in one place, she fled to another, carrying the Gospel with her, extending its knowledge and multiplying its converts and friends. Just as on the persecution of Stephen, the disciples went everywhere, spreading the word of God, extending the Redeemer's kingdom. Who has not felt his heart deeply and painfully affected, as he read the account of that first Christian's martyrdom. Yet, under the controlling and directing government of Jesus Christ, a more propitious or favorable event to his cause, did not occur in the Apostolic age.

And when, in after-times, a far worse foe than a merely political or civil one was suffered to arise, a foe than whom a more bitter and vigilant never arose, and that too under the garb of the religion of the mild Prince of Peace, and his Church was literally driven into the wilderness, seeking an asylum among the roving beasts of the forest, in its dens and caverns, the Church was never safer, and the confidence of Christians never stronger. And to that apparently untoward and truly distressing event, or rather chain of events, with other favoring providences which grew out of them, are we, this day, indebted for the Gospel

in all its pristine purity of doctrine, and simplicity of its ordinances, and their truly edifying administration. Corruption, from its very deepness, has often led to purity, and the bitterest persecution of Christians to the enlargement of the Church. And is not the untiringly watchful eye, and constantly outstretched arm of her wise and sovereign Head seen in all this?

Come down to a late period; and within almost the history of our own times, and certainly within the history and even knowledge of the existence of this continent of our earth, we shall see the same wise and directing providence over the Church's glorious and ever-watchful Head. When from the populousness of other countries, and the multiplied, wide-spread enemies of the Cross, no safe retreat to Christians could be found in those countries, and they were driven to the very verge of extermination, another vast portion of the earth was discovered far in the West. The existence of this continent was seasonably made known. Had there not been another continent, either Christ had restrained the wrath of her enemies, or created another dwelling-place for her. But it was a seasonable discovery, while all that led to it was marked by signal providences. It was at the very juncture too when Christians, when the Pilgrim Fathers, must either flee or suffer.

And what have been the results to the cause of pure Christianity, or to the Church, of that discovery and immigration to the shores of this then wilderness?

What progress has that cause made? What multitudes of souls have been redeemed and saved? Scarcely were the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, their march through the wilderness, and entrance into Canaan, marked by more signal providences than those which attended the Puritan Fathers in their introduction into this land. Nor is it possible for a reflecting being to mistake the great leading design of those providences. The design of extending the Redeemer's kingdom is written on every page of the book of Providence, not merely as it regards the Church, in its distinct covenant capacity, or as a separate body, in sustaining that branch of it in the midst of physical dangers and perils, and comforting them under the deep gloom which shrouded their prospects; but as it regards the restraints which were imposed on their persecutors. Jesus Christ showed himself no less the King of kings, than the King of saints; that he was a Governor among the nations, as well as the Protector of his saints. Or, in the language of the text, "Head over all things to the Church." A declaration by the way which has not merely suggested, but which demonstrably proves the truth of both the propositions which we have advanced.

But there is one distinct argument which ought not to be passed without separate notice, though it must be briefly stated, as not only showing the importance of the Church, but the supreme regard which God entertains for it. That God is influenced supremely in

all that he does, by the motive of his own glory, is demanded by every just and honorable view of his nature and character. He has expressly asserted this in his word, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever." Again, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." No motive, worthy of him, could have influenced him in all his works and ways, short of a desire and purpose to manifest himself to his intelligent creatures. There is no conceivable source of true happiness short of a perception of the glorious attributes and character of God. It is this in its fullest extent that constitutes heaven itself. But how has he chosen to do this? To make this manifestation of himself? By what means? An inspired Apostle has distinctly told us,—“To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Creation teaches much of God. Providence adds and is daily adding to that instruction. But it is in the vast work of redemption that he has brought his whole character to view; that he has made known his manifold wisdom: not the single attribute called wisdom; but all his attributes: “manifold,” or multi-form; in every way of making himself known; and not to mankind only, but to his whole intelligent

universe; to principalities and powers; the highest order of his rational creatures. All this he has chosen to do by the Church. What, then, in this connection, especially, is worthy of God, if not the Church? What, if not her interests, shall command his constant and highest regard? He created the world for the Church; to display his perfections by the Church. For the same reason he continues the world in existence. For that, nations are raised up and governed; and all this is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator. The entire government of the world, for the sake of the Church, is given to him. This is his Mediatorial kingdom. This is the kingdom which he will deliver up when he has put all enemies under his feet, and all the redeemed of our earth are glorified in heaven.

And who so worthy to rule the nations and govern the world? to reign King of kings and Lord of lords? who, as the glorious King of the saints—Head of the Church?

The two propositions which have now received your attention, and which, I think, have been fully established—indeed they are expressly asserted in the text, have prepared the way for several important reflections.

1. The first and most obvious is, the infinite exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator. But on this topic I need not dwell. Supremacy necessarily implies infinite exaltation. He who is Head over all things, must be exalted beyond all possible finite con-

ception. We must strip the Son of God of his supremacy, or yield to him infinite exaltation. True, it is his Deity which gives him this standing. For he could not be supreme without being Divine. But as Mediator, Deity and humanity are united in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let him then be first and highest in all our views and affections. But this reflection from our subject, which stands forth so obviously and prominently, naturally suggests our next.

2. The elevation and dignity of human nature. Not, indeed, what it is in its fallen state. The fall stripped man of all true dignity, and sunk him to the lowest depth of degradation and shame. God's great standard of dignity is holiness. Give a worm this, and it rises to the standing of an angel. Divest the highest archangel of holiness, and he sinks below the standing of a worm. But holiness is not all that elevates and gives dignity to human nature. The relation which it bears to Deity himself, by its intimate connection and union with the eternal Son of God, exalts sanctified human nature above every other created being. If "Jesus was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death for man," his taking upon him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, has given to man a standing far above that of angels. It was this connection of the Divine with the human nature which, while it qualified the Saviour to make an atonement for sin, gave to that atonement an infinite value. The one, therefore, was as necessary as the

other. True, it adds no inherent excellence to man. But it inconceivably exalts his relative importance.

“Nor doth it yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Jesus Christ will always retain his human nature. And how will men and angels gaze upon it with admiration and delight! True, the glories of the Godhead will shine through it, which will eternally point his body out, to all the inhabitants of heaven, as the most glorious object which heaven contains. Yet his body is the model after which that of every saint will be fashioned. At the resurrection they that “sleep in him shall come forth in bodies fashioned according to his glorious body.” This and the preceding reflection have been suggested simply by the Mediatorial character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and man’s relation to him as his redeemed subject. And although they may be regarded as incidental only, we could not omit them with propriety. Yet the latter naturally suggests our next reflection, growing directly out of what Christ does, in his government over the world, with direct and constant reference to the Church. For he is “Head over all things to the Church.” Hence,

3. In the past administration of Christ’s Mediatorial government over the world, we have a full guarantee, an unfailing pledge of its future similar character. He will continue to do what he has always been doing in behalf of his Church. He has

protected her from the first moment of her existence. She has, indeed, at different periods of her existence, been brought low; been reduced to a single family. But that family was as safe as though it had been already translated to heaven. The waters of the flood might desolate all things else, but that little Church, the flood itself could not drown. In many after-periods, we have seen her on the very verge of utter ruin. But she was sustained, and she still lives. She has often been suffered to be oppressed; been carried away captive; been chased by bloody persecutors into the wilderness for safety; been deprived of her privileges—alas! often scourged and chastised by the direct hand of her own glorious and Almighty Sovereign. For she had proved herself rebellious, and the rod was her salvation. But though brought low, she has been raised up. Powerful kingdoms have directed all their forces against her. And at the moment when the threatened, well-aimed, exterminating blow was just ready to fall, her King sent the angel of death among her enemies, and she escaped. The gates of hell never have prevailed, and never will prevail, over the Church. When miracles were needed, miracles were wrought. God has blown upon the counsels of her enemies, and baffled all their attempts to exterminate her. Under all the oppressions of Egyptian tyranny and cruelty, there was a little spot over which her vigilant and Almighty King swayed his protecting sceptre. Goshen was under his guardian

care, and there his people dwelt; while he sent plagues and death to their oppressors. But we have already sufficiently reviewed the history of the Church, for our present purpose. We now refer to it as the pledge and proof of what shall be, and that most fully sustained by numberless promises and assurances of prophecy. But the former shows us the manner in which Jesus Christ governs the world in behalf of his Church. In the latter we have chiefly the naked assurance of her protection and final triumph. From the past course of Providence towards nations, we may know what will be its future course. Every nation, no matter how powerful, that opposes the Church, will be brought to desolation and ruin.

Indeed, I think we may safely advance a step farther. The time is rapidly approaching, if it have not arrived, when the only security of a nation, in the enjoyment of its civil privileges, will depend on aiding and promoting, and not merely protecting, the interests of Christ's kingdom. The first step or movement may be seen, and probably will be seen, in the free toleration of religion. And this hitherto has been all that her friends have even asked. She has never failed to advance when let alone. But this toleration, except under the form of an essentially erroneous and false form of religion, has been denied to it in most of the kingdoms and nations that have hitherto existed.

An established religion is *prima facie* evidence, that religion, in its purity of doctrine and simplicity of

form, is not enjoyed. Even religion in its greatest purity has never failed to become corrupted when incorporated or at all connected with the civil constitution of a government. By aiding and promoting it, therefore, we do not mean any such connection. But in addition to its free and untrammelled exercise and enjoyment, a government should foster and promote all the handmaids of religion. It should require such an observance of the Sabbath, as to prevent secular employments. It should sustain and cherish institutions of learning, and especially such as are designed for the instruction of the young and rising generation. These are not, strictly, religious institutions, yet they are important auxiliaries of religion. Christianity is eminently favorable to knowledge—knowledge in its widest extent and range. There is no delusion so deep, no blindness so imperious, as that in which most of the political powers of the earth have been involved, which would lay restraints on the religious freedom of their subjects, and keep the masses of the people in ignorance, and especially, in ignorance of the Sacred Scriptures. Nor should it be matter of surprise with those who study them, and know the inspired history of the past, and their promises for the future, that most important changes in those respects are soon to occur among those nations. Revolutions will take place among them, if nothing short of them will produce the all-desirable effect. The multitude will have the word of God. Christianity will be tolerated. Its

friends shall worship God unmolestedly, nor be dependent on a civil magistrate's license or permit to assemble, in any numbers, who may please to engage in that holy employment. Woe to the civil power that shall prevent or forbid it! The only wonder is, God's sufferance so long of such interference with his supreme authority.

This first step we have seen already taken, and taken first by a nation from whom it was least expected. Even the Sultan himself has given free toleration to all within his dominions. He has done it without a revolution. A happy release to his empire, at least of happy promise, and thrice happy to his Christian subjects, who have for years been groaning under a worse despotism than the tyranny of a mere civil authority. France, too, we trust, has taken that first step towards the exercise and enjoyment of true freedom and liberty. The Christian world will hail that, and every other revolution that occurs in similar governments, as a triumph to her cause—as a yielding of the powers of darkness to the authority of the Church's only acknowledged Head and Sovereign. The revolutionists themselves may not and do not mean this. But Christ means it. They are not impelled or influenced by any motives of a religious nature. And so far as religious considerations are concerned in their movements, they are entitled to no credit. The leaders, in that regard, are probably infidels. But He who governs the world has his eye on

the Church, and her best interests at his heart. And he can and will make the policy, whatever motives may dictate it, subserve those interests. Nor will the state of the world rest long here. Revolution will succeed revolution, until a moral renovation is witnessed, and the interests of the Church shall absorb all other interests. If, to prepare the way for this, bloody revolutions must occur, then probably opposing nations, or nations that oppose this mighty work, will be brought into conflict with each other. And are there not striking indications of that at the present time? Hence,

4. It is not difficult to predict the final destiny of any nation from the past history of the world. And it may be easily read from the bearing of its policy and course on the interests of the Church. The Great Head of the Church has never for a moment ceased to make her the object of his care and supreme regard. For her sake and her sake alone, all power in heaven and in earth was given to him. Every angel has been under his sole control, as a Mediatorial King. All the elements of nature are at his entire disposal. All the events of Providence are by his direction. By him kings reign. Every kingdom and nation that have existed, has risen, been prospered or depressed, continued or destroyed, at his nod. In a word, everything, in all the universe, that has any bearing on the Church.

This is the universal kingdom, which he received, and

which he governs, as Mediator, and which he will not deliver up, until he has wholly sanctified and admitted the last heir of grace to the kingdom of glory, and put down all rule, and all authority and power, and subdued every enemy under his feet, the last of whom is Death, and which can only be after the universal resurrection and final judgment;—and this kingdom he received and governs for the Church, “Head over all things to the Church.” And now, review the history of his administration over the world, and, as the present point is concerned, more particularly, the history of the nations which have existed. Many powerful ones have arisen; many have continued some centuries, not, however, without experiencing great revolutions; and hitherto they have all passed away. Those now in existence, at least most of them, have experienced, and are experiencing, like revolutions, and some of them frequent revolutions; indeed, the whole world appears to be on the very eve of a universal revolution. The truth is, the kingdoms of this world are all to become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. Kings are to be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers to the Church. But what nation on earth is now prepared for this? What nation but must undergo a vast change, before it can become a province, or portion, of the kingdom of the Prince of Peace? Not one can be admitted whose government is not founded on, and whose administration is not wholly regulated by, Christian principles; which does not in

all its operations foster and further the pure religion of the Gospel. Our own is vastly the most conformed to Scriptural requirements of any now in existence; but I need not say how far it is from conformity to them. We must undergo a great revolution.

But the free access to, and the extensive circulation of the pure Word of God, the numerous churches of Christ, the general ability, orthodoxy, and fidelity of the Christian ministry, the increasing liberality of Christians in the support of religious institutions and benevolent enterprises and objects, and the wide diffusion of knowledge throughout our country, we think happily promise, that the necessary revolution will be a bloodless one; that the grace of God, and not his judgments, will effect it. We trust that such is Heaven's decree.

But what is the prospect, what must be the destiny, of those nations where none of these exist; where the Word of God is interdicted; where there are few or no heralds of the Gospel; few Christians, and even they forbidden to assemble for worship, or subjected to most unrighteous restraints; and where favoring institutions are wholly or extensively neglected; where a human and selfish policy, irrespective, and even in the denial, of Christian obligation and the authority of the glorious Author of Christianity, dictates all their measures, and the ambition of individual and national aggrandizement is the supreme, impelling motive? What must be the result? Just what it has been in all past ages. They will continue, but in some way—it may

be beyond our sagacity to see how,—their existence shall serve the Church ; and then they will be blotted out, at least in their present form ; they will be radically revolutionized, assume another form, and one under more favorable auspices to the Church. No human wisdom or policy, no physical force, no armies and navies which exist, though multiplied a thousand fold, can prevent this. “The meek shall inherit the earth,” and “that nation and kingdom that will not serve God, shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted ;”—“the mouth of the Most High, who ruleth over all, hath spoken it.” Hence,

5. The solemn responsibility of the Church. On her prayers and efforts depends the conversion of the world. But this responsibility is connected with circumstances of the most encouraging character. Never more so than at the present time. We have believed, and we still believe, that severe trials are before the Church ; but we would be neither an enthusiast on the one hand, nor an alarmist on the other, nor is there cause of either. But we would arouse the Church from the sleep into which she has but too deeply fallen ; we would urge every Christian to firmness and to fidelity.

It has always been known, but alas ! not always realized and felt, that Zion’s interests were safe ; that her cause lies near her Monarch’s heart ; that his own right hand and outstretched arm have safely conducted his Church through every trial ; and though often depressed, yet never forsaken ; often punished, but only

to reform and purify her. Powerful empires have been blotted out, but she has lived, and lives still in multiplied numbers, and daily increasing strength. And vastly brighter days are before her, and the sun of her prosperity is above the horizon. We say not that an unclouded day is before her. But some of the clouds are dispersing, perhaps to be collected again for a bursting storm. But we leave that to him who rides upon the storm, and holds the whirlwind in his fist. But there are often circumstances, there are often events, which give to the strongest assurances new force; encouraging providences, which add new vigor and animation to faith. Such are occurring now. And they are well calculated to inspire the hearts of Christians with the warmest gratitude to their faithful Head, and urge them on to new and redoubled efforts in his service.

But it ought not to be passed unnoticed, that even though there may be days of conflict and trial to the Church and to the world, there will be none of darkness. The world itself has reached a point of improvement and advancement, that light and knowledge and civilization must still increase, and rapidly increase. Even barbarous nations are brought almost in contact with the most enlightened. Nothing in human conception can prevent or retard its progress. Nor does the certain and rapid enlightenment of the darkest regions of the earth furnish the only or the most encouraging and animating signs or circumstances of

these times. Nations, some at least which have long ranked among the most enlightened and highly cultivated, but despotic in their government, and consequently, unfavorable and even opposed to the spread of the pure Gospel, are beginning to throw off the chains which have bound them, and assert the rights with which the God of nations has vested them. This freedom is a blessing too rich, an enjoyment too sweet, to be relinquished without the severest struggle, but which, we trust, will not come. It is far more likely to extend than to be arrested. And civil and religious liberty are intimately connected. Let the Gospel have free course, and it will be glorified. While it is the means of the sinner's salvation, it is the appointed instrument of the world's regeneration. And may God speed it through the earth!

Once more. We all have a deep personal interest in this subject. It is not nations only, but individuals also, on whom the eye of the Great Head of the Church is fixed. He has coupled the impenitent of both in the same breath of the most fearful denunciation. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." True piety is the only safety of an individual, as well as of the world. Holiness is the only object which possesses true value, and is of any consequence or account, under the Government of Jesus Christ. To procure this for our

fallen world, he came from heaven and died. For its sake, which is found alone in his true invisible Church, he governs the world. How solemn and pressing, then, the question which every professed member of that body should put to himself, of his personal character and standing in the sight of God. As that is, so is God's estimate of our consequence in his universe. If we have the evidence of being his children, then come what may, we are the objects of a favor, a care, which will never be withdrawn. They insure safety here and eternal salvation hereafter. The heathen may rage, and kingdoms be moved, revolutions may multiply and extend over the earth, and cover it with the blood of the slain, but the Church shall live and prosper, and gain a final and everlasting triumph over it all.

He, who for her built this earth, and governs it, and all things else in heaven and hell, and in the wide universe, that bear upon her best interests, will take care of every real child of his. And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" O how momentous the question! Do we, in truth, brethren, sustain this high and holy relationship? Profession alone does not constitute it. The external demeanor, the mere round of duties, does not form it. Regenerating grace alone is its only foundation, the only security. But is this the foundation, the security of us all? Or have we been spared thus long simply because, in some way unknown to us, God could employ us to promote his cause, while

yet at heart we may be its enemies. The incorrigibly, the finally wicked are spared for no other reason. But may Sovereign Grace forbid that such should be the destiny and the doom of any among us! May none of us be of that wretched number, to whom the great and kind Head of the Church, when arrayed in the terrors of a Judge, shall say, "Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me!" The certainty of the contrary to all the now impenitent, must be found in seasonable repentance! And to be seasonable, with some, perhaps, here present, must be speedy. What we do must be done quickly.

XII.

THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF MYSTERIOUS PROVIDENCES.

“Clouds and darkness are round about him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”—PSALM 97 : 2.

How little do we comprehend of the designs and operations of the Infinite Jehovah ! In some striking instances we see and recognize his hand, and are filled with fearful surprise or adoring admiration. Yet his hand is equally concerned in all things. Not less so in the daily events which awaken no special attention, than in the overwhelming judgments and calamities which sometimes fall on men. The truth is, God is a sovereign, and his sovereignty consists in doing all things after the counsel of his own will. In other words, agreeably to the combined or concurring dictates of his infinite perfections, without assigning the reasons of his conduct. “For God giveth not account of any of his matters.” “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his councillor ?”

We may readily conceive two reasons for such concealment. The one is, that in our present state of im-

perfection we should not be able to comprehend, in but few instances at most, the reasons which influence and direct the mind of God, or the ends which he has in view ; which, instead of affording relief and satisfaction, would involve us in deeper obscurity and embarrassment. More light without a proportional capacity would serve only to dazzle and confound. The other reason is, to afford a trial and test of our faith. This is the most important practical principle in the Christian scheme. It lies at the very foundation of personal, experimental religion. Faith receives no special commendation where the reasons for its exercise are so strong and obvious that they cannot be resisted. "Because thou hast seen me," said our Lord to Thomas, "thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." There is not only wisdom, but goodness in the very fact that God has not disclosed to us the reasons of his conduct in those dispensations which are so dark and mysterious. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," should not only cause us cheerfully to submit, but entirely satisfy us. Where vision fails, it is the province of faith to operate. Where our reason or judgment is inadequate to the discoveries which we desire, it is our privilege as well as duty confidingly to trust in God. We should submissively and cheerfully wait for eternity to afford the light which disperses all the clouds and darkness in which God's dealings are enveloped. What is now so

much the occasion of grief, may yet become, and to every redeemed spirit will become, an occasion of adoring admiration and praise. This may not and should not silence all grief. But it certainly should prevent all excess under the most trying dispensations of Divine Providence. We can here know, comparatively, but little. It should satisfy us that he who governs and controls all things, knows, and that the final result will display his wisdom and goodness.

This, however, is not a reason why we should be indifferent about the designs of Jehovah. It is our duty and our privilege to know all we can of them. By careful examination and research, many things which at first view appear enveloped in thick clouds and darkness, would be rendered clear and obvious.

It will be a natural train of thought on this subject,

I. To state some of the reasons why many of the dispensations of Providence are so dark and perplexing to us.

II. State some of the practical lessons which the subject suggests.

I. We often fix in our own minds what would be most for the glory of God, and best, and when we see God pursuing a course which is not in accordance with our views, his ways appear exceedingly dark and mysterious. This, to those who are not Christians, or whose faith is not strong and unwavering, becomes an occasion of repining, if not of actual murmuring, instead of silent and uncomplaining submission.

But even this should not prevent inquiry into the designs of Infinite Wisdom. Inquiry when properly conducted may lead to a development, which will result in more than bare submission. It may lead to a perception and an adoring admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God, in those very dispensations which otherwise would remain in perfect mystery.

There are things into which we should not pry, and concerning which God has forbidden to attempt to lift the veil; "secret things, which belong to the Lord." But in all his providential dealings, in all his conduct, by which he displays the principles of his government, as well as his revealed truths, it is our duty and privilege to study his designs and purposes; to fathom them, as far as we can, that we may see and approve, and not merely submit. The cases by which these views are illustrated are numerous, various, and of daily occurrence. Let me point to a few of this character. How often do we see the most pious and useful removed out of this world, in the midst of all their usefulness; by which many a plan of benevolence matured, or just commenced to be successfully prosecuted, is forever crushed! How dark and mysterious is such a providence! It affects not an individual, or a few only, but sometimes a whole community, it may be a world. How often we see the infant snatched from the embraces of fond parents; or the promising child, it may be an only child; or the still more advanced youth, just entering on manhood; a son, a daughter, removed,

and often under the most aggravating circumstances ! O, how dark, how mysterious are such providences ! In such cases, what more can we say than to exclaim, in the language of the text, "Clouds and darkness are round about thee." And the only consolation is, that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of God's throne." In these instances, perhaps, no inquiry, no research can discover the designs of the Almighty. Then, indeed, our duty is to be still, and know that he is God. Yet even here, we may bring some considerations to our aid. They may be conjectures only, while the object is to discover his wisdom and benevolence. That pious and useful individual may have been removed, not merely for his own sake, much less to whelm a family, a church, or a community in grief, but to draw others forth to greater activity, by which a still greater amount of good may be effected, or to teach the important lesson, that God can accomplish his purposes without the instrumentality on which we might be making so much dependent ; that where one agent is laid aside, he can call forth others. And what design more wise, or lesson more important, than that we should place no dependence on an arm of flesh, but on God only ! That infant, too, or child, just entering on a state of peculiar attractions and peculiar promise, was taken away, because God saw that it did, or it would, supplant himself in the affections of its too fond parents. And it was taken, not merely to add another sanctified

spirit to the circles of the glorified, but to prevent an idolatry, which would have eternally ruined the souls of its parents; or to prevent its final ruin, by living only to contract guilt, and die in impenitence. These may have been the good and kind designs of God, in those providences which to bereaved parents seem so dark and mysterious.

That youth, also, just arrived at maturity, in whom fond hopes were centred, with fair and pleasing prospects, is suddenly hurried upon the scenes of another world. O, how dark and mysterious that providence! But God may have intended it, to awaken his or her thoughtless companions and associates, and in the sanctification of their hearts, its happy influence may reach to far future generations, and thus tell in the salvation of multitudes, who but for that providence would have forever perished. In all these and similar instances, how different the Divine conduct from what we, in our short-sightedness, had arranged and fixed in our own minds! How often we mistake the purposes, motives, and plans of Infinite wisdom and mercy! While our hearts are bleeding under some crushing providence, we either yield to despair, or brood over our sufferings in unmitigated grief. Our motives may be good, and receive the Divine approbation, and yet all our persuasions be in direct opposition to the designs and purposes of the Almighty.

2. The providences of God are often dark and mysterious, because we have a very imperfect knowledge

of them in their bearing upon those particularly affected by them, and are the less disposed to search for the evidences of their wisdom in proportion to their painfulness. All the acts of Providence form one connected chain; they are parts of one grand whole. While each is an effect, each becomes a cause of other effects. We dwell on that which most deeply affects us; we neither search for the immediate cause, nor look at the connected series; we hence see but in part, and know only in part. The truth, indeed, is, we can see the whole of nothing; we are compelled to look at parts, and parts only. The chain of God's providences commenced with his first governmental act over this world. It has been running on, adding link to link, in an unbroken series, ever since, and it will not terminate till that Mediatorial kingdom, which the Saviour received after his resurrection, shall be delivered up; and one great object of the judgment will be to manifest the wisdom and goodness of God in each and every providence, by which any of the human family were here affected, and thus furnish subjects of endless investigation and adoring wonder and praise. Then we shall know, wherefore God sent blessings, and wherefore judgments; why he smiled, and why he frowned; why he sent this, and why that affliction, with all the circumstances attending each event, and his design in each. We shall know, why the eminently good man was called to his eternal reward in the midst of his useful and benevolent labors, whom, and when,

the Church and the world could least spare. We shall know why so many souls received existence only to be washed in the Saviour's blood, and taken in their very infancy to heaven; and why such multitudes, spared beyond the tender age of their parents' deepest apprehension and solicitude, spared to enter on their manhood, to raise their hopes and expectations to the highest degree, and then were suddenly cut down. We shall know, why the industrious father, on whom the whole support of a family seemed to depend, was taken from his employment and consigned to the grave; and why the helpless infant and other little dependents were deprived of a mother's care in all this helplessness. Oh, what a day of the revelation of Divine wisdom and goodness will that last of days be! How will the clouds and darkness, which were here round about Jehovah, in the administration of his government, be all cleared away! When the last event in the chain of providences shall have occurred, then will all the ways of God towards all his creatures be fully vindicated; the dim glass, through which we here beheld them, will then give place to perfect vision; we shall then no more see in part, and know in part, but that which is in part shall be done away; we shall know even as we are known. Perfected memory will recall, and the clear light of eternity will shine upon, every event by which we were here affected; everything will be seen in all its immediate and remote connections.

I proceed,

II. To state some of the practical lessons which the subject suggests.

1. Where we cannot discover, after due examination and prayerful research, the wisdom and goodness of God in the afflictive dispensations of his providence, we should distrust our own wisdom, and bring to our relief the exercise of a confiding faith in God, and wait patiently for the day which will clear every providence of all mystery. Some things must thus be left. But these are the very things, in regard to which faith should be most implicitly exercised. Many things are, undoubtedly, designed to be dark and mysterious, to give full scope to faith, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ,—receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Such in these cases is the benevolent end which God has in view, and such may always be the happy result. God has kindly appointed this to be the Christian's support and consolation, and this is enough to alleviate the pain, if not to extract all the bitterness from the most mysterious and agonizing afflictions. If the "clouds and darkness which are round about Jehovah" in his dispensations, are too thick to be penetrated, then let the assurance that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne," support and comfort the heart.

2. As God has a wise, and holy, and benevolent purpose in all the afflictions which he sends upon his children, their chief aim in pondering upon them should be, to discover the goodness and kindness of God in sending them. Few of his dispensations are so dark as to afford no bright spots in them. We should diligently search for those spots. We should constantly keep our eyes upon them. Were Christians to do this, they would never fail to see much goodness mingled with his chastisements. This will lead to a proper improvement of them, whereas, if we look only on the dark side, think more of our own bereavement than of God's hand in it, we shall utterly fail to derive the benefit which God intended by it, and settle down in gloom, and sadness, and despair; a condition in which it was never his purpose to place his children. We should moreover remember that bereavements occur not seldom, perhaps, generally, more out of regard to survivors, than those who are removed. If there are exceptions to this, they respect those aged Christians, whom, full of years, and full of the fruits of grace, God takes to their reward in heaven, "shocks of corn, fully ripe for the harvest." And unless we see and second his designs, we shall not only lose the instruction which afflictions are kindly intended to afford, but we shall counteract them. God and his own people are sometimes thus brought into conflict with each other. They would aim at his glory, but misinterpreting and misunderstanding his design, they

run counter to each other. He may approve their motive, but he will counteract and thwart their plans. And while assured that he has the best and kindest intention in all he does, would we have him deal otherwise with us?

Christians will yet bless God for those very events which crush them, and lay them in the dust. Why then not anticipate that way, and that occasion of exultation and praise? Why not look beyond this period of trial, and now have some foretaste of the joys which await them? But the bleeding heart still looks on the dark side. "The affliction was a deep one. It came suddenly; it came unexpectedly. It has broken up all my plans. It has disappointed my most raised and dearly cherished hopes. It has blighted the fairest prospects. My very life was bound up in the dear object that is removed. It has fallen upon me in opposition to all my prayers, and all my energies to prevent it!" Yes, it may indeed be all this. And is this a reason for despondency, and murmurings, and repinings? Human sympathy is indeed awakened at the trial. But remember, there is deeper sympathy in the heart of him, who is touched with a feeling of our infirmity, and whose own hand has wounded, that it may heal again. He has not willingly afflicted and grieved thy heart. A good and kind design is wrapt up in the affliction. Search for it. Direct the glass of faith over all its aspects. Look at every circumstance. You may, you will find some bright spot,

when this is the object of your search. Was the beloved one a Christian? Did the immortal spirit as it fled from the body, so much the object of your affection while it animated it, fly to the open arms of its Saviour? Are now the moans of sickness, and the groans of death, all forever hushed, and exchanged for that new song sung in heaven? Ah, dear, grieving friend, see you no kind hand in all this? Must that happy spirit, that is now pouring its rapturous melodies before the throne, be brought back and resume its place in the body which is now laid aside for a glorious resurrection, again to endure pain, again to sicken, again to feel all the agonies of death; to lose all it has now gained in its knowledge of God, and of heavenly employments, and begin them all anew?

But, desponding Christian, these are all new thoughts to you. At least, if they have passed your mind, you have not dwelt upon them. They have not been the subjects of your most intense reflections. Impossible otherwise, and yet you find no comfort. Dwell upon them and be comforted. Turn away the eye and your thoughts from what is only dark and distressing, and think of the mercies which have been mingled with the affliction. Every new search will bring new mercies to your view. The liveliest gratitude may thus mingle with and moderate the deepest grief.

3. Afflictions are never sent to Christians, but with a view to their own personal, spiritual benefit—the improvement of their Christian character. And hence

when they experience them, their first and chief attention should be directed towards themselves. If the individual whom death has taken was a subject of grace and an heir of heaven, the bereavement contains a double blessing. For there is no greater blessing to a Christian than removal from earth to heaven; while to surviving friends who are Christians, what greater favor can there be, than to become the better fitted for heaven themselves? The mercy is not the less because the affliction is severe. A less degree of severity may not have been sufficient to effect the good which was intended. But if we may not be able to ascertain for what particular end the affliction was sent, as oft-times the Christian may not, yet it cannot fail to teach him one of the most difficult truths to be properly realized; that God has a supreme and sovereign right to us and all we have, and that we must never set up claims which interfere with his own. This truth can only be learned by the removal of those objects which occupy too warm a place in our affections. While we possess them, we are not conscious of any claims to them which clash with those of God. Yet he may see them, and he knows that nothing will make us sensible of them, but their removal. And alas! how often are we then made deeply sensible of the fact. How common the complaint, that he could not have sent a greater affliction upon us.

We feel then that he could not have wounded us in a more tender spot. Whatever else he had taken, if

but only this could have been spared, the affliction had been comparatively light. Dear Christian friend, do you not see that here is found the very reason why that one, of all others, was taken? That it was to make you sensible of a feeling, of whose existence you were not before duly conscious. Or if conscious of it, the more reason for that particular bereavement. Whichever may have been the case, what but mercy, and goodness, and even kindness to thyself, are seen in the dispensation! I know indeed that it is difficult to see, and hard to acknowledge this. And if it were not, God had probably never sent that particular affliction. He has pursued just that course which he saw to be most needful, and which alone could secure the benevolent end he had in view. Grief, indeed, there may be. But this thought should moderate it to the most calm, uncomplaining, peaceful submission.

Finally, our subject shows us the duty, safety, and happiness of the most unlimited confidence and trust in God. How great, how wise, how good is that Being who made and governs all worlds, directs every event, and has a special regard to the best good of all who love him, in every dispensation of his providence! What a glorious result of all his dealings towards his children will be disclosed in the last day! What ages in eternity will it require to review and investigate the events of time, and see the designs of the infinitely wise and benevolent God in them all! The short history of each of his creatures, in all its con-

nections, will furnish subjects of examination and contemplation, commanding at every step the highest admiration, and affording the most elevated joy. What will those Christians then think of the days and years of despondency, of repining sadness, at those dispensations of Divine Providence, which they regarded as altogether evil; in which they saw no light; could perceive no gracious hand—no good design! Will they not almost wish to live their lives over again, that they might correct their errors here; might show their confiding faith, their unlimited trust in God, and their peaceful, cheerful submission to his will, in their sorest affliction, their saddest bereavements? Will they not wish to gather back to their original fountain the ten thousand bitter tears which were causelessly shed—live again, to declare to the world, that “though he slay me, I will trust in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation?” They will, at least, look back to their course on earth with utter amazement, at the weakness of their faith; their rejection of the consolations which God, in his word, so kindly and abundantly pressed upon them.

But why should the Christian wait for the disclosures of eternity, to be convinced that such will be the result of all God’s dealings towards him in this life? The eye of faith may now perceive what will then be so clear and obvious to his perfect vision. Let us more carefully cultivate that grace; learn to place more confidence in the promises and assurances of

God's word ; and then we may not only perceive, but feel some of those joys which await the Christian, when the full light of eternity shall show him the designs of God in all that he experienced in his journey through this life.

Where we cannot see, let us believe, and patiently wait till that day, when all those clouds and that darkness which attend the providences of God shall be dissipated, and all his ways be vindicated, to the joy of his people and the glory of his own name.

XIII.

THE SOUL—ITS LIFE OR DEATH.

“Let my soul live.”—PSALM 119 : 175.

FOUR words in such close proximity of more weighty import, can not be found. They embrace all that is dear and precious to man in time and eternity; all that he himself is, or can be, here and hereafter. “Let my soul live.” The form of expression is that of prayer or entreaty. It was so used by the writer of it. The whole Psalm is really a prayer, directly addressed to the Almighty, and a more important prayer never proceeded from the lips of man. “Let my soul live.”

The terms, *soul* and *live*, are indeed employed in Scripture in a variety of senses. The word *live* is often restricted to the present state of existence; the mere continuance of this life; often to express mental peace and joy; spiritual prosperity, or religious enjoyment. Nor less frequently, has it exclusive reference to what is future, either in certain prospect, or as an object of earnest hope and strong desire.

In like manner, the term *soul*, has equally different

meanings attached to it. It often stands for the whole person. Sometimes for animal life, common to men and brutes; and sometimes for particular desires, inclinations, and passions. In a strict philosophical sense, and even as in some instances in Scripture, this last is its true meaning, when employed in contradistinction to spirit. We shall, however, use the word in this discourse in its common acceptance. In neither of the above senses is it used in the text. It there has a far higher import; as that which places man far above all other beings in this lower creation, and allies him to the highest order of intelligences, and in no small degree, even of approximation to his Creator.

I need not, then, spend a moment in bespeaking the attention of this assembly, each individual of which possesses such a soul, unless willing it should be lost.

The text presents two objects of inquiry :

I. What is the soul ?

II. What, in the highest sense of the word, is it for the soul to live ?

“Let my soul live !”

In regard to the first topic of inquiry, What is the soul ? I would remark, that, in regard to its essence, no distinctive, satisfactory definition has ever been given of it. In its present state of existence, at least, it never can be defined. The wisest heathen, and even Christian philosophers, who have made it the one all-absorbing subject of investigation, have never succeeded in

defining the soul as to its essence. The Divine account of its origin affords no assistance in this respect; it merely states the fact and manner of its origin: "And the Lord God formed man (*i. e.* his body) of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul;"—and there the word literally means no more than animal life, and is often so used in Scripture, "the breath of the nostrils." Soul and life are interchangeably used in very numerous instances, as also the word spirit, which means breath. Undoubtedly, what we mean by the soul is one of the constituent parts of man, and distinct from his body, and the mere animal life accompanied the act of the Almighty when he breathed into Adam's moulded dust the breath of life, whereby he "became a living soul." Analogous, to this, though different in its effects, was the Saviour's act of breathing upon his Apostles, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." That there is, however, in man something entirely different from, and far exalted above, his corporeal and animal nature, is matter of every man's consciousness as well as reason and Scriptural proof; and though we cannot define it any more than any other secret omnipotent act of the Creator, yet it may be described, and sufficiently so, for all important practical purposes. We may understand its power, its essential faculties, and know its final destiny; and, I need not say, these things present it as claiming the supreme attention and solemn concern of every living man. To some of

these deeply interesting characteristics of the soul, I now ask your attention ; and

1. The soul is not dependent on the body for its existence. It did not come into existence, at first, by the same, though, by an omnipotent act. The body at least was first formed, although its existence probably accompanied the first motion of the animal life. In all after instances, none but the Great Father of Spirits knows the period of its connection with the human body ; no examination can ascertain that ; no speculation affords a probable conjecture. Verily, man is “ fearfully and wonderfully made.”

But we are certain that the soul can and does exist independently of the body. I need not say to you that Revelation is clear and explicit on this point ; and you will not ask for proofs. Nor is reason wholly silent in regard to it. It might not indeed have made the discovery, but it receives its entire assent, manifested by one’s own knowledge of its powers. Few, or rather none, can convince themselves that the soul becomes extinct at the body’s dissolution, even the most sceptical. Those who have striven the hardest to convince themselves of this, avowed atheists, have been constrained to yield the point, on the near approach of death, and abandon their atheism. They have done this in the same breath with their avowed disbelief in Divine Revelation. Call it instinct, or what you will, the impulse, the conviction is strong and irrepressible.

Observation itself harmonizes with this sentiment.

Often has the soul manifested a higher degree of activity in its last struggles to make its escape from the body, than at any previous period. So close is the connection between the soul and the body, that while a slight disorder of the latter often deranges the former, yet not unfrequently, while the pulses of life are slowly beating their last, the former, the soul, rises above all the depressing, crushing weight of the hand of death, to the highest activity.

But however imperfect and unsatisfactory the evidence of reason, or the testimony of observation, the constant and explicit declarations of God's sacred word leave no possible ground of doubt. And that word is so full I need not take up your time in adducing examples of it. No one that believes that word can wish it. And it is such whom I am addressing. I remark,

2. That while the soul is not dependent on the body for its existence, its existence is immortal. It not only survives the body's death, but it will literally live forever, or never become extinct. This might reasonably, if not indeed, with perfect conclusiveness, be inferred from the fact that its existence is not dependent on the body. If it can exist one moment in a state of separation from matter, it may exist forever. Yea, farther, if it does exist a moment after the death of the body, it must exist forever, unless God, by a special act of omnipotence, annihilate it; for, aside from such an act, it will possess all its capabilities for continuing to exist, that it had to exist a single moment. Reason,

too, may pertinently inquire, Why give it any existence, and especially, a power to exist independently of the body, if it is not to exist forever? What substantial good to the being, to the man, or what possible glory to his Maker, could such a brief existence as is allotted to man in this world, effect or accomplish?

Will any say that this consideration will apply with equal force to the brute creation, which we do not suppose will exist after the death of their bodies? There is no point of comparison between the two cases, between men and brutes, unless we attribute intelligence to the latter rather than instinct, and in addition to this, are assured not only that they possess a nature independent of their animal life, and which does actually exist after the death of the body. If either of these points, especially both of them, can be established, as they are established in respect to human beings, then I freely concede that they will exist forever. But neither of these points can be established, either by reason or from Revelation.

Again, we ask, why were human beings created, if their existence be limited to this life? Surely it could not be for the brief happiness they can enjoy here. Besides, countless multitudes are miserable from their birth to their death, while a vast proportion of the human family are cut off from this life just as their faculties are beginning to open, and even to bud. Who could discover the benevolence of God in such an arrangement? Not to ask, on what ground could his

justice be vindicated in the great and obvious inequalities of his providence, in the oppressions of the virtuous, and the ease and even triumphs of the wicked! The chief happiness of the former class springs from hope; hope that reaches far onward beyond the grave. So that if there is no future eternal state of existence, they may well adopt the language of Paul, in another but similar case, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Immortality is then indelibly stamped on the soul.

But we can advance much farther in a knowledge of the soul, than the establishment of its independent and immortal existence. For,

3. We can ascertain its powers or faculties; its capabilities and capacities; not indeed to the full extent to which they may and will be carried; but as to their nature and kind. It has memory, it has reason, it has will, and having, or rather being of a moral nature, it is endowed with conscience, which fits it for a moral government. It is capable therefore of forming a judgment on moral as well as other subjects, and of feeling the force of motives and moral obligation. No man requires proofs of these things. They enter into his very consciousness. He feels them to belong to himself. He is constantly the subject of the operations of these faculties and powers, unless when suspended by sleep, and often even then. He daily acts under their controlling influence in view of what he regards the supreme motive. Those powers may all

be perverted, memory be weakened, reason blinded, the judgment warped, and the conscience blunted and seared. But they will never be effectually effaced; they belong to the independent, immortal soul, and are as indestructible as the soul itself. They and the effects which they produce, are in fact all we know of the soul. They are cramped in their operations through the influence of the gross body, which the soul here inhabits, and perverted by the deep depravity of the soul's moral nature. When that body is thrown aside, when the hand of death dissolves it and liberates the soul, those powers or faculties will be released from all embarrassment, all obstruction to the freest and clearest exercise; memory, reason, and conscience, will be quickened to their highest exercise. How else shall men give account of all the deeds done in the body, even every secret thing, whether it be good or bad? How else shall every mouth be stopped when God judgeth, unless the conscience, then unerring in its perceptions and decisions, adds its approving voice? Thus much we certainly know of the soul. And we are sure, also, from what we know of its faculties here, that those faculties are not stationary, but always gaining strength and extent in their exercise towards the object to which they are directed; consciously so, unless disease, or the crushing weight of age, drag the soul, as it were, with the body to the dust. But this is only a suspension of their exercise. The moment the soul makes its

escape from its clayey tabernacle, they resume, no, not merely resume their former force, but are quickened to the highest energy and activity. Then there will be nothing to impede their progress. The very bodies they will have at the resurrection will be no clogs, like those which were laid in their graves, but aids to thought, to feeling, and to conscience.

I can here add but one item, one topic of remark more, namely: The soul's eternal destiny. This destiny necessarily results from the moral condition of the soul at death. Death effects no change in that condition. It merely breaks down the clay tabernacle of the immortal tenant, and it comes forth in the moral state in which death found it. Its character is then unalterably fixed. It is already prepared for its eternal destiny. Its tastes, its tendencies, are all directed towards one point, and that point its appropriate destiny. The soul, if I may use the expression, has carved out its proper and fit destiny. The Judge has but to pass the sentence which the character demands. If that character is holy, if the tendencies of the soul are towards a holy God, and a holy heaven, and communion with holy beings, its destiny will be the place of holiness. If destitute of these qualities, the soul fixes its own doom. It cannot, and would not if it could, go to a holy place; in other words, to heaven, where pure and perfect holiness reigns.

Now, unless God grant another trial, a farther term of probation, the soul must forever remain as it was,

and where it was, on entering the world of spirits; save only for a final assembling after the resurrection, for the universe to hear and approve the final sentence.

But a farther trial will not be granted. Probation will have ended. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." "These (the finally wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

I can neither add to nor longer dwell on topics of such infinite moment. We have presented the mere outlines—some of the most important characteristics of the soul; its independence of the body for its existence; the immortality of that existence; its physical and moral endowments; the irresistible necessity of their exercise; the consequent character they form; its completion at death, and the endless destiny that awaits it. And I may add, in one sentence, the everlasting expansion of its powers; its endless progress in holiness or sin, happiness or misery.

II. "Let my soul live."

On the second topic of my discourse, What is it for the soul, in its highest sense, to live? I cannot dwell; nor is it necessary. By nature it is dead—"dead in trespasses and sins." All its powers are under the controlling influence of a totally depraved moral nature. That nature must be renewed; its powers consecrated to

holiness and to God, or they will only work out a wretched character, and a miserable destiny. This moral nature renewed, the soul begins to live. It lives in and by the exercise of all the Christian graces. It has peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In repentance, it has the sweet assurance of God's forgiveness. In believing, the soul is drawn by love, the strongest emotion of the heart, to union and communion with Christ. Cheerful, grateful, affectionate obedience follows, as a necessary consequence. Does not such a soul live? Nothing can quench this principle of life. The waters of a flood cannot drown it. Afflictions and trials of any degree of severity, only invigorate it. It can triumph over them all. The most cruel death cannot repress it. The body's death is the soul's final conquest. Yet in its highest enjoyment, in its most elevated views of God and heavenly things, in the present state of existence, the life of the soul is but partial; is most imperfect. Sin still cleaves to it while in the body. At its death, it is forever freed from sin. It is then the soul lives, in the purest, highest sense. Here, the best only have that assurance, and most live on hope, with at best but scanty foretastes. Death advances them to the reality, to the perfect state and holy place, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered the heart of mortal to conceive."

This it is for the soul to live in the presence, the smiles, the ever unfolding glories of the infinite God;

while every revolving age in eternity will mark advancement in knowledge, in holiness, and in bliss. I submit a few reflections, and conclude this discourse. And the first shall be in the appropriate words of the Saviour, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Here the Saviour places the contrast between the soul and all things else which the heart of any mortal ever coveted or desired,—between the soul and the whole world. It could not be put higher. And yet the sinner in his desires and efforts places it between the immortal soul and the merest pittance of earthly good, and gives the latter a supreme preponderance in his estimation! What inexpressible infatuation and folly! The soul is emphatically oneself, is the being himself. The body, and all other material things connected with it, are mere appendages, which are soon to be thrown off. The soul lives, and will eternally live, independently of them. It can carry nothing of them beyond the grave. Possessed of what men deem much or little, all is dropped at the grave's mouth. Death makes of the richest man a perfect bankrupt.

What at that hour would the whole world profit him, could he call it all his own! And yet, what multitudes are bartering away the imperishable, immortal soul, with all its rich endowments of Godlike powers (for God made the soul after his own image), its capacity for endless progress in all that can elevate

and dignify it, and endless, ever augmenting blessedness ; bartering all these away, for the little here he calls his own, held, too, by the most brittle and uncertain tenure. But why stop to reason on this subject ! No reasonable man requires it ! He cannot withhold his conviction, even when all his wishes are arrayed against it. He cannot compel nor bribe his reason to commit perjury in such a case as this. But cool assent is not all or chiefly what the question before us demands for any practical purpose. It is a case of life and death ; the life or death of the soul ; its eternal bliss or endless woe ! It should therefore call into the highest exercise every energy of the soul, its moral feelings, as well as physical powers. Every feeling of the heart must be aroused to press the convictions of the understanding. In other words, till men feel that their souls are suspended over the pit of endless perdition, by the slender thread by which their lives are held to this world, and that it is liable any moment to be cut, they will not move one step towards securing their salvation. Would that I could so present and press the subject, as to awaken the deepest feeling, the most intense concern in the heart of every one in this house, who has not already secured his salvation. But I do not forget how unavailing are all human appeals, much more so my own, to accomplish a work to which Omnipotence alone is adequate. I do not forget that even “ Paul might plant and Apollos water, but God must give the increase ;” his blessing alone can secure

a happy result. Yet he has appointed means, and has often blessed the feeblest instrumentality. This is my only encouragement to add another word.

Each of us has such a soul, such a tenant in these frail bodies, as we have attempted, but most inadequately, to describe. Each will live forever, with all its appropriate powers eternally expanding, live in bliss, or exist in woe, while the ages of eternity run on. Which of these only alternatives, is depending on this short and uncertain life. Death closes every opportunity to effect a change, either of character or condition. Saved or lost forever, all of us must soon be! Where is the hope that all of you will leave the joyful testimony behind, that your souls have exchanged these tabernacles of clay for "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Thanks to God, for his forbearance and grace, that testimony may be secured, and secured beyond the possibility of disproof, but with absolute certainty only by immediate repentance and hearty submission to God. Life and death hang on these alternatives.

XIV.

AN INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH, AND RESEMBLANCE TO CHRIST,

THE NOBLEST OBJECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S DESIRES.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”

PHILIPPIANS 3 : 10.

THESE words express the object of the Apostle's supreme desire and most devoted efforts. To obtain this object, he tells us, he counted all things else but loss, in other words, of no value. This he did when he first became a Christian. No man had brighter prospects of a worldly nature than he; talents of the highest order, and cultivated to the highest degree. From the account which we have of him before his conversion, and while a young man, he had vast influence with the highest authority in his own nation, or he would never have been intrusted with the commission which he received from it, and which he farther corroborated by the fact, that after his conversion to the Christian faith, the life of no mere man was ever more diligently and perseveringly sought than his, and which was, indeed, finally sacrificed on the

altar of martyrdom. But he cheerfully abandoned all these brilliant worldly prospects, and subjected himself to unsurpassed hardships and unrelenting persecution, to become the disciple of the crucified Redeemer, and herald of his bloody Cross. Hear him in his own inspired language: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and 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 offal, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

But all this he had already secured. He had obtained an irreversible interest in Christ long before he penned the text. He had savingly known Christ from the moment of his conversion. Nor had he any doubt of the resurrection. This great truth he had always taught and maintained as a cardinal and glorious doctrine.

These, therefore, were not the objects which he proposed to himself, as arousing all the energies of his ardent soul to obtain, as set forth in the text. It was something which he had not obtained; something future, a state which he had not yet reached. "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might at-

tain unto the resurrection of the dead." And to render this the more evident he adds, "Not as though I had already attained; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There was then a future object to be obtained; and that object is stated in the text, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection." To show and illustrate that object is the design of this discourse, and which involves the following things.

1. It lies beyond the precincts of the present life. It does not consist in present attainments. It is not reached in this life. Paul was not only a Christian, but an eminent Christian. Probably no man has ever attained to higher qualifications as a Christian than he. And yet he had not reached that state after which he so ardently aspired, and to which he constantly directed all his efforts. With him, that state was a state of absolute perfection. This he states, indeed, in so many words: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." His eye was steadily fixed on something beyond his present attainments, high as they were. To say, merely, that he was not perfectly happy, had not obtained the prize, was not crowned,—was not only true, but a truism of which the

Apostle could not have been guilty. Or to suppose, as some learned commentators have, that he did not refer to Christian perfection, but to the Grecian games to which he alludes, and with which he compares the Christian course, and simply to mean, that he had not yet completed his course, and therefore, had not received the prize, were to utter the same truism, viz., that he was not already a glorified saint. He does indeed allude to those games, not to show, what every one knew, that he had not completed his course, and obtained the prize, but to show with what ardor and determination he pursued his course, in order to secure it.

And what is implied in that, but that he lacked something which was essential to the completion of a perfect Christian character? What, in other words, but that he had not reached a state of perfection? It seems impossible to attach any other idea or meaning to his language; and to place any other construction upon it, is evidently done to make it consistent with the erroneous notion of a state of perfection on earth, and that Paul himself was an example of it, but which is obviously in direct and plain contradiction of that sentiment. And if he had not attained to that state, what other man will have the presumption to say that he has reached it? No man can justly claim a higher degree of piety surely, than that Apostle claimed for himself, or rather a degree of piety which he expressly disclaimed for himself. Absolute perfection was that

at which he aimed, and strove with all his sanctified energies to reach, and short of which he could not be satisfied ; a state of confirmed holiness and felicity.

This view is confirmed by the very phraseology of the text, "That I may know him (*i. e.*, Christ) and the power of his resurrection."

2. This introduces some new thoughts, and demands our distinct attention.

The Apostle here states, that there were two things which he most ardently desired ; two conditions, to the attainment of which he directed all his efforts. The one was, that he might know Christ. The other, that he might know the power of his resurrection. That these phrases are not to be understood in their more common acceptation, as denoting such a knowledge or experience as is essential to constitute one a true Christian, a sense in which both terms are often used, is most obvious. For in this sense Paul had already known Christ and the power of his resurrection. For, as already remarked, he had long since become not a Christian only, but a most eminent one. It was something which was future, to which, he tells us, he had not attained. Let us consider the two parts of the text separately. And the first inquiry is, what was that knowledge of Christ which he so earnestly desired ?

He has elsewhere given us a clue to an answer. In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, 13 : 12, he writes : "For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face

to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know, even as I am known." This would constitute the very perfection of his knowledge. His views of God and of his glorious perfection would be such in clearness and extent, that he could never attain in this world. This knowledge, this clear and open vision of the glorious God-man, or God manifested through the Divine Person of the Redeemer, would produce another most important and most desirable effect. And this also he states in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, 3 : 18 : " But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The meaning is, that the clearer our views of the Divine glory, the stronger will be the resemblance between the Being beheld, and the beholder. And where the Being beheld is supremely loved, as Paul loved Christ, the resemblance will become more and more close and exact. This power or property of assimilation, is a law of our very nature. We insensibly become like those with whom we hold, and delight to hold, intercourse. We imbibe the same sentiments, cherish like feelings. This is especially true of every growing Christian. He makes little or no advance in the Divine life who does not often and habitually contemplate the excellence and beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in his word, even in the present state of imperfection.

While Paul did this, and which was the secret of

his high attainment, he was not satisfied with it; he desired, he ardently longed, to behold those Divine glories through a clearer and more perfect medium than even his strong faith could furnish, even to see the Saviour "face to face," that he might be more perfectly like him.

The same idea is, perhaps, still more clearly expressed by another Apostle, the beloved John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The idea is, that a vision of Christ, such as the glorified have of him, will produce the effect of nearest possible likeness to him,—“We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Another Apostle tells us, that saints are made partakers of a divine nature; not, indeed, in its essence, but by assimilation to this moral character of God. Alas! we can but little understand such expressions. But, brethren, there is one thing which we do know; they reveal truths, they stand for facts, however incomprehensible by the mightiest sanctified intellect of a mortal. The object, then, of this strong desire of the Apostle, as expressed in the text and context, was, that he might be like Christ; this was the paramount, all-engrossing desire of his soul. It was not that he might be released from his labors, or his sufferings, or simply be happy; on the contrary, he tells us, in the very verse which contains my text, that he desired to

suffer, even as Christ himself suffered, that he might be like him,—“that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made (or that he might be made) conformable unto his death;” not that he desired to suffer for the sake of suffering, or simply that he might resemble the Saviour in the mere fact of suffering, but that he might possess and evince those high moral qualities which the Saviour displayed in his unequalled sufferings. That was the great point of resemblance which he so earnestly coveted and ardently aimed to reach. That he might attain to this, he would cheerfully and even gladly endure the intensest agonies of crucifixion.

Such, I conceive to be the meaning of the Apostle in his desire to “know Christ.” This point of resemblance to him he had not reached. Its attainment lay beyond the grave. In this world, he would still be imperfect, would continue to sin. What indeed he saw of Christ, in his present state, he loved with all his heart, and aimed with his whole soul to imbibe and imitate, and make his own; but here he saw through an imperfect medium, or, as he expresses it, “through a glass, darkly; but then face to face;” now he knew in part, then he would know even as also he would be known, and, seeing Christ as he is, he would be like him,—like him in holiness, less in degree, but perfect in kind. What in this life was an image, a mere type, in heaven would be perfect reality.

But there was another point of resemblance, after

which he longed, and for which he strove; this he expressed in the words, that he might know the "power in a resurrection." This, too, to a saving degree, or of his saving sense, he had already known and experienced; for you require not to be informed, that the regeneration of the heart is compared to a resurrection. It is a resurrection from the death of sin,—“You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;” since the word, here translated, “quicken,” is the same as is used to express the resurrection of Christ’s body from the grave.

As a doctrine to be believed, and a most important and essential one, the Apostle had no doubt of, and always taught it. Moreover, he had experienced the same divine power in his resurrection from the death of sin, *i. e.*, his regeneration, as that which raised the Saviour from the grave. But in the text and context, he speaks of a knowledge or experience of the resurrection of Christ, as something which he had not experienced, to which he had not attained, but which required the same power to effect, as to raise the dead. But this does not express the object of the Apostle’s strong desire. It was not enough, that his body would be raised from the dead; for of this he was assured. For all would be raised, the just and the unjust. But it was to a resurrection far different from that of the great mass of human beings. In the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he had taught that a peculiar resurrection awaited all the righteous,

—a resurrection of the body, of which that of Christ was both the pledge and the pattern; a resurrection, which should take precedence of that of the rest of mankind; for the dead in Christ shall rise first. Not until he experienced this, could he be satisfied. Till then, he not only would not have conquered his last enemy, Death, and shouted victory over the grave; but he would not have reached that height of glory, which constitutes that perfection which completes entire resemblance to the Saviour, at which he aimed; the perfection of moral beauty, and a body of resplendent glory. Here is the consummation of all his ardent aspirations and elevated hopes. To attain to this, he was here willing, and, indeed, anxious, to share with the Saviour his deep humiliation and severest sufferings; to be also like him in the beauty and glory of his person after the resurrection. To this he alludes in the closing verses of the chapter which contains the text,—“For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

In the application of this subject, I remark

1. The mistaken views which the world has of the nature of religion, and especially of its power to support and console, and even fill its possessor with joy, under the severest trials and sufferings which can

befall them. Consult the Apostle Paul, who has given his own experience in his writings; and a fairer example, save that of the incarnate Son of God, the world never knew. Not only did he rejoice in all his tribulations, but even desired to know, *i. e.* to experience the fellowship of the Saviour's sufferings, unequalled as they were. And he tells us,—let Christians well consider it.

2. The secret of all this. It was the cheering, animating, I might even say, exulting thought, that, in his sufferings, he bore some resemblance to the Saviour. He desired, above all things, to be like him, if only in suffering. The most agonizing death could not repress his joy. This, and this alone, sustained him under his crushing trials. This, too, was the feeling of all the holy martyrs, who could triumph in the very bitterness of death. Ardent love to Christ still has that power. But, alas! how few Christians manifest this in their, even comparatively light, afflictions! How much more common to hear their repinings and complaints; to speak of their hard lot; to wonder at God's dealings towards them; and if not actually regard him as a hard Master, yet despond under his dispensations! But those who will most resemble the Saviour hereafter, are those who most resemble him here; those who share the deepest in patient suffering, will share the largest in his glories.

With the same high aim, the same ardent desire of assimilation to the Saviour which characterized the

great Apostle, every Christian, whatever his lot on earth, may have like support and consolation, and look forward with the same animating hope of likeness to the Redeemer, when removed from this world; and in the last day, receive a body fashioned like to his own glorious body.

3. Our subject shows us, what estimate we should place on earth and all earthly things, its riches and honors, its cares and toils, its pleasures and fashions. In view of the glorious inheritance, which is in reserve for all the true followers of Christ, how little should these things affect us! How should it rebuke that pride, which centres its chief attention on this mere tabernacle of clay, which is so soon to be crumbled in the dust! If you must think much on the outward person, think of it in all its glorious adornments on the resurrection day. And although this will be the full consummation of the Christian's bliss, yet that most important point of resemblance between himself and his Saviour, that of a moral likeness, a perfect resemblance of moral character will be attained, while the body is still slumbering in the grave. This likeness will be reached at death. At this, Christians should now aim; towards this, lend every effort. It is the moral likeness alone, which insures a like glorious resurrection, the only alternative of which is the resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt; or, in the fearful language of the Saviour, the "resurrection unto damnation."

In conclusion, then, let me ask, in what can any one have a deeper interest, than in the subject of this discourse? Soon, and what is now future will be present realities. How wise to anticipate them, and be prepared for them. What folly so great as to put them far from our thoughts! Soon, and all that so deeply interests us, either the cares or the pleasures of this world, will interest us no more forever. With what feelings will professed Christians look back on the course of life which they led on earth, its gaities and fashions, when they come to review it in the light of eternity. Alas! what multitudes of such, who now manifest little or no distinction from the rest of the world, will share no distinction from them in the awful scenes of the resurrection! Their close conformity and alliance here, will be even closer still, when they come forth from their graves. And what can equal the folly and guilt of those, who, making not their pretensions, are preparing only for "the resurrection unto damnation!"

XV.

THE SAVIOUR'S LAST PRAYER.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.”

LUKE 23 : 34.

THIS is one of the most remarkable records contained in the New Testament. A record of one of the most remarkable occurrences ; even on that day of wonders which mark it, and which will forever distinguish it, as the most wonderful day in the annals of all time ; a day never, indeed, to be forgotten. It contains a formal prayer uttered by the Son of God while his sacred blood was flowing from his hands and his feet ; for it seems to have been offered, while his crucifiers were in the act of nailing him to the Cross ; or having just completed that act, were casting lots for his raiment, which by law or custom were always given to the executioners of criminals. “And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do ; and they parted his raiment, and cast lots ;” the miserable reward of a most cruel deed ! This prayer of our Saviour is re-

markable for many reasons, and suggests several topics of instruction and practical importance in addition to those which prompted it, some of which I purpose to present for your consideration.

1. It is a memorable prayer as being the last our Saviour offered before his death; and the last recorded prayer which he ever offered on earth. Previously to this, we have frequent accounts of his praying alone, and praying with and for his disciples and others. But death seems forever to have closed his lips as to prayer. During his forty days' continuance on earth, from his resurrection to his ascension, we have no intimation of his engaging in that exercise, though constantly employed in instructing his ordained Apostles, "Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

At his resurrection from the dead, our Saviour entered on his state of exaltation. It was then he entered on the full discharge of his regal office; his office as King. This he proclaimed to his disciples, according to Matthew, at his first interview with them after his resurrection. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." By this is meant, that as Mediator, he had from that moment authority over all things which have any bearing on the Church, in the kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace; in heaven and on earth; over holy and fallen angels, his own people, and wicked men. Hence Paul says, "He is exalted, Head over all things to the Church." This

is the kingdom which he will deliver up in the last day. And it is noticeable that all that he did after his resurrection, was in the way of authority.

Thus we hear him issuing his commands, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." So also at his last interview with his disciples, just before he ascended to heaven, we hear him exercising the same authority. "And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." It is true, he issued commands before, but rather as a Divine Teacher, or in his sacerdotal office; but often accompanied with illustrations of his doctrines, with exhortations and entreaties, and sometimes with tears and prayers. But we hear nothing of these after his resurrection; not an entreaty, not an expostulation, not a prayer.

There, and whatever else is necessary to carry forward his work on earth, is done by other means and agencies, under, however, his supreme direction. He sent the Spirit, to renew and sanctify and fit for heaven, those whom the Father gave him. He despatches his angels to minister to them. He appoints his ambassadors. He directs every providence.

But does he not still intercede before the throne of the Father? And is not that prayer? Verily, "he

ever liveth to make intercession for all them that come unto God by him." But in what does the intercession of Christ consist? Not in oral prayer. Paul tells us it is his "appearing in the presence of God for us." It is by presenting himself as a sacrifice for sin, by which offering, the same Apostle tells us, "He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." His blood of atonement, his sacrifice on the Cross, is the plea which he offers. This is the most powerful of all intercessions. The last prayer, strictly speaking, as such, was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

2. This prayer was not an indiscriminate prayer. That is, it did not embrace all who were present on that occasion. It was primarily and more especially offered for those who were actually engaged in nailing him to the cross. These were Romans. "They knew not what they did." They probably had never heard him preach, never witnessed his miracles, knew nothing of his character, or the object for which he came to our world. They had no means of knowing, and what they might have heard respecting him, would be from his enemies. They belonged to a nation of heathen idolaters, and felt no interest in him; and probably, regarded him as a criminal, equally guilty, at least, as the two malefactors who were crucified with him. Besides, their own Governor had condemned him to the cross, the Roman mode of executing the vilest criminals, and they acted under the express orders of

their Centurion or commander. Most truly, therefore, they knew not what they were doing, in putting Jesus of Nazareth to death; him who came into the world to save sinners, God's own Son. The prayer, however, was not limited to those soldiers. It virtually and efficaciously included all who repented and embraced him as their Saviour, either at that time or afterwards. It embraced the Centurion, who, as commonly believed, repented on the spot. For it is expressly stated, "When the Centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man;" or as two other Evangelists have it, "Truly this was the Son of God." This truly was a noble confession of him, under the circumstances, especially as his own Governor had pronounced sentence on Jesus, as an impostor and a deceiver. Nor was this conviction and confession confined to the Centurion. For it is stated of those who were with him, watching Jesus, seeing the earthquake and those things that were done, greatly fearing, said also, "Truly this was the Son of God." Nor was the Saviour's prayer limited to them. At least, in all probability, many of those who came to witness the awful spectacle, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returning, were brought to repentance. Not a few of them, probably, were among the three thousand converts fifty days afterwards, on the day of Pentecost; and but a few days after that, we read, "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved;"

and on one other occasion we are informed that "the number of the men was about five thousand."

We have said that the prayer of the Saviour included all who repented and embraced him as their Saviour, and only such. For he himself tells us, that his prayers were always heard; and that he did not pray for the world, meaning those who would remain incorrigible in their sins and perish. The reason which he there assigns for praying for his disciples was, that "they were not of the world, but had been taken out of the world;" they had become his followers. So also he extends his prayer subsequently, to all who would become such in future. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

There is a sense, indeed, in which the whole human race are included in his office of a Priest; as an intercessor, as well as a sacrifice. His atonement embraces a world. It is co-extensive with the entire miseries of the fall. Thus he himself declared, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "My flesh" (meaning himself, as a sin-offering), "My flesh I give for the life of the world." John said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Paul wrote, "Who gave himself a ransom for all; who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that

believe. He tasted death for every man. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." The provision made, must be as extensive as the invitations given; and I need not say, these are universal. None are lost from any deficiency, any insufficiency in the atonement. This were to derogate from the merits of the infinite Son of God, and the efficacy of his blood.

Planted on this broad and firm foundation, we reiterate the divine and precious declaration, "Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely. If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Moreover, the atonement has bettered every man's condition. It has removed every difficulty and bar on God's part, reconciled the conflicting attributes of his justice and mercy; so that "he can be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth." The sinner that rejects the offer of life, and perishes, is his own destroyer. And why should the Saviour, who knew from eternity who would accept and who refuse, offer unavailing intercessions? or, why not offer special intercessions for those and those only, whom the Father gave him, as the reward of his humiliation, sufferings, and death? Everywhere in the Scriptures is the death of the sinner placed to his own account. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," is the reason

the Saviour assigns. But the difficulties which the sinner finds on his own part, and the necessity of the omnipotent influences of the Spirit to remove them, it is not now my object to show. But simply, that Christ's intercessions are not indiscriminate, that is, embracing all, whether they repent or not; otherwise they would, in fact, be unavailing. And he himself said, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always."

The particular point, as brought to view in the text, is, that the Saviour prayed, not for all, for some rejected him; among them, as we have reason to believe, the great body of the Sanhedrim, and most of those, probably, who were active in procuring his condemnation, and cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," who had seen, heard, and known enough of him, to overcome everything, but the most inveterate prejudice; yet those for whom he did pray were unquestionably brought to repentance and saved. That, however, affords an illustration of the whole intercessory work of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, is a specimen of it, and suggested the remarks above made, founded on other portions of the New Testament. But I remark,

3. In the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," the Saviour gave the highest expression to the infinite benevolence and compassion of his heart, that can be conceived. Only in the peculiar circumstances in which he was then placed, could even he have given utterance to such deep and

bursting compassion—such burning benevolence. Only such a heart as dwelt in the bosom of Jesus of Nazareth, could have so meekly and patiently endured the indignities, the insults, the scoffs, the scorn, and derision, which had been previously heaped upon him. What a series of all these, in constantly increasing aggravation, attended him, every step, from the moment of his arrest in Gethsemane till his last on Calvary! What consummate hypocrisy in the perfidious wretch who betrayed him, “Hail, Master, and kissed him!” Friendship on the tongue, but bitterest enmity in the heart. There could be no greater insult. In man, nothing calls forth deeper contempt towards him who is guilty of it. Avowed enmity awakens no such feelings as hypocrisy. God himself regards it as one of the greatest offences that men can commit against him.

And then, in all his conscious innocence and perfect holiness, that he should be seized by a band of ruffians, when, too, by a volition, he could have sent them all to perdition!

At the hour of midnight he was hurried to the judgment-hall; there to submit to a mock trial, conducted by a wicked and timid magistrate, and on the testimony of perjured witnesses; attended by a single sympathizing friend, the other disciples, save one, having forsaken him and fled; that one following at a distance, and only present, at length, thrice openly to deny him with oaths and curses.

Thus far no external marks of scorn had been given him on his trial. But the sentence of condemnation pronounced, his sacred person was rudely and cruelly assailed, and made the object of profane mockery and derision. A scarlet robe was thrown around him, a reed put into his hand, and a crown of thorns on his head, in sportive mockery of his royal claims as King of Zion, and Son of God. They spit upon him, and seizing the reed from his hand, smote him on the head. All this was but the beginning of his bodily sufferings. The Cross, the instrument of his death, was laid on his shoulders to be borne to the place of execution. Ah, hearers! a light burden that, crushing as it was, compared with the mighty weight of a world's guilt, which pressed upon him. But, arrived at the spot, the top of the never-to-be-forgotten Calvary, they laid him prostrate to nail him to the Cross. It was while that most cruel act was being done, he raised his eyes to heaven, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." During all this mockery, and insult, and scorn, and cruelty, we hear not one word of complaint, no symptom of repining. Who can fail to recall the prophecy, uttered more than seven hundred years before the predicted event occurred? "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Only one sentence fell from his lips, from the judgment-hall to Calvary; a

sentence of the tenderest sympathy: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." The last, till he put up the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Had this been all, this would seem enough to demonstrate his Deity. Thus far only in this awful narrative does the point under consideration require me to go. From what lips but those which uttered it could such a prayer come? More intent on the sin of his crucifiers than on his own sufferings, intense as they were, and instead of invoking the righteous vengeance of his heavenly Father, pleading their ignorance in extenuation of their guilt, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But, my hearers, we have a deep and solemn interest in this subject. It was not merely to awaken your sympathies with the Saviour's sufferings that we have brought it before you. It is full of solemn instruction and awful warning. May the Spirit help us all to improve it.

1. The Saviour has here set an example for our imitation. He had taught, during his ministry, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." And how strikingly he enforced and exemplified his doctrine in his last prayer, and almost with his dying breath! What a reproof to those who cannot forgive the slightest offence, and even the greatest, which a fellow-

being can commit against us! God indeed does not forgive without the offender's repentance. The Saviour prayed for the forgiveness of his crucifiers, in view of their repentance. Our imitation of him in that respect is the exercise of the same spirit, in the earnest hope and prayer of an offender's repentance. Were this spirit universal in the Church, there would indeed be few or no occasions of offence, or calls for the exercise of forgiveness. It would bear a near resemblance of its upper branch in heaven. There are no bonds which bind so tenderly and so strongly as this spirit which the Gospel breathes, and the Saviour so exemplified in life and death.

2. The Saviour's prayer, "Father, forgive them," embraced in its efficacy not only those who were the immediate subjects of it, but all who have become or will become his disciples and friends, down to the last conversion. Short as it is, it is an epitome or summary of the prayer he offered just before he went to the scene of his last sufferings, in which he prayed, not only for his Apostles, but for all who should believe, through the preaching of his Gospel. It was his last oral, intercessory prayer. Its more immediate results were not only the conversion, as we believe, of the poor ignorant Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross, the Centurion, and the "many that stood with him, beholding the things which were done," and who cried, glorifying God, "truly this was the Son of God;" but it included the multitudes who were converted

under the preaching of the Apostles, and all who ever believed or ever will believe through the Gospel.

What a consolation this to Christians in their various trials and difficulties! If the prayers of Christian friends are valued, how much more precious the prayer of him, who knows all the necessities and trials of his people, and has adapted blessings and consolations to impart, and whose prayers are always heard and answered. These are as much needed now as when he offered his last in the hour of his agony on the cross, or last met his disciples before his sufferings. They may freely pour all their complaints and grief into his bosom, assured that he most tenderly sympathizes with them; that his grace is sufficient for them in every time of need, and freely bestowed. If he could pray for those who were his torturing enemies, but doubtless became his repentant friends, he will never forget nor forsake those who believe and trust in him. If on the cross he could pray for them, on his throne, with "all power given him, in heaven and in earth," He will bless and keep them, to their complete redemption. He knew the efficacy of the blood his foes were drawing to cleanse from all sin. And it is as cleansing now as when it flowed.

Finally. If that prayer of the Saviour was, as it were, enforced, by the ignorance of those who were crucifying him, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do," how, alas! should those tremble who have no such ignorance to plead? What must those

fear, who have lived under the full blaze of the Gospel day from their very infancy, multitudes of whom wear the very seal of the Covenant on their foreheads! What may those among us fear, who are still uncleansed with that blood which the Saviour so cheerfully shed, that the vilest might be pardoned? There is such a thing, such a crime, as "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame." And who is guilty of this, if not impenitent sinners, whether in the Church or out of it?

There is, indeed, a sense in which it is true of even such sinners, they "know not what they do." But ah! not such a sense as can palliate their guilt in their rejection of a freely offered Saviour, whose dearly purchased salvation has been so often and so urgently pressed on their acceptance. Every sin is a nail in his hand and his feet; but the blood they draw can wash the guilt of it away. The sin must be repented of, or it can never be applied to cleanse the sinner. Repentance, or death, and that eternal, is the only alternative the Gospel presents. And how knows the delaying sinner that he will ever repent? I had almost said, repentance now, or repentance never. There at least is no certainty of it, if delayed a half hour longer. It is the voice of the Sacred Book which cries in the ears of all the impenitent, "Now, is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation!" "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart;" and increased hardness will follow every re-

fusal of offered mercy. Who knows how, or when, the blow of death may fall ; or what the mind's state when the soul is engaged in its last struggles to escape from all that is mortal ? What mad insanity, then, to risk one's whole eternity on such contingency, such awful uncertainty ; and most especially, when all that is dear in hope, and precious in eternity, may be at once secured, beyond the possibility of failure. The promises of a Covenant, sealed with the blood of Christ, is the ground and the guarantee of this assurance. It cannot fail. It is the promise of the God of truth. Repent, and you are assured of an interest in the intercessions of Him, whom "the Father heareth always."

XVI.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE SUPPER :

INTENDED FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY, AND AS A MEANS OF
GROWTH IN GRACE.

“To-morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him; even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.”—NUMBERS 16 : 5.

FOR a particular account of the circumstances under which Moses pronounced these words, I must refer you to the chapter that contains them, remarking generally, that a great rebellion had broken out among the Israelites, of a most threatening character to the government and well-being of that nation. Though aimed directly against Moses and Aaron, who were charged with an unlawful and even tyrannical usurpation and exercise of authority, it was virtually directed against Jehovah himself, under whose express command they acted. The accusation against those men of God, in their own language, was, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them; wherefore then lift ye up your-

selves above the congregation of the Lord." Suffice it to say that the following day, after the rebellion had reached its height, was appointed to decide who were the Lord's and who were holy, and causing him whom he had chosen to come near unto him. The result was the most fearful destruction of the rebels. "The ground clove asunder; the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and they and all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation."

God's faithfulness to the covenant which he had made with Abraham, the distinguished progenitor of that nation, and repeatedly confirmed with his pious descendants, was a pledge that no device formed against his chosen people should prosper; that he would always have a seed to serve him. And the history of the Church from its institution to this day, has furnished abundant proof of the redemption of that pledge. It received a new assurance of her protection in the solemn declaration of her Great Head, that "the gates of hell shall never prevail against her."

This embraces, however, much more than a promise of her continued existence, as a body in visible covenant relation to God. It implies her purity and essential holiness; not necessarily of her entire body, but, at least, of a portion of it. For in this extensive sense, it probably in no age has been true, if indeed of any distinct branch of it. Yet her purity as well

as her existence, has always been God's special object in his government over the world. And it will continue to be so, until Christ shall present her to himself, a holy Church, without spot and without blemish.

The means employed have, indeed, in many important respects, been different. Under the old dispensation, they were, sometimes, national calamities, in which the good and the bad often shared indiscriminately; at other times, special judgments, sent upon individuals, as a punishment for their individual offences, as in the case before us, to distinguish between the obedient and the disobedient, the true friends and the real enemies of God. Or, in the language of the text, "to show who were his, and who were holy."

Ordinances were divinely appointed,—circumcision and the passover. They distinguished the children of Abraham from all other nations, but did not discriminate between the righteous and the wicked. They had indeed this tendency, this was the object of their appointment, and when properly observed they had this effect. But that Church was a National Church. Hence the rewards promised to the obedient, and the punishments threatened to the disobedient, were chiefly temporal, although some had respect to an eternal recompense of reward in heaven. But under the Gospel dispensation, the dealings of the Great Head of the Church are less visibly and distinctly discriminating, in regard to the spiritual state of its members. The

Church is no longer a national body. It is one divinely organized community over the earth. It is not indeed a pure body. But her existence and ordinances constitute as visible a distinction between her and the rest of the world, as they did between the Israelites and all other nations. It has, however, a far higher object than this visible distinction. No external observances are of any value where the proper qualifications of the heart are wanting.

The above remarks furnish the following general sentiment, viz., that the ordinances of the Gospel, and especially that of the Lord's Supper, are eminently discriminating, and intended to "show," in the language of the text, "who are the Lord's, and who are holy."

We shall confine our remarks to the ordinance of the Supper, with reference to which we may appropriately apply the words of the text: "To-morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy. I will cause him to come near unto him; even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him." This will appear from the following considerations.

1. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper was appointed for Christians, and for Christians only. The circumstances attending its institution, the parables or figures by which it is fitly represented, and indeed the very nature of the ordinance itself, all prove that it was intended for none but the true friends of the Redeemer. When it was instituted, the whole true Church was

virtually present, being represented by the Apostles, who were divinely commissioned, not only to preach the Gospel, but to collect, organize, and regulate churches, as branches of the one body, of which Jesus Christ was the Head; being founded on him, as the chief corner-stone, and built up a holy temple.

It is true, that Judas was present at the commencement of that solemn meeting, but only while the passover was being eaten; for immediately on receiving the "sop," which was a part of the passover, "Satan entered into him," took full possession of him, and "he went out." He never partook of the Eucharist, the consecrated bread and cup. It is represented as a feast, where only friends associate and hold communion with one another. The guests are called Christ's friends, and he, their friend. The proofs that none but true Christians have any right to partake of this ordinance are so abundant, that it would require a volume to state them. We have only hinted at a few of them; and let it suffice to add only, that from the very nature of this ordinance, real Christians only are authorized to partake of it. It is a celebration of love, a commemoration of dying love, which requires the sincerest gratitude and the warmest love in the communicant, as well as the exercise of faith, which Christians alone possess. All this shows that the Lord's Supper was designed to be a most discriminating ordinance; a badge, as it were, of true Christian discipleship; a mark of distinction between the chil-

dren of God, and the children of this world; the friends and the enemies of Jesus Christ. This, I say, was evidently the design of this Gospel feast. From which, however, it does not follow, that none but Christians do partake of it, or that none are Christians who do not partake of it. But,

2. It is not only the design but the tendency of this ordinance, to distinguish between those who are the cordial friends of the Saviour, and those who are not. The observance of the Lord's Supper is not a mere ceremony. It is a means of growth in grace; a season of peculiar nearness and intimacy of communion between Christ and his friends; an occasion when the Saviour presents himself, through most impressive symbols, in relations the most important, and attitudes the most endearing. In the hour of communion we are made impressively conversant with scenes unparalleled in the annals of time; transactions of universal and most solemn interest. Time and space seem annihilated, and we feel that we stand by the very cross upon which the Redeemer bled and died. All the wonders of redemption cluster around that spot. There we read, as in letters of blood, not only that God can be just and the justifier of them that believe, but we see how the Divine attribute of justice is satisfied and glorified, and mercy displayed and magnified. There, too, love is seen to triumph over every obstacle in the way of the sinner's recovery to the forfeited favor of the justly offended

God. No humiliation of his equal Son too deep, no agonies too crushing, no sacrifice too great, to prepare the way for the sinner's reconciliation and eternal salvation. There, too, we see sin, its nature, and the sinner's demerit, as can nowhere else be seen, even in the world of woe. Its whole accumulated weight, of our entire fallen world, pressed on the head of the infinitely holy Sufferer, in that hour, the transactions of which are so vividly brought to view in the solemn employments of a communion occasion.

And now, what must be the tendency of these representations, these views, this whole exhibition, on the communicant? If he has any proper qualifications for such an occasion, if his heart ever felt the power of Divine grace, must they not be increased? If he is a Christian, other than in name only, must not his gratitude be kindled to higher degrees—his love receive a quickening impulse—his faith become more firm and comprehensive? Will he not feel a greater nearness—a stronger attachment to the Saviour—a relaxing of the bonds which bind him to the earth—greater weanedness from the world—if not an entire crucifixion to it? Will not heaven and its glories be brought nearer to him, and he feel some increased qualification for its joys? That is the season when many a Christian has experienced all this to a higher degree than at any other. Like the beloved John, they have, as it were, leaned on the Saviour's bosom, or felt like Peter, at the Mount of Transfigura-

tion, when he exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Laboring, suffering, dying for Christ would then be easy. Aye, brethren, this is the direct tendency of such an occasion, such an exhibition, if there is the least preparation, the least qualification for it in the heart of a communicant. And this was the kind and benevolent intention of the Saviour in appointing this sacred ordinance. He designed by it to bring the real Christian nearer to himself; to bind him more closely to his own heart; to inspire him with a larger portion of his own Spirit, and cause him to exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." Thou art the "chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely."

There is no such thing as growing in grace, and in the proper knowledge of Jesus Christ, but in a conscious nearness to him; no subduing of the corruptions of the natural heart, no deepening of repentance, no victory over spiritual enemies, no increasing likeness to the Saviour, but when the thoughts and heart are fixedly, and strongly, centred on him. Only when, "with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are we changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord." The perfection of holiness, exact likeness to him in heaven, is caused by "seeing him as he is;" beholding the glories of his Divine Person without an intervening cloud.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” But when are such views of Christ as clear, when as distinct and impressive, as when the eye of faith beholds him, as exhibited in the holy Eucharist? as when, in the wine and the bread, the appointed and expressive symbols of his crucified body, we drink his blood and eat his flesh? And will all this produce no distinct effect on the communicant? As he goes from such a scene into the world, will not “the world take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus?” Will it not be evidenced by his daily walk and conversation, and his increased circumspection; his careful avoidance of whatever would bring reproach on the Saviour’s cause, or a blot on his own Christian character; or that should lead the world to say, “What does he more than others?” This leads me to remark,

3. A communion occasion will produce some effect; will prove a benefit or an injury to every communicant. Such a season cannot pass without decisive results. It is true of all the means of grace, that unless they are properly improved, they will be abused. The very Gospel is “a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death.” It is either the power of God unto salvation or it becomes the means of hardening the heart, and in proportion to their directness and force. We see this

manifested, and not seldom, under a less or greater resistance of the truth, in a season of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. No one can live through such a season, without being made a subject of the saving influences of the Spirit, or becoming more indifferent, and often reckless and wholly abandoned.

Such is the moral constitution of man, that motives will necessarily produce some effect, less or more deep; and on religious subjects, and especially those which relate to their salvation, the effect will be salutary or injurious. On this subject, the mind cannot be called up to a high degree of action, without soon either yielding, or effectually resisting; and the reaction will be proportionally great, and even greater. Hence it is universally true, that when a sinner is thrown into a state of deep and painful conviction, if he does not soon yield his heart to God, and become a true convert, he will quench the influences of the Spirit, and "the last state of that man becomes worse than the first;" and it is a miracle of mercy, which seldom occurs, if he is ever again awakened to the same degree. More commonly he is left to an uninterrupted state of self-security. The Spirit no longer strives with him. We see this illustrated under the painfully afflicting providences of God. If men are not made better by them, they are made worse.

If this be true under the ordinary means of grace, and the more deeply affecting providences of God, how much more certainly will it be so, under the means

and motives which the awful scenes of the Saviour's crucifixion furnish, as presented in the ordinance of the Supper? The more vividly the Saviour is presented to the view of a duly prepared Christian, the more deeply will he be affected. And though the ardor and fervor of his feelings may abate, he will not lose them. They will remain, at least to a happy degree, and exert a happy influence over his life. Others will "take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus." His Christian character will be improved. He will become more weaned from the world, more circumspect in his life, lest he bring reproach on the cause of Christ, or a blot on his own Christian character. This is the great object of the institution,—the Christian's growth in grace. And there is no proper remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the observance of that ordinance, where all this is not the obvious result. If a communicant can go from the Lord's table into the world, with no renewed or firmer resolves of being more crucified to the world in all its forms of temptation, he has not only not been benefited, even if he may be a Christian, but the proof is strong that he has a name to live, but he is dead—dead still in trespasses and sins. And were he, which indeed is not to be expected, but were he to enter into a strict and impartial examination of himself, he would find that his sense of religious obligations, of his solemn covenant vows, and his relish for religious duties, were all declining in him, and that the world was drawing its cords tighter and

tighter around him. And this will soon be rendered obvious to all who observe his course of life. While, therefore, the "path of the one will shine more and more unto the perfect day," the course of the other will, to say the least, involve greater and greater doubt, of even the possession of a Christian character.

The foregoing remarks are sufficient to prove the truth of the sentiment, or doctrine, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a most discriminating ordinance, and well calculated to show who are the Lord's, and who are holy; and such as he acknowledges to be his, "will he cause to come near unto him; even him whom he hath chosen, will he cause to come near unto him."

Need I say then, brethren and sisters of this church, that a most solemn occasion is before us? "To-morrow the Lord will show who among us are his, and who are holy." There will, indeed, be no outward decisive manifestation of it. Profession will not decide it. On the very occasion to which my text refers, the very author of a most daring rebellion made that profession. They said, "All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them." A seat at the communion-table will not decide it. At the marriage feast which "a certain king made for his son," and which, though the holy Eucharist was not then instituted, yet may well represent this Gospel festival, one appeared "who had not on a wedding-garment," though it had been provided for him. Nor

is this case, perhaps, in any branch of the Church, a fair representation of the number or proportion of unworthy partakers at the Lord's table when spread for his people.

But though there be no outward manifestation or token by which the unworthy may be exposed, yet we know that the omniscient eye of the Saviour will detect, and in the last day expose to an assembled universe, every unqualified guest. Nor are the best prepared, the best qualified, without occasion of still better preparation and higher qualifications. The Saviour is present, at such times, by fittest means and expressive symbols, and by the most awful and affecting scenes, then, as it were, re-enacted, in a peculiar sense, and as nowhere else present, till he appear on the throne of judgment. It is his table that is spread. He furnishes it with food from heaven. It is his own "flesh and blood" which he spreads before his friends, and of which, in emblems of his Divine appointment, they eat and drink. And he tells us, "He will come in and view the guests. Those whom he hath chosen, will he cause to come near unto him."

Are any of us, brethren, still unprepared for that searching interview? This is our last public opportunity to obtain the requisite fitness. O how should we improve it! Nor think the important work accomplished when we leave this house to-night. He will accompany us to our dwellings; he will meet us in our closets, if still engaged in proper efforts to meet him

at his table. He will even give us some foretaste of the blessedness of that meeting, if we have the spirit of communion. Yea, if we sincerely ask him, he will breathe that spirit into our hearts; he will take the work of our preparation into his own hands, and will clothe us from his own vestry.

I know of no fitter words with which to close this preparatory service, than those with which I commenced it. "To-morrow, the Lord will show who are his, and who are holy; and will cause him to come near unto him; even him whom he hath chosen, will he cause to come near unto him."

May this be the happy experience of all who approach his table on the coming day. Amen.

XVII.

OUR NEED OF THE GRACE OF CHRIST.

AN AFTER-COMMUNION DISCOURSE.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

ROMANS 16 : 24.

WITH this blessing in substance the Apostle Paul closed all his Epistles, except his second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he associates the Father and the Spirit with the Son; and which, ever since his day, has been called the Apostolic Benediction, and been generally pronounced in all Christian Churches, at the close of religious worship. It is an official act, originating in God's direction to Aaron and his sons in the priesthood saying, “On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.” (See Exod. 6th chap.) This three-fold repetition of the distinguishing name of Jehovah, and the peculiar blessings connected with each, are

only more plainly and appropriately to Christian times, expressed by St. Paul in the Epistle referred to: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

This, and especially the words of the text, may be regarded as a prayer; and a prayer addressed directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the expression of a desire for those blessings, which can only be bestowed by the Almighty; for which he has made it the duty and privilege of his people to ask him. These are all summarily comprised in the word grace, which is here evidently used in its largest sense: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." That grace in its highest efficacy, in providing redemption for fallen men, in laying the foundation of every hope for eternity, and in effecting the indispensable qualifications for enjoying the happiness of heaven, we, my brethren, have this day been celebrating, in the observance of that most distinguishing ordinance of the Gospel, the Lord's Supper. This was the great object of coming to this table this morning. From that spot, and the contemplation of those affecting scenes which were there exhibited, we are about to go forth into the world again, and engage in the things of this life. We are allowed another hour, however, before we arise and go hence, to linger at the cross, and recall and deepen any proper impressions which we may have received, and so far as we may lawfully and

wisely do it, look forward to those undisclosed events, which God in his providence may have appointed us in coming days, and ere another such season of special privilege shall return to this church, and especially, in the fulness of their numbers. Before that distant day will arrive, some seventieth part of an entire generation will have passed from time into eternity. This city will probably furnish its proportion of victims to the angel of death. The pale of the Church will afford no defence. And during that period, multitudes will have gone from earth to heaven. And who shall say, or dare predict, that none of our numbers will have bowed to the irreversible mandate? But, living or dying, wherever we may be, whatever our engagements or condition, what more appropriate petition could be offered,—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!” None surely more expressive of the feelings of your pastor. That grace, which here includes every desirable blessing and favor, we shall all need. And to descend to some particulars, and to give, it may be, interest to the subject, I remark,

1. We shall need it, in order to secure the benefits designed by the solemnities of this day, or indeed any other appointed means of grace. If there are any means, any solemnities, any concurrence of circumstances, which of themselves could secure unabated love, unwavering faith, and undeviating obedience, any intrinsic efficacy to produce these effects, surely, they were those with which we have been favored to-day.

More affecting scenes than those which cluster around the cross of Christ, will never occur till worlds are assembled at his bar. What can kindle love, or strengthen faith, provoke repentance, or produce resolutions of obedience to higher and holier degrees, than the solemn transactions of a communion occasion? When does the world so entirely lose its charms, or become less in the Christian's esteem, than in such an hour, unless when the hand of death is closing his eyes forever on it? But alas! what do we require more than our own experience to teach us, how soon all these things may lose their influence?

Grace alone can keep alive what only grace could first produce. By the grace of God the true Christian is what he is. It was grace which first arrested him in his career of sin, which uncovered to him the flaming pit, and alarmed his fears, which arraigned his sins in frightful order before him, and caused him to see and feel his guilt and danger; grace, which drew his feet from the horrible pit and the miry clay, and plucked him as a brand out of the fire; grace, all grace, full and free, which presented the bleeding Saviour in all the winning attitudes of mercy and love, as his atoner and his substitute, which opened his heart, affectionately and gratefully, to embrace him, and commit to his faithful keeping all his interests for time and eternity, and poured the consolations of sweet hope into his bursting heart, and gave that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. The same grace has

procured for him all the means of his sanctification and full preparation for heaven. On that grace the Christian will be constantly dependent for any profitable or right improvement of those means, for every step's advance in the Divine life. Born again he may be. But without the grace of God to keep holiness alive in the heart, all external advantages would be fruitless, and he would utterly fail of heaven. He would derive no benefit from his richest privileges. He would never perform one acceptable act of worship. Grace must carry on what grace has begun. And that it will, is the only ground of the believer's hope, that he will reach heaven at last. To feel this dependence is not only his greatest security, but the source of his strength. Paul felt and realized this when he penned that seeming paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong." And paraphrasing this sentiment, one has aptly observed, that "in the kingdom of grace, men ascend by lying down, conquer by submitting, save their lives by losing them, and are the strongest when most weak." Every true Christian can readily solve this seeming contradiction. It is the promise of Christ himself, that his strength is made perfect in the Christian weakness. And every child of God can say with the Apostle, "Through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things."

What petition, then, more important—what more urgent—what should more constantly flow from the heart and the lips! "The grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ be with us." Without his grace, our richest privileges will all be fruitless, perverted, and only turn to our greater condemnation.

2. We shall need this grace as we resume and pursue the employments and business of the world. Tomorrow's sun will summon us to our usual avocations, and the business of the world again solicit our hearts, and command our thoughts and hands. None of us require to be told, how exceedingly difficult it is to resist those solicitations, and exclude those thoughts, and recall those hands from their wonted employment, even on God's holy day; how much of the world we bring with us, even to his sanctuary, and allow it to obtrude itself upon us in the very hour of worship! No reflecting, watchful Christian, can ever suffer that day to close, without recalling, and deeply repenting of that sin—or rather train of sins. Alas! how readily and eagerly the world seizes upon our thoughts, and commands our conversation, the moment we leave the house of prayer! And not a few who profess to be the disciples of Christ, encourage and cherish this enemy of the soul and its salvation, by spending more or less of that sacred day, if not by actual engagement in secular concerns, by receiving and perusing letters of business, and in laying their plans for the coming day, yet in reading the news, or trifling books, or indulging in idle walks and vain conversation.

Let it be remembered that the following declara-

tions of Jehovah have never been revoked, but repeatedly sanctioned: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing my pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." But if it be so difficult to exclude the world, while surrounded with all the favorable influences of the holy Sabbath, and even during the hours, and even the first moments, which immediately succeed the worship of God's house, what power will it exert over the mind and heart of life, in the absence of those sacred influences? The world, in its very best aspects, and in its most lawful and indispensable engagements, is the enemy of God and of the soul, and often drew solemn warnings from the Saviour's lips. The world is full of lures to draw us away from the path of duty and of life. Alas! there is no spot, no employment so sacred as to deter the great Tempter. He was present when Christ summoned together the twelve to institute the sacramental supper. He took full possession of Judas. He assailed Peter, and desired to have him. He procured his fall. He alarmed the fears of all the disciples, so that they fled, in the Saviour's greatest need of their sympathy,

except the faithful, the beloved John, who went with him to the judgment-hall, and stood by him at the cross. Little did they expect—little fear of being so soon overcome when seated with their Saviour at the communion-table.

And have Christians now less cause to expect, less reason to fear temptations and trials of their faith and their firmness? The great Tempter well knows their most vulnerable points, their ruling desires, their besetting sins; the heavy weights which hold them back from duty, or press them down to a sinful conformity to the world. The most confident firmness may soon relax to sinful weakness. We shall scarcely have retired from the communion-table and left the house of prayer, ere some tempting influence will assail us.

The adversary of God and of souls will not be even discouraged by the bitter tears which he saw fall from the eyes of the communicants, at the remembrance of their past delinquencies, and their deepened consciousness of utter unworthiness of so great a privilege; nor by seeing the heart beat with warmer love to their Redeemer; or hearing the inward whisper of firmer and holier resolves for the future and more entire devotedness to his cause. All this he will ascribe to the influence of surrounding objects; to the power of the Cross while they stood, as it were, at its very foot, and held the eye of faith fixed on the bleeding sufferer.

But removed from that spot, and engaged in other scenes, the eye of faith loses its direction, and the

thoughts and the heart are absorbed by other objects. Nearness to the cross is the Christian's only safety. And there is such a thing as maintaining that position, amid all the temptations of the world. But need I say, grace alone can effect it? What prayer in this view, therefore, is more appropriate? "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

3. We shall need his grace in order to a faithful and proper discharge of the various duties which will be required of us. Without such Divine assistance, no duty, however obvious or easy, would be acceptably performed. There is far more in the duties which are required of us than the external act. Their acceptableness to God, or the contrary, depends on the state of the heart. The more formal one's worship of God, where the heart is not properly engaged, the more unacceptable; or rather, criminal, because to insincerity is added the crime of hypocrisy. But not to this only, but to a proper discharge of every other duty, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is indispensable.

Assuming the constant necessities of Christians, the Apostle Paul has expressed the truth of our position in language the most express and comprehensive. After referring to the unspeakable privileges and blessings of Christ's priesthood, and that as the only medium of approaching the mercy-seat, he adds, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

But there are many duties which are of difficult performance. We need not particularize them. An enlightened and impressible conscience will render this unnecessary. They consist of what are usually termed crosses; often difficult to be taken up, and heavy to be borne. They require sacrifices to be made, whether of feeling or of anything else, to which there is a strong opposition; privation to be endured, to which there is strong repugnance. Christians sustain most solemn and important relations to Christ, to each other, and to the world. They are the Saviour's only representatives on earth. They are bound to keep his image bright on their moral character. To promote each other's spiritual and eternal well-being; to show that they are a peculiar people, an affectionate fraternity. They are to "let their light shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven." They are never to render themselves liable to the reproach, "What do ye more than others?" And consequently to keep the line of demarcation broad and plain between them and the world.

Under all the unfavorable influences with which they are and will be surrounded from the world, and the workings of their own at best but partially subdued corruptions, they will find it hard to meet some of the most urgent claims of the Gospel, and utterly impossible to answer them, either to their own comfort, or the honor and best good of the cause which they profess to have espoused, without constant Divine

assistance. In this view, then, what more appropriate and necessary petition can be offered, than, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all?"

4. We shall need this grace in order to meet the various providences which are before us. What lines are written for us in the book of God's decrees, we indeed know not. But this very uncertainty, as to what awaits us, together with the certainty of our constant liability to all the various afflictions and trials allotted to man in the present state, shows the necessity and the wisdom of preparation for the worst. This can only be effected by the grace of God. Few live long in the world without experiencing trials less or more severe. None are wholly exempt from them. This is a world over which death sways a universal sceptre. And when he strikes his blow, it is not his victim only who suffers. Many a close and tender tie which bound others to him are cut asunder. Often the survivor is the greater sufferer; always, where the one removed is a Christian. To such, death at any age, under any circumstances, is infinite gain. The bereaved are the sufferers. Afflictions and trials of this kind certainly await us. The six months which are now before us, ere we meet again as a full church on a like occasion as that which we have to-day enjoyed, will not be an exception, in all probability, to the same portion of past years. Not all who met around the table of their Lord and Master, this morning, will ever meet there again. Some will have ex-

changed these for far higher and richer privileges; the Gospel-feast on earth for the marriage-supper of the Lamb in heaven; will have gone where these emblems of the Saviour's body and blood will not be needed, to remind them of his dying love, or kindle the spirit of communion with him to higher degrees. Their faith will be exchanged for vision. They will see him face to face; and behold the glories of his person with immortal eyes. They may have been permitted to come to their Lord's table to-day, the better to prepare them for the speedy change, which will pass upon them; to strengthen their faith for the final conflict; to wean them more from the world, they are so soon to leave; to raise their love to the Saviour to higher degrees, and brighten their prospects for eternity, that they may the more willingly resign their earthly friends, and bid farewell to all the objects and scenes of time, banish the darkness and terrors of the grave, and render death a sweet and coveted sleep.

Our Saviour went from the upper chamber to the Judgment Hall, and thence to the Cross, and his disciples went forth to new trials and afflictions; and no doubt the sanctifying influence of that last interview the better prepared them for enduring them. The same trials and afflictions do not await us. But trials and afflictions in some form are to be expected. Death, indeed, ere long to some; the death of friends to others. And who will not need the grace of the Lord

Jesus Christ in either event? Who can glorify him in death? Who look calmly into the dark grave, at the sight of which nature revolts and shrinks back, or forward still to the untried scenes of eternity, without the support and consolations which grace alone can give? Or who can see their friends and dearest relatives laid in the grave, without the same grace to sustain and comfort them? And yet these trials will be experienced by some, it may be, by many of us, before we shall all meet again. How suitable the prayer, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all."

But grace defends against dangers, as well as sustains under trials; dangers to life, dangers to Christian character—to piety. And to these dangers who is not exposed? To the first, every individual is every moment liable. Death stands near every step in life. No man can say the next will not be the last. The means of a removal from time to eternity are often invisible, till the moment they are employed. Our condition may be more or less one of hazard. But protection must come from the same source; the same Almighty arm in every condition. And although always to be acknowledged and realized, yet many circumstances in our own condition cannot fail to give this reflection more than ordinary weight. The season of the year has arrived for the dispersion of no inconsiderable portion of our usual congregation. And the separation, in regard to many, long, and to distant places, must necessarily awaken more than ordinary

solicitude. It cannot fail, at least, to remind us of a still longer separation, and to a far more distant place, and where the next meeting will be under circumstances of the deepest solemnity.

But the hazards and perils to life, however they may be increased by the circumstances in which we may be placed, are not the only dangers that will require the protecting or interposing grace of God. As already intimated, there are peculiar dangers to Christian character, to spiritual edification and piety. The cultivation of the Christian graces depends, eminently and even essentially, on habit; the habitual performance of religious duties. No man, for example, ever made advances in the knowledge of God who did not habitually study his word. No man ever experienced the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, with whom the practice of prayer was not habitual. And so of other duties as connected with other graces. But I need not say that the habit of an act depends on the frequency, the uniformity, the punctuality, with which that act is performed. Nor need I add that these depend on the circumstances in which one is placed. A change in them must necessarily prevent that uniform, punctual performance of, at least, some of the most important religious duties, which with every Christian should be habitual. And the habit once broken in upon, it becomes difficult to restore it. Remissness and voluntary neglect will ensue, as the necessary consequence. We are creatures of habit. And

it is much easier to break up a good habit than to form it. Many repetitions of the same act are necessary to form it; but a few violations will destroy it. Familiar associations of place, and especially places of worship and persons and objects, are certainly favorable to it. New or strange ones as certainly unfavorable. But it should be remembered for our encouragement, and as a motive to unyielding perseverance, that the more powerfully our faith is tried, and the strength of our moral and religious principles is put to the test, while that faith remains firm, and those principles unyielding, the stronger is the evidence of Christian discipleship, the more extensive and happy the influence which one exerts, and the greater his reward in heaven.

But whatever may be the allotments of Providence respecting any of us, may the privileges of this day be improved and blessed to our better preparation to meet them. If, like "the beloved disciple," we have, as it were, leaned upon the Saviour's bosom, in the hour of sweet communion with him at his table, like him, too, let us go with him to trials, and sorrows, and labor, and accompany him to his very Cross; and if so he require, like the great Pattern himself of patient suffering, cheerfully lay our lives down for him, who laid his down for us. He has permitted us to sit at his table to-day, not merely for the satisfaction of an hour's more intimate communion with him, not merely to enjoy an antepast of the marriage-supper above, but to gather strength for more devoted labors in his

service, and for a more patient endurance of the trials which may await us, and the better to glorify him in life and in death. And if we are never permitted again to enjoy this privilege together on earth, may we all be prepared to eat and drink at his table in his kingdom above, and sit with him in his throne, even as he is set down with his Father in his throne. May a kind, protecting Providence attend those who go, and watch over those who remain. “And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” Amen.

XVIII.

HEAVEN.

“But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”—HEBREWS 11 : 16.

THE countries which are here placed in comparison with each other, were Canaan and heaven. In the Sacred Scriptures these two countries are everywhere set forth as furnishing the objects of the supreme desires of mankind. And, as they mark the dividing line between what is temporal and that which is spiritual and eternal, the supreme desires of mankind are still centred on the one or on the other. This world and heaven divide our entire race. But whatever advantages, civil and religious, were connected with the actual possession of that earthly land of promise, the faith and hopes of the pious portion of the Israelites were supremely centred on that “better country”—“that city which God had prepared for them,”—heaven and its glories. And what else in the comparison is worthy of the supreme desires and aim of immortal beings? This world, with all its possessions and charms, is destined to be blotted from existence ;

and long before that, we and this whole generation, as with those that have preceded us, will have forever done with it. To the truly good, heaven alone will be their eternal dwelling-place. There they hope and expect to join their pious friends who have gone before, and those who shall follow after them, and ultimately, all the redeemed, with angels that never sinned, and spend an endless existence in beholding, admiring, and celebrating the ever-unfolding glories of God and the Lamb. This is all that supports and comforts them in their present pilgrimage, and under their various afflictions and trials. What then should be a subject of more frequent as well as intense contemplation, than the eternal happy home of all the saints—that world, where God, in all the full manifestations of his infinite perfections, resides; where the Saviour is the object of their ceaseless praises; where all the holy constitute one harmonious, delighted family, of whom God is their father, and Christ their elder brother? With all these attractions, is it not strange that the thoughts of Christians, especially, are not more frequently, more intensely directed towards that world?

One reason undoubtedly is, that they look upon that world confusedly, with little or no distinct perceptions of it; merely as something so entirely distinct and different from this, that all attempts to gain definite ideas of it are utterly in vain, as though there was nothing analogous to it in the present state; nothing

here in common with what is found there. But as no subject can be as important as this, to every fair expectant of that world, to which he is soon to be removed, let us briefly inquire what God has revealed respecting it.

1. It has locality. Wherever heaven may be, it is a place—a place of residence, as much as this earth is a place of residence. We are not told, indeed, in what part of God's universe it is. It is simply represented as above us. But this only expresses relation to this earth. If any distinct idea is to be attached to the word above, it is undoubtedly that of immense distance, far beyond our vision, or even scope of the telescope. This, however, is matter of no essential importance to us in our present state of existence. Not so, of the fact of its being a place of residence. For without that we can have no intelligent idea of heaven. The notion that the soul, on leaving the body is absorbed in the Deity, as it has been expressed, is absolutely unintelligible. Such an idea is not hinted in all the Bible. But it is everywhere represented as in a place. The translation of the bodies of Enoch and Elijah, the ascended body of Jesus, and the universal resurrection, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth,—all these facts prove that heaven is a place; where all the holy will dwell forever. For those bodies are, and are to be material, substantially such as lived and moved on this earth.

And if material, there must be locality,—the one implies the other. When Paul was caught up into Paradise, even the third heavens, and heard words which it was not lawful, or possible for a man to utter, who can doubt that he was introduced to a place where those words were uttered which he heard; and the very doubt which he expressed whether he was in the body, or out of the body, proved that he went to a place: that it was neither a fancy nor a swoon, but a reality. And I need only remark, that the idea of place is essential to all conceptions of mortals, of the reality of the heavenly state.

2. Heaven is a place of matchless splendor and glory. In a physical point of view it is the perfection of beauty. As the citadel of God, the chosen residence of the Redeemer and his dear-bought Church, we might reasonably expect it to be embellished with all the beauty and splendor, which his infinite wisdom and power could produce. Eden, in the days of man's innocence, was but a faint type of the heavenly world. It is impossible to form higher conceptions of grandeur and magnificence, than those which are expressed by the various images employed by inspired penmen, in describing it. Listen to the following language of the highly favored Apostle John, in his description of heaven, under the emblem of a city, contained in the twenty-first chapter of his Revelations.

“The building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was of pure gold, like unto clear glass; and

the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst; and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass; and I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it; and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." What imagery can surpass this as emblematical of all that is beautiful, splendid, and magnificent! True, it is the language of figure, and is to be understood figuratively. The emblems are taken from objects of sense, because they are addressed to our senses. Nor could the description otherwise be understood by mortals. But when these outward channels for receiving impressions are exchanged for what is infinitely more refined, who can doubt that the reality will immeasurably surpass this representation? And although mortals would be utterly overpowered by the brilliancy and glory of that upper world; yet, the refined senses with which their bodies will be raised in the last day, and the enlarged capacities which they will possess when they shall have

thrown off their present gross tenements of clay, will be perfectly adapted to that new state of existence. So true is it, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But dismissing these merely external things, these outward splendors of that better country, that heavenly city, which God hath prepared for his redeemed children, let us contemplate what else that world affords to those who are prepared to enjoy them, so far as they have been revealed to us in this sacred book. And I remark,

3. That in heaven, God is seen, as seen nowhere else. The manifestations which God has made of himself, to some of his peculiarly favored people on earth, have indeed been overpowering. The Shekinah, the transfiguration, the prophetic and the Apocalyptic visions, are but a few instances of the displays of his ineffable glory. But in heaven, he is beheld in all the fulness of his perfection. Here, we see through a glass, darkly; but there, face to face. Here, we know but in part; but there, we shall know even as we are known. Here are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. The Scriptures everywhere represent heaven as the place where God manifests himself in all his perfections and glory. In the present state we can, at best, know but little of that infinite Being. When, in answer to his prayers that he would show him his glory, Moses saw him, he

beheld him but obscurely. No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him and live. But not so in heaven. There too the whole Godhead will shine forth gloriously through the Redeemer's manhood. In his last public prayer, he put up the petition in behalf of his disciples, that they might be where he is, to behold his glory; and even tells his heavenly Father, that the glory which he had received from him, he had bestowed (*i. e.*) would bestow on them.

But on this point I need not enlarge, and remark,

4. On the society which heaven affords. Ah, how little can the maturest saint on earth, the best prepared for that society, appreciate it, as it there exists! How few such can find a fellow-feeling in others, even though Christians! With multitudes who bear the image of Christ, how often is Christian fellowship interrupted! How often the unsubdued remains of depravity break forth into occasions of grief, distrust, and offence! And alas! how often by mutual offences is the Saviour wounded in the house of his friends! Not so in the heavenly world. There, not only do the wicked cease from troubling, but the purest affection for each other reigns in every heart. Their interest, their employments, their joys are one. There, the demands of both tables of the Law are fully accorded. God is loved with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and they love one another even as they love themselves. What an immense multitude, too, and each with a heart large enough to embrace the

whole in the purest affection! All the countless millions, from the death of Abel to the last-born subject of grace.

How improving, too, that society; embracing prophets, and apostles, and martyred conféssors, and others most favored and distinguished on earth, whose lips, and pens, and example were blessed to the salvation of multitudes! What will it be to sit at their feet and still learn lessons, which they will still be capable of teaching! for there will be grades in heaven, of different degrees of knowledge, though eternally ascending. For heaven is a world, a state of endless progress. There, too, how many friends, partakers of the same grace on earth, will meet, and with ecstasy embrace each other, who in the deepest sorrow parted here, but meet there to part no more! How often has death been desired rather than life, to go where their pious friends, even their sanctified infants, have gone before them! But ah, what joy to meet again where there is no death to part, no absence to mourn!

There, too, as the crowning excellence and glory of that happy society, and which binds them all together in one blissful fraternity, is the Son of God, in his glorified humanity. For he is the elder brother in that happy family. "Wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren." From him they will derive, as its original source, all their knowledge of Divine things, and which will be forever on the advance. By him all the mysteries of his providence will be cleared up.

Every design and purpose of God in all their afflictions, and trials, and sorrows, will be disclosed, and the happy bearing of all his dealings towards them be seen, acknowledged, and call forth new expressions of gratitude, new notes of praise. The history of each will be an interesting volume to review and study; how they were brought to a knowledge of the truth; how kept from final apostasy; how recovered when they had fallen; how reclaimed when they had wandered, and by whose strong arm they were led on, till their feet stood on Mount Zion above; till they had entered within the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city.

Jesus Christ as Mediator, will forever be the medium through which the Saints will hold communion with God. Every blessing conferred on them in heaven, not less than those blessings which were bestowed on earth, will forever be for Christ's sake. Nor can they ever forget the immense price he paid to purchase them. He will probably forever wear substantially, the form he wore on earth; forever show the scars which will tell the story of the Cross. His humanity indeed will be arrayed in splendor and glory, which only immortal eyes can gaze upon; such perhaps as John in vision saw, whose brightness was above the sun when he shineth in his strength; or such as Peter, James, and John beheld on the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet it will be the same Jesus of Nazareth that bled on Calvary; "the same tender, compassionate

Saviour, who in view of those awful agonies, addressed to his sorrowing disciples those comforting words, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also;" the same sympathizing Friend who soothed his children in their afflictions, and sustained them in their wearisome pilgrimage. Without tokens of all this, without those scars of honor and of victory, heaven itself would lose much of its happiness. And when, at every look, they behold all these proofs of what he had done and suffered to rescue them from deserved destruction, and raise them to endless blessedness, with what new ardor will they pour forth their gratitude, and say, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." All, all, is now forever safe from forfeiture. They are confirmed in holiness, and an eternity of ever-increasing happiness is before them.

1. And now, what more needs be said, in the first place, to make that world a subject of habitual, untiring contemplation? Whither should the thoughts of the hopeful expectants of such an unfading, glorious inheritance be directed, on what fixed, if not on its

riches and glories? What else in the comparison demands a thought? And then, so near to the moment of its full possession! A step only divides this world from that; a step which any moment may be taken. Every Christian should feel, and act under the impression, that at any moment he may wake up amid all the glories of heaven. Such an impression would be the strongest impulse to the performance of every duty. Under its force no Christian could lie in spiritual slumber, or remain in spiritual sloth, for a single moment. Whatsoever his hands should find to do, he would do it with all his might. And this principle should gather strength, just as the distance is diminished between his present state of toil and trial, and his entrance upon the joys of heaven. We may remark,

2. How ought the attractions of heaven to weaken or moderate the Christian's attachment to this world? There is nothing of earth, surely, which can satisfy the desires of a sanctified heart. The whole of it were a poor portion for an immortal soul. Poor, from its own nature; worthless, if this were all, from the shortness of its continuance. Its best possessions are but beggarly elements. Ah, what is this world, its riches, its honors, its pleasures, to one who may view himself, every moment, as standing on the very verge of heaven; to one who has already an earnest of that unfading glorious inheritance, on which, at longest, he is soon to enter! The proper point from which to gain a true estimate of this world is, when it will be

no more, away from the influence of present objects ; when we are either torn away from it, or it is consumed in the universal conflagration, and we look back to what it was, and ask ourselves, how it will then appear ? How, when we shall have done with time, or all time itself shall have given place to eternity ? And to that point we can at any moment transport ourselves in thought. Think, then, what this world will be to us, when we shall have become spirits in the world of spirits ! What, when (if indeed so happy) we shall be wholly engrossed with the glories of heaven ! O, how insignificant then will this world appear to us ! Surely, it is not difficult to contemplate a future, which we believe or hope, and even know, will soon become a present reality. And every child of God will soon be in heaven, forever placed beyond the influence of temporal things, with no more concern with earthly things, than if earth had never been ! Yes, that is the stand-point, from which to gain a just and true estimate of earth and of time. And these reflections suggest a

3d. Namely : That the prospect of entering that better country, that city prepared of God for his people, should stimulate every Christian to be prepared for his entrance into it, and cheerfully to leave this world, at God's pleasure. Few Christians have done, and well done, all their work for this. The best prepared are the most ready to acknowledge their deficiency, and unpreparedness for such an event. Few,

if indeed any, are always on the mount, and viewing with the telescope of faith, the glories of that better country, that splendid city, which God has prepared for them. Most even of those who have wisely and securely planted their hopes within its limits, have much to do, many a weight to lay aside, many a besetting sin to conquer and subdue, stronger habits of self-denial to form, a more refined and ardent taste for Divine and spiritual things to cultivate. Multitudes even of such live too much as though this earth were their eternal home; and not a few, as if it were mere matter of chance, whether they ever reach heaven or not. Ofttimes the change of one's earthly residence for another, one country for another, is great; and no wise man will deliberately make it without, as far as possible, due preparation. How far greater that from time to eternity; from earth to heaven; and how unspeakably more important, due preparation for it! For this purpose the necessary means have been furnished, abundant information respecting the nature of that heavenly country, and what are the indispensable qualifications for entering into it. These are contained in the Sacred Book. With what prying and untiring diligence should all who hope to reach that happy world, study this unerring directory—this chart of all their journey—this guide to every successful effort! But, alas! how many, who possess all this needful information, put forth no serious efforts to secure a title to that world;

who are contented to grovel in the dust of this earth, which they are so soon to leave, and which is destined, ultimately, to be burned up, with no title to, no prospect of a better inheritance. O, how will such as finally fail of heaven, look back to their course here, to the pittance, at best, of what they gained on earth, but will have left forever, and in the last day of time, see utterly consumed! How, amid the scenes of the judgment, will that course, that pittance, this whole world, appear to them! Ah! how in the hour of death! And how soon may that hour arrive! No one, then, who has not now a fair title to heaven, has another moment to lose. Another misspent hour may find him sealed over to the fearful doom of the finally impenitent sinner. Death has but to strike his blow upon the body, for the second death to seize upon the soul. No reason for a moment's postponement of this great work can be assigned, which will not be an additional ground of final condemnation. For no other really valuable purpose is another moment's continuance allowed any sinner on earth. Let him, then, improve the present. God is ready to seal his pardon on the first emotion of sincere repentance, and his justification, on the first look of true faith in Jesus Christ. Then repent, believe, and heaven at death shall be yours forever. May God make us all wise to enter into that better country, that glorious city, which he has prepared for all its heirs; and to him, now as then and forever, be the praise! Amen.

XIX.

THE GRAVE.

“She goeth unto the grave to weep there.”—JOHN 11 : 31.

THE narrative of which the text is a touching incident, is one of the most instructive and affecting which is recorded in the Scriptures. No one of serious thoughtfulness can read it, or listen to a recital of it, without awakening in his heart the tenderest emotions. The solemnity of the occasion; the persons concerned in the whole transaction; the wonderful miracle which was wrought, demonstrating the truth of some of the most important doctrines of the Gospel; and, indeed, all the circumstances attending it, mark it as one of most instructive and solemn interest. With the exception of the miracle which our Saviour performed, it was an occasion of ordinary, and, indeed, of most familiar occurrence. It was the affliction of a family in the town of Bethany, near the city of Jerusalem, by the death of one of its members. A family of no worldly pretensions, but eminently distinguished by their ardent piety; and by the frequent visits of the

Saviour, sometimes to avoid the threatening violence of his enemies, at other times to be refreshed amid his constant and wearisome labors, and not seldom, probably, to hold sweet communion together. Ah! what worldly distinction can admit comparison! No higher encomium was ever passed on mortals than that which the Evangelist John has recorded of that pious and lovely family: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It was Lazarus who had died.

When that afflictive event occurred, Jesus was on the other side of Jordan, some thirty miles distant from Bethany. On the sickness of Lazarus, "his sisters sent to him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." This, however, by his own omniscience, he knew before the message could have reached him, and also his death, as appears from the narrative itself, at the same time intimating to his disciples his purpose to restore him to life again. "When Jesus came, he found he had lain in the grave four days already." Before he entered the town, the narrative informs us that Martha went and met him, and after a short interview, she returned, and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him."

However instructive and interesting it might be to refer to all the incidents which make up this most affecting narrative, the briefest notice of which would consume the time allotted to a whole discourse, we

must necessarily forbear. We are now concerned with a single item. And it was at that point in the narrative to which we have already conducted you, that that item was introduced which I have made the topic of this discourse.

“The Jews which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily, and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.”

There are few subjects which more readily or powerfully arrest the attention, or enter more deeply into the sensibilities and hearts of most persons, than that, which in all its bearings is suggested by these few words, selected as my text: “She goeth unto the grave to weep there.” The grave is the house appointed for all the living. The generations which sleep there, outnumber by countless millions, the present inhabitants of our globe. And there are few among the living who have not dear and loved ones among that number. Fresh graves are every moment opened to receive the precious remains of kindred and friends; and as often, perhaps, visited by surviving mourners, to be bedewed with their tears. The grave is a spot of peculiar attractions. May we not hope, then, to make the contemplation of it subservient to our highest spiritual improvement? With this hope, I remark,

1. That the supposition of the Jews, on Mary’s hastily leaving the house, not being apprised of her object, was both reasonable and natural. Frequent

visits to the graves of kindred and friends, when practicable, have been common in all ages of the world. It is prompted by the strongest impulses of our nature.

The graveyard has always been regarded as a place of special sacredness, and peculiar endearments; one of the first that is sought and visited by strangers, but much more so to those who have there deposited the precious remains of beloved friends. This is not the result of Christianity, or even of civilization, though enforced by both. It is true of the savage that roams the wilderness, and may seldom be near the spot which contains the ashes of his ancestors or of his nearest kindred. The sepulchres of our fathers constitute one of the strongest bonds of attachment even to country. With the exception of living kindred there is no bond so tender and endearing, and seldom a stronger. There is such a thing as families among the dead, as well as among the living. Hence the universal desire and practice, as far as possible, of placing those who were members of it here, side by side there.

Hence, too, such care to guard that sacred spot from all unhallowed encroachment. The Scriptures afford many striking and beautiful illustrations of this pious sentiment, in the practice of the early Saints. As an instance of this, let me refer you to Abraham's purchase of the field and cave of Machpelah of the sons of Heth, after the death of Sarah his wife, for a burial-place for his dead; and his care to separate and guard it from all intrusion. He purchased it "for a posses-

sion, to make it sure for a burying-place." There Abraham himself was buried. There also the remains of his son Isaac, and of Rebecca and Leah were interred. An instance still more affecting was that of Jacob, who on his deathbed solemnly charged his sons, whom he assembled around him, saying, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought for a possession of a burying-place;" assigning as the reasons of his dying injunction, "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah." Thither also were carried the bones of Joseph, at his own request, who might have had a mausoleum in Egypt. The case of Barzillai is another affecting instance. "Barzillai said to David, I am this day fourscore years old; let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother."

But this feeling and practice were not peculiar to patriarchal times, or to the Jews. It is the spontaneous impulse of human nature, and Christianity favors and cherishes the sentiment. In addition to this universal feeling, two principal reasons have been assigned for this care of the sepulchres and graves of the dead. With the Jews, it was an expression of their belief of the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body. Hence they called a cemetery, "the house of the living." And in their burial

service they pronounced, says Calmet, this benediction, "Blessed be the Lord, who created you, and at last hath taken you out of this world. He will in time receive you. Blessed be the Lord, who causeth death and restoreth life." The other reason was that which heathen philosophers assigned, especially those who believed in the immortality of the soul, though they knew nothing of the resurrection of the body, nor was that a topic of discussion with them, viz., that the soul still hovered about the lifeless body, during a greater or less period.

With the abundant light which the Gospel has shed on the subject, we need not that proof or expression of our belief of the soul's immortality, or of the body's resurrection, while we utterly repudiate the notion of the spirit's residence with the body in the grave for a moment; but hold that our disembodied spirits at once ascend to God who gave them; nor probably ever visit them, or will, till they come to receive their new immortal bodies at the resurrection. These are among the great truths which the Gospel has brought to the clearest light. But these thoughts lead me to remark,

2. That there is a sense in which the spirit of a departed fellow-being, and especially of a deceased friend, is brought near by means even of the deceased body. We know, indeed, that this is not true in point of fact. At least we have no reason to believe that it is so. The soul of the Christian, like that of the pious beggar,

ascends at death to heaven; nor does the Bible intimate, certainly with any directness or clearness, that it will ever visit the earth, till it accompany the Son of God, to receive its new immortal body at the resurrection. And the soul of the wicked, like that of the impenitent rich man, descends to hell, at the body's death, and will never be released till death and hell deliver up the dead which are in them, to be arraigned at the bar of the final judgment. The sense in which a seeming nearness to a departed spirit is obtained through the body from which it has fled, arises from the fact, that we know of no other medium of intercourse or intercommunion between it and ourselves, than that of the body. Mortals can have no conception of the communion of one spirit with another. The pretension of not a few at the present day is the grossest delusion. We in the flesh cannot have one definite and distinct conception of a spirit as separated from body or form. The more intensely, however, our thoughts are fixed on the body, the stronger are our conceptions of the spirit, which once inhabited it, and while it inhabited it; and consequently, the nearer is that spirit apparently brought to us. It is an impression wholly in our own minds; a mere creation of the imagination. When we see the lifeless body of a friend, or of any fellow-being, but especially of a beloved relative or dear friend, before us, though reason and Scripture tell us that that friend is not there, and that in fact we are no nearer to him in one

place than in another on the earth ; yet who does not feel that he is so, as he stands by the body, whether lying on the death-couch, or deposited in the grave? Ah, it is this position, this impression which starts the fresh tear, and causes the breast to heave forth a new sigh. Who has not witnessed this? Who that has ever lost a friend, has not felt, has not manifested this? It is this impression which throws such attractions around the grave where the body of a friend lies, though lifeless and cold, inanimate and insensible as the dust in which it reposes, or the clods that press upon it. It is this which makes the grave a hallowed spot; this which makes a visit to it one of real, though melancholy satisfaction; this which so watchfully guards and affectionately adorns and ornaments it. It is this impression of nearer and closer converse with the departed spirit, which adds strength, and vigor, and vividness, to the memory and the imagination. Delusion and fancy as all this may be, and actually is, yet to the deluded it is realization. It is a feeling deeply planted in the human heart. It has existed in all time; lived through all ages; is found, and acted out, in all conditions, and grades, and ranks, and states of human society, civilized and savage; and has given rise to the universal custom of the world in its sacred regard for the dead, and clothed the spots where their dust reposes with a peculiar sanctity. It is sacrilegious, and the greatest outrage, to disturb its silent repose. It may, indeed, be abused to supersti-

tion. It has often been so abused. Hence the sacred veneration of relics, and even their worship. But what has not been abused? The holy rites of religion, plain and simple as they are, have been abused and perverted. The bread and the wine in the holy Eucharist, though nothing but bread and wine, have been profanely deified, and made to take the place of God himself, as objects of worship. But is that a good reason for disobeying the Redeemer's express command, "This do in remembrance of me!"

3. The grave is a moral and religious instructor, and often becomes the most effectual instructor; especially the grave of a friend. Death and the grave are only different names of the same messenger, addressing the same important messages to the living in different forms. They inculcate the same truths, administer the same warnings, and present and enforce the same motives. The grave continues to utter what death first teaches, having however this advantage, that the mind of the bereaved is more composed, and in a condition for calmer reflection. When we stand by the bed of a dying friend, and mark the moment of his spirit's flight into eternity, we are overwhelmed with a weight of grief which forbids that calm and serious reflection, which may be profitably indulged in after visits to his grave. And if this be not the leading object of such visits, they are at least profitless. At the parting moment, indeed, we cannot fail in thought to trace the spirit's course into the unknown

world. It is this which throws such awful solemnity around the dying hour. Whither has the immortal spirit fled? Where is it? Who that ever read the words of Job, while his thoughts were thus directed, can fail to recall them: "Man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Do these words yield no instruction, administer no warnings, furnish no motives? Can the thought of the departing spirit's flight into the world of spirits, and of its eternal destiny, fail to fix itself on one's own state and future prospects? If we are authorized to trace its upward way to heaven, and contemplate its admission to the company of the blessed, forever freed from all sin and sorrow, with ever-increasing knowledge and happiness in the endless future, need I ask if there is nothing urging to the pursuit of the same course, that the same happy end may be reached, the same glorious prize be gained, as well as everything to sustain and console, in thoughts like these, under the severest bereavements? This, it is true, is on the supposition and belief that their deceased friends have gone to their eternal rest. Hence at their graves, they will recall only those traits in their character which to them afford evidence of such a happy termination of this life. No person ever voluntarily visits the grave of a friend, from any true regard to his memory, for any other purpose. In the most doubtful cases, memory will earnestly recall, and affection magnify, every favorable circumstance; will light upon

some bright spot, some kind act, some amiable trait, or incident in the past life. Death wipes out all else.

But, when the character of the deceased has been adorned with the Christian graces to an eminent, or to a degree which excludes all reasonable doubt, like that of him who is a principal subject of the narrative before us, pious friends, at least, who mourn over their death, will not only recall their virtues for the purpose of consolation, but for their own spiritual improvement. And there is no spot more favorable for this than the grave where their mortal remains repose; no spot where their thoughts will be fixed on these points with greater, if with equal intensity, or equal concentration.

But, once more. There is another attraction which encircles the graves of pious relatives, which, if not more important than any other, yet invests those graves with a peculiar sacredness and endearment. The graves of such are mementos or memorials of a union between Christians and their pious deceased relatives, which death itself cannot dissolve. This union is not founded on natural affection, any farther than it has been sanctified, but on Divine grace. It is a union in and through Jesus Christ; and which is common to all true believers in him, whether in this world, or in the world of spirits; whether in the Church militant, or Church triumphant. They are members of the one great family, a branch of which is in heaven, and a branch on earth. "I bow my knees,"

said Paul, "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," "that ye (Christians) may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ." Love to Christ is the foundation of that union, and faith its bond. And this is the great leading idea of what Christ conveyed to Martha when she met him, on his approach to Bethany. Her first recorded words to him were, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." He replies, "Thy brother shall rise again." To this, she rejoins, "I know that he shall rise again, at the resurrection, in the last day." This, therefore, was not the consolation which her breaking, bleeding heart, required. This was no new truth to her. Nor would it have been what she so earnestly desired, had he told her, "Thy brother is happy among the blessed in heaven." For she had no doubt of that. She knew that Jesus loved him, and he could not but be happy in the embrace of his love. The burden of her grief was, not that he who was called Lazarus was dead, but that her brother was dead. Her deep sorrow arose from the impression or apprehension, lest death might forever wipe away those holy and delightful associations which had marked their intercourse with each other while he was alive; the thought that they might never again recognize each other, in the endearing, happy relationship which they had sustained in this life. It was the

doubt whether this relationship, and the pure and holy joys which sprung from it, would ever be renewed, that filled the heart of that pious sister with such anguish. This was the point which gave her so much distress. And the Saviour proceeded at once to relieve her.

“Your brother” (brother is here the emphatical word), “Your *brother* shall rise again!” That is, Lazarus shall rise, as your brother, possessed of all those endearing attractions, and lovely, fraternal sentiments and feelings, denoted by that tender name, only perfectly pure, or freed from all imperfection. And the Saviour adds, in proof of this, “I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die!” The meaning which is usually placed on these words, I am aware, is the Saviour’s assurance merely, that all the pious shall be raised up in the last day, and shall not die, or be lost, but will be eternally happy with their Redeemer in heaven forever. This indeed is true. But before the Saviour had thus spoken to her, she believed all that, had expressly declared her faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, which necessarily implied that of the immortality of the soul, and she had no doubt that the soul of her deceased brother was happy. According to that construction, we may well ask, how was her mind relieved? He had not told her that he would at once raise her brother’s body from the grave,

though that was his purpose. Those sisters probably were as much astonished at his resurrection when it occurred, as the others who witnessed that miracle.

We know not (for the Bible gives us no information nor hint on the subject), what the condition of Lazarus was, after his resurrection. But from many passages found in it, we are abundantly assured that his soul, at death, went immediately to heaven; that, of course, it was wholly sanctified, and that when it resumed the body which, for four days, had been lying in the grave, it was never again tainted with sin, and that when it was finally laid aside, it was as a gentle and sweet sleep. We know he lived awhile on the earth after his resurrection; that is expressly stated, but how long, we are not told. We find in the following chapter and fourteenth of Mark, that he was a guest with Jesus, at the house of Simon, the leper, where they made him a supper, and Lazarus was one that sat at the table with him. Martha and Mary also were present, and Martha served, and Mary, as Mark and John informs us, poured the ointment of spikenard, very precious, on the head of Jesus, as he sat at meat. And can we doubt that Lazarus felt and manifested towards his sisters, to whom he had been restored from the grave, all the tender and affectionate characteristics of a brother, only more pure, more holy, more ardent? Can we otherwise than believe that he had the same feelings, only perfected, during the period of his spirit's absence in heaven, and when

he resumed his body at the mandate of the Saviour? What reason have we to suppose, that a single sanctified affection which he had in this world, was dismissed, and utterly wiped away, when he died? and when he was restored to this life again, he, in like manner, dismissed those which he had in heaven, and resumed, with his body, those he had in this life, with all their imperfections; for he was not perfect here previously to his death. In every point of view the contrary is true. This is not only most manifest from this whole narrative, but abundantly supported by numerous arguments drawn from other portions of the Scriptures, had we time to advert to them. But a distinct argument may be drawn from the very state of those sisters, on the death of their brother, as related in this narrative, which ought not to pass without notice. If their almost despairing complaints and the chief anguish of their hearts did not arise from their doubts and uncertainty, whether they and their beloved brother would recognize and have peculiar feelings and affection towards each other in heaven, then they exhibited more of an unsubmissive spirit under that bereaving dispensation of Divine Providence, than any other saints of whom we have any account in the Scriptures. This we cannot believe of those pious disciples of Jesus Christ; those whom the Saviour so tenderly loved, and who so ardently loved him in return. Hear Job under his almost unequalled afflictions: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Hear David: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Hear Eli, in still more trying circumstances: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Hear Paul, who suffered as few have suffered: "The will of the Lord be done." Hear Him whose sufferings were unparalleled: "Not my will, but thine, be done." But in contrast of these, and all other instances of bereavement and affliction recorded in the Bible, hear those pious sisters of Bethany, in language almost complaining of the Saviour's neglect: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, our brother had not died." Ah! Jesus knew the innocent cause of their deep anxiety and distress, to be, not that Lazarus was dead, merely or chiefly, but whether Christian relations and friends on earth, will know each other as such in heaven; and he gave them the highest assurance of that, in recalling the spirit of their beloved brother from that happy world, with all his purified affections, again to mingle in delightful fellowship on earth. And what cause of gratitude have Christians now, for the assurance, that they and all their pious kindred and friends will know each other as such in heaven? True it is, indeed, that these are not the chief attractions of the heavenly world. Its chief glory is Jesus Christ, who has prepared it for those who love him. He, through whose immortalized humanity God displays all his glorious perfections, is the light and the joy of heaven. But

that will only increase, not diminish, the happiness of the saint's communion there, who enjoyed Christian, kindred fellowship here.

Numerous, most consolatory reflections, from this subject, will readily present themselves to the minds of Christians in view of the death of those who were here kindred in spirit, as well as kindred by blood, or other close alliances. We have no time to state them, nor can it be necessary, and only remark, in conclusion, that there is a spot, most favorable of all others on earth to awaken and impress them. Need I say, it is the grave—the grave of the sainted dead, once our kindred in the flesh? There is no spot around which are thrown such sacred attractions as the grave; none where so many subduing, softening influences are felt; none which brings eternity and its solemn realities so near; nothing—unless its tendencies are utterly perverted by a species of idolatry, alas! probably, too common, towards the departed, whose dust reposes there, in mere recollection of what he was while living, —which stamps this world with such emptiness and vanity. It is the place of weeping. There Jesus wept. His, indeed, were not tears of regret and mourning, but tears of the tenderest sympathy. They were called forth by the overwhelming sorrows of the beloved Martha and Mary, at the death of their sainted brother.

But let afflicted Christians remember that he is the same tender, sympathizing Friend now, as when he

so freely mingled his tears with theirs. He will not raise your dead at your tears or your prayers. Those who go down to their graves will remain there till the last trumpet shall awake all who sleep in them. But let us remember that our tears for others will avail us nothing, while we weep not for ourselves. Our first tears must be tears of repentance. Shed these tears, and all others may be tears of joy, or at most, tears of sympathy in the afflictions and sorrows of others.

XX.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

“Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, even so. Amen.”—REVELATION 1 : 7.

It is impossible for one not utterly incapable of serious reflection, to read, or hear these words pronounced, without awakening the deepest and most awful solemnity. The truths which they disclose, and the event which they announce, are indeed of the most solemn and awful import. They are not here presented for the first time. They pervade the whole volume of God’s word, and were often the topics of the Saviour’s discourses, and still more frequent subjects of the Apostle’s writings. With direct reference to the scenes of the judgment, that great and glorious Being himself declared, almost in the very words of the text, “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” No, these are no new truths.

Neither are they points of speculation ; but of the deepest practical, personal, and individual interest and moment. For "every eye shall see him," and he will come to fix the endless unchangeable destiny of all our race !

The special reason why the Apostle John here refers to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the scenes connected with that advent, appears to have been, that so startling, so mysterious, and in themselves so incredible were the revelations which were about to be made and he required to record, that it was especially important to present the great Revealer of them, in such majesty and glory, as not only to silence every doubt, but command the most solemn and universal attention and belief. For the same reason that he called him "the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth ; the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." And as we, in like manner, find each of the Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, contained in the next two chapters, introduced with reference to some particular attribute or attributes of the same Being, in order to produce the deepest conviction of their truth and importance. It is not my design, therefore, as it was not that of the Apostle, to describe or attempt to describe the second coming of the Son of God to judge the world. What the inspired penmen have nowhere done more than to

announce the solemn fact, it were worse than in vain for any other hand to attempt. The attempt would only impair it. Yet the text presents the subject, if not altogether under a new, yet under a peculiarly impressive aspect, and well calculated most solemnly to affect every living man, and especially an immense portion of the human race, denoted in the text, by "all kindreds of the earth," who "shall wail because of him."

This at first view might seem to contradict other declarations of the Bible; those in which the second coming of Christ is represented as an event of the highest joy and exultation to the saints, to those who are prepared to meet him. They are represented as "loving his appearing." It is the day of their complete redemption, even of their bodies from the dominion of the grave, and the beginning, in all its fulness and glory, of their endless triumph and exaltation. And solemn as the account is which all must render to Christ at his coming, yet the saints are represented as "giving up their accounts with joy, and not with grief." It is evident, therefore, that by "all kindreds of the earth who shall wail because of him," or at his coming, or as our Saviour expresses it, "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn," the words, "kindreds and tribes," are not to be understood in their largest and most comprehensive sense; but as the word (for it is the sense in both places) is often used, both by inspired and uninspired writers, to denote a portion

only of the human race, and especially such portions as possess a general resemblance. They are kindred as to character or condition. They are of the same class, less or more numerous; a meaning which is still in common and familiar use. That this was the sense in which the Apostle employed the word, is clear from his particularly naming those who pierced or crucified the Saviour, as making a part of those kindreds who shall wail at his second coming; and of those who resemble them in character; and also from his just having discriminated between the righteous and the wicked, by putting that exulting song into the lips of the former, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even the Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Surely these are not included in "all kindreds of the earth," who "shall wail at the coming of Christ to judge the world."

With the view of embracing the great leading truths contained in the text, and deriving from them some practical reflections, I remark,

I. That no future event is more certain than that the Saviour will come to judge the world in righteousness. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." He himself has declared, that he will come in the clouds of heaven, and then shall all nations be gathered before him. I shall not, as I need not, stop to prove what is so clearly and abundantly

affirmed in the New Testament; but would remark, that there is no evidence, or even clear intimation, that the Son of God will ever appear, personally, to our world, except to close all time, and settle the eternal destiny of the whole human race. Every instance in which his second coming in person is spoken of, is connected with the solemn transactions of the last day of time. It is indeed the assertion and the belief of many, and of some who hold a high rank among divines and theologians, that he will come to the earth previously to the Millennium, sit in judgment, and introduce that glorious period. But I regard this as wholly an unsupported dogma; as utterly inconsistent with every representation of his second coming, and impossible in itself; for our earth could not contain the countless millions to be assembled before him, both the living and the dead. Indeed, it is nowhere said that the scenes and transactions of the judgment will take place on the earth. On the contrary, Paul tells us in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, "that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." John in this same book of Revelation tells us, that the utter destruction of this earth, and these nether heavens, will even precede the final judgment. "And I saw a great white throne, and him

that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." If we are to understand these things in the order in which they are related (and who is authorized to reverse it), then the resurrection of all the dead (only the dead in Christ shall rise first), the change of the then living, their being caught up together in the clouds (those probably in which Christ descends), and the utter disappearance of the earth and these heavens, are all to occur before the judgment. But dismissing these points, the text asserts the fact with which we are concerned in this discourse, that there will be a universal and final judgment, the certainty of which is doubly reaffirmed in the expressions, "Even so. Amen."

II. The text specially designates a particular class, and those of a kindred or similar character, who "shall wail because of him." A portion of the text was once a matter of prediction; and, without doubt, the Apostle John had it in his mind when penning it. It is found in the prophecy of Zechariah, 12 : 10, and reads as follows: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." In this clause of the passage, special reference would

seem to be had to the awful scenes of the crucifixion of the Son of God. The facts of the case, and some of the circumstances which accompanied that awful event, justify such an application of it. Although not limited to that event, in the connection in which the prophet Zechariah used those words, they clearly include and point to it. No one can read those words without instantly directing his thoughts to the manner of the Saviour's death, and some of the attendant circumstances of it. Indeed, the act of piercing him is one of the very circumstances which John, who wrote the text, records in his account of his death, in the nineteenth chapter of his Gospel, and who particularly states, that what was done, was in fulfilment of the Scriptures: "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled;" meaning, of course, what the prophets predicted respecting the manner of the Saviour's death. But this particular prophecy we find only in that of Zechariah, and the piercing of his hands and his feet, in the twenty-second Psalm. Thus was the Redeemer of our race pierced on the cross. "One of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water; and he that saw it," as he stood at the cross, "bears record, and his record is true."

And was there no mourning on that awful occasion? What means, then, the tender and affectionate language of the Saviour, as he labored under the weight of his cross, on his way to the place of his

crucifixion, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children?" Ah! there was deep and bitter mourning. And who can restrain his tears at the very recital of that Saviour's death!

But the mourning and the wailing was not confined to his friends and followers. Luke tell us, "that all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." Expressive token of the bitter conviction of their pierced consciences. If we quote the whole of the passage of the prophet, of which the Apostle quoted but a part, as bearing on the particular point which he had in view, we may make another application of his language. That passage reads thus: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

That, too, was fulfilled within fifty days after the Saviour's death: not, indeed, as realized by his crucifiers, and others, who witnessed that scene, and were filled with rage at what they had done and consented to be done, but on sober and solemn reflection, with penitential grief and earnest faith, under the convicting and converting influences of the Holy Ghost, shed down on the memorable day of Pentecost. In all pro-

bability, some, if not many, of the three thousand converts on that day were virtually, if not actively, guilty of the Saviour's death. Peter expressly charged that crime on the assembled multitude, on that occasion. Whom "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Ah! with what overwhelming power must their convictions have come upon them! How must the thought that they had a guilty agency in the cruel murder of the Prince of Life, the adorable Son of God, have crushed them into the dust, and filled them with the deepest agony! The compassion of the prophet, touching as it was, fell far short of the reality: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

And here I might add, that this is equally true, if not equally striking and noticeable, in every conversion. There can be no true repentance, no evangelical faith, where there is not essentially the same view of Christ, though there may not be the same deep compunctions of conscience. Every right apprehension of sin, its infinite odiousness in the sight of the holy God, as well as of its awful consequences, and every act of faith, regards the Saviour as pierced and dying an agonizing death, as the only ground of the sinner's pardon and justification, and of every hope of his salvation, while there is nothing so touching and affecting as the story of the Cross. It has often drawn tears

from the eyes of those whose hearts were closed against him, and who reject his precious salvation.

In an affecting sense, too, is this true of every believing and proper view which the sincere Christian takes of the Saviour. This is the awful and most affecting scene, which is, as it were, re-enacted in that ordinance which the Saviour himself appointed for the very purpose of commemorating his death. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, till he come." But while the Prophet's view probably extended only to the scenes of the crucifixion, and to what would follow it, as the great means of saving lost sinners, I remark,

III. That the Apostle had exclusive reference to the transactions of the last day and final judgment. He used the very language which the Saviour himself employed to represent his second coming to our world, to sit in judgment upon it. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and they which pierced him, and all kindreds shall wail because of him." Here is a most fearful doom pronounced on the crucifiers of the Son of God. I scarcely need say, no crime ever equalled that. It stands unparalleled and alone. Had he been but a man, in all his acknowledged innocence from the lips even of the wretch who betrayed him, who, when the awful deed was done, threw down the price of his treason, under the insupportable compunctions of his awakened conscience, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the in-

nocent blood ;” and the repeated declaration of the judge, who, when overpersuaded to condemn him, as a significant token, took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person ;” yes, had he been but an innocent man, it had been a crime of deep-stained guilt ! But he was none other than God’s “only begotten and well-beloved Son.” God himself in human nature ! This was the very charge they brought against him, and on which they took his life : “Because thou makest thyself equal with God.” O what a day will that be to them, when that Being, no longer in their hands, through the condescending and consenting “weakness of the flesh,” no longer an insulted prisoner at the bar of an unrighteous judge, no longer helplessly agonizing on the Cross, shall come to vindicate his claims to Deity, before an assembled universe ; come in the clouds of heaven for his pavilion, with countless myriads of holy angels and glorified spirits of our race, and sit upon his great white throne in the air, and before it arraign his crucifiers and those who procured and consented to his death, and fix their wretched doom forever !

How will they call to the rocks and to the mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of his wrath will have come, and how shall they be able to stand ? Their very release from the deep pit, where for previous ages

they had been confined in chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day, when dragged forth to light, will fill them with new terrors and aggravate their wretchedness. Yet, "every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him shall wail because of him." But, my hearers, this awful doom awaits not them only. My text intimates, what is elsewhere abundantly declared, that all like them will share the like doom.

"Behold he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." And who are kindreds, but those who bear the relationship of resemblance to one another? There is no stronger likeness than that which exists among all sinners. It is the kindred, the likeness of hearts, of character, of conduct. And hence they are all doomed to the same place. See the different classes of the inmates of the same world of woe, from the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," the final Judge, in his own words, as given in the eighth verse of the twenty-first chapter of this Book of Revelation, with direct reference to the decisions of the last day. No, there is but one place where all who fail of heaven will dwell together forever. Hear the awful words of the Judge himself to those on his left hand: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

But connected with these thoughts, this general resemblance of all classes and grades of sinners to each other, there is another, which we should not omit to state. There is a closer relationship between all impenitent sinners, and those who actually conspired and effected the death of the Saviour, than may be suspected. There is such a thing as crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting him to open shame. Every sin, indeed, is at least a nail that fastened him to the cross. But a deliberate, voluntary rejection of him and his offered salvation, is a virtual approval of the whole bloody deed. Peter charged this, as we have already seen, on the thousands assembled on the day of Pentecost. Not all, surely, were actors in that awful tragedy. Not a Jew actually drew his blood on the cross. But they procured, and approved, and demanded, his death; and the charge of the murderous deed lies against them. And every sinner who deliberately rejects him is, by just construction, partaker of the crime—is an accessory after the fact. He heaps shame on his cross, and treads under foot the Son of God, and “counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.” This is the language of the inspired Paul, with direct reference to the rejection of the Saviour. Unbelief is the crowning sin of all sins. It is not only a virtual approval of the act of taking the Saviour’s life, the act of crucifying him, but a rejection of all the blessings which were procured by and which flow from his death. Unbelief comprises all sin. For

that faith which properly receives and embraces Christ, is the only method of its cure. "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." These are the words of our final Judge himself—that Being whom every eye shall yet see, coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, before whose throne we and all our race must stand, be judged, and receive that sentence which will decide and irreversibly fix our eternal state!

In concluding this discourse, I hardly need remark, that the subject of it is one, in which we all have the most solemn personal interest. "Every eye shall see him." We shall see him, and share in all the wonders and transactions attendant and consequent on that second last advent of the Son of God to our world, to judge the countless millions of its inhabitants, from Adam to the last-born of his posterity, in righteousness!

And need I say, that it comprises all the motives to prepare for those scenes and transactions, which can be conceived to have an influence, or a bearing, on those who are destined to witness and share in them? That is the day for which all other days are made: the day when the entire history of man, in all generations, and of every individual in them, will be fully disclosed to the assembled multitudes of all intelligent beings, human and angelic, of every order and every grade. None so great as to resist—none too small to be overlooked. "I saw the dead," says John, in one of his last visions, "small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was

opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works ; and the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death ;” and the last, for it is a death that never dies. “ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” O, what so important to any of us, as that our names be found written in that “ book of life !” That book is not the book of God’s decrees, though every item found in it will be in perfect accordance with all that is written there. But it is the book of God’s covenant mercy ; the book which contains the name and delineates the character of every new-born child of God, from his spiritual birth to his complete redemption ; the book in which the recording angel stands ready to place the name of every sinner here on his repentance. O who would not have it there, when it shall be opened at the day of judgment ! What, in the comparison, is the register of kings and emperors, and their descendants ! Rank and distinction here, may prove but the deeper degradation and infamy there ! Death levels all such, and all other earthly distinctions ! None exist in the world of spirits—none will be recognized in the judgment—none forever, but that which the grace of God creates, and creates in this life, and in those “ whose names are

written in the book of life." Yes, that book is now open for the record of every name here; a record never to be erased. My hearers, shall all our names be found there, when the books are opened at the final judgment? The only evidence of that important fact is "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," on which acts are suspended, pardon, justification, and eternal redemption.

This last, as the ultimate result, can only be secured by the two previous acts. For there is not pardon where there is not repentance, nor justification where there is not faith; and these involve sanctification, as indispensable to the enjoyment of heaven, though an act, or rather a succession of acts, distinct from both pardon and justification. The ultimate, the all-important question, whether our names will be found in the book of life in the great last day, will depend on the answer to the question (for that will favorably decide every other question touching our salvation), have we repented?

But all these exercises and acts are limited to this life. Death forever sets the seal to every man's preparedness or fitness for his eternal destiny. And that event may occur at any time. This night, for aught any sinner knows, his soul may be required of him. O, how big with eternal results is this hour, this fast-waning hour, in God's house! And yet that time, short as it is, is long enough, as time alone is concerned, to secure eternal life. But what we do, must be done quickly.

XXI.

DEATH—THE CONQUEROR CONQUERED.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

1. COR. 15 : 26.

To every true Christian, death, however appalling in his approach, or terrible in the manner of his arrest, instead of an enemy, will prove a kind and welcome friend. It is the moment of perfect sanctification, of entire freedom from all the woes and evils of sin, and an introduction to pure and endless bliss. Yet, in the text, he is declared to be an enemy, and is represented as a powerful tyrant, exercising an uncontrolled dominion over the human race, but as our *last* foe. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.” Of all past generations, two individuals only have escaped his crushing hand. And although they were exempted from the usual severity of his blow, yet in the suddenness of their transition from a mortal to an immortal state, they may have felt some dart from his quiver as they ascended aloft. To the Christian, every other enemy is subdued, before Death actually makes his arrest. Sin gave him his dominion and his power.

But sin is pardoned before the soul is admitted to heaven. For sin cannot enter that pure and holy world.

To all others, too, Death, as known on earth as the conqueror of the body, and as it regards the exercise of his power in time, will be subdued; although to put on a far more awful form, to inflict far deeper pangs, in eternity. This universal and complete subjection is the sole prerogative of the omnipotent Son of God; and in connection with the judgment of the world, is the last act of his Mediatorial reign. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death." We are led, therefore, to contemplate Death, both as an active and powerful foe, and as an enemy to be finally and completely subdued by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Let us consider him in the former character of universal conqueror. And here we may regard him without reference to the moral character of those whom he makes his victims; for in this regard, there is one event to all. And although it has been very truly said, that to die is the good man's privilege, yet it is not that Death is not an enemy, even to him. It is a blow struck in righteous anger for his sins. It is the execution of the original sentence denounced against our race, for the crime of apostasy and rebellion against

their Maker and rightful Sovereign. And surely the execution of such a sentence, for such a cause, can never in itself be regarded as a blessing. Dying, as a privilege, is found only in the circumstances of the case. God, by the provisions of his sovereign grace, has made the evil to result in a good; the curse to issue in a blessing. But it is not a greater good or a greater blessing than never to have died, never to have deserved to die, or than to have been wholly sanctified, and received to heaven without mingling in the corruption of the grave. God himself has decided the point, that not to die is preferable to death, in the translation of Enoch and Elijah. It was a peculiar blessing to them, and a signal token and testimony of his approbation of their singular piety. "By faith, Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God took him. For, before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." The same also was true of Elijah. Thus their exemption from death, and immediate translation to heaven, was a most signal token of the Divine favor and approbation. Who then will say that death in itself is preferable to translation? Because heaven succeeds his blow, and God has made the grave of the good man a passage to glory, it changes not the character of the King of terrors from an enemy to that of a friend. He is the same relentless tyrant.

But is not the individual alone, in these circumstances, the one whom he removes from earth to

heaven, that death is an enemy. How often is the whole Church made to mourn over his desolations, by the removal of her most useful members, and her brightest ornaments; in the sudden frustration oft-times, of the most benevolent plans, and most successful efforts! What an affliction, when those are removed to whose believing prayers, and mature piety, and wise counsels, and godly example, the Church, under her Great Head, is indebted for her spiritual prosperity; or when the faithful missionary is suddenly called off from the sphere of his daily extending usefulness, and the darkness of heathenism is suffered to roll back its tide, and extinguish to a whole generation the light which had but just been kindled! God, indeed, is wise and holy in all these mysterious arrangements. But who can or ought to look on death in his desolating march, otherwise than as an enemy!

But we may not confine our view to such instances. These are but few, comparatively, where sad desolation follows in his train. How often he comes in terror, and arrests the worldly career of man! How many enterprises, conceived in wisdom, valuable in themselves, and of happy promise, are suddenly and forever terminated by his crushing blow! Good has indeed resulted, and good that was soon manifested, in numberless instances, from the bitterest disappointments of lawfully cherished hopes. Still, they were evils in themselves; evils, like the agonies of the crushed limb, in the pains of its amputation, which

saved the sufferer's life ; so these have been the means of the salvation of many an immortal soul. But behold Death as he sunders ties still more strong and tender. We may indeed regard him as the bearer of a friendly message, when he enters a family and relieves a long-agonized sufferer, just on the verge of heaven; when the emaciated body, incapable of relief and enjoyment, is all that holds back the spirit, panting for immortal glory. The act which thus releases from earth and introduces such a one to heaven, may be regarded a friendly act, though produced by an enemy's hand. But these are comparatively rare instances; nor is even the removal of such, occasion of more than cheerful submission; seldom, if ever, acknowledged causes of joy or gratitude. No feeling heart ever thanked God merely for the removal of a friend by death; the sufferings of a friend but deepen one's sympathies, and increase attachment and interest. But these are Death's most friendly acts. Far more frequently he comes in awful forms, sometimes with no tokens of his approach, till his victim is seen writhing in his arms, or motionless at his feet!

And then, the one who has been so unexpectedly taken. Not the one whom the neighbors would have selected. I say neighbors. For friends can never make selections for the King of terrors. Not the one whom age, or infirmity, or helplessness would have indicated. Not the one who was the most dependent.

Alas! how often he on whom the most dependence was placed!

But we may pass the limits of the family circle, of the neighborhood, and even the Church. Death does not come bearing only a commission to single individuals, however rapidly they may succeed each other, as his victims. How often is he armed with a pestilence, which sweeps them off in vast multitudes! How often with the carnal weapons of angry warfare! How he strews them on the bloody battle-field! He too rears a standard there, a standard which was never taken, and waves a flag which never strikes. However the contest may end to the human belligerents, he is always the conqueror. The Omnipotent arms him with every element of destruction. In little more than a quarter of a century, he sends an entire generation of our race to their graves, and in the same term, repeats the desolation as another generation succeeds. The mourners soon become the mourned! Earth itself is one vast charnel-house.

Whether, therefore, we view his victims, while yet struggling in his fatal grasp, or the multitudes of mourners, crushed under the weight of their afflictions, say, is not Death an enemy? We do not, indeed, as we should not, forget nor overlook the power and wisdom and holiness of Him, who gives to Death his commission and directs his desolating movements; nor that goodness and mercy which bring good out of evil,

and would adore the hand which orders all things. Yet as he himself has represented him as a powerful tyrant, a King of terrors, an enemy of man, we may present and contemplate him in that character. In the revealed economy of the Divine government, Death is placed under the power of the Great Adversary himself. Paul tells us that the Son of God took our flesh and blood, that through Death, he might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is the Devil. True, this is Death in his worst and most dreadful form, Death as he reigns not on earth. Nor do we regard this as a part of his dominion, in the sense of our text; as that enemy who shall be destroyed, as it regards the soul. Yet his prerogative extends to the very moment of separation between the soul and body. His work is not complete till then; and to the wicked, especially, that is the moment when he puts on his most awful terrors. For if he come to the good man, accompanied by good angels, as we have reason to believe in all such instances he does, why may he not come to the impenitent sinner, attended by evil angels, fallen spirits, and under the permitted direction of the Prince and chief of that fallen company? The departing moment of the righteous and of the wicked, is no doubt attended by spirits of the other world, of a character and destiny adapted to the character and destiny of the departing soul. This has often been expressed in the dying moment of both the saint and the sinner. And who can tell, till his own experience

teaches him, but it would always be expressed, could the expiring individual command the power of giving utterance to his views and feelings? As an angel appeared to our blessed Saviour to strengthen him in his last dreadful conflict, so angels, as in the case of Lazarus, are no doubt sent to the expiring Christian, to sustain and comfort him in his struggle with Death. "They encamp round about them that fear the Lord." And may we not also believe, that apostate spirits are present with the dying sinner?

O what an enemy then is Death, even in his temporal reign, when he comes to the sinner, accompanied with a host of fiends from the world of woe, to attend his soul to their own regions of black and endless despair! For he resigns not his temporal reign till that moment is past. What an enemy to the sinner's soul, when, as he lays his crushing hand on the body, he impresses on that soul the seal of death eternal! What a disappointment to all the sinner's hopes! He has heard, but heard in vain, the last sound of entreating mercy! Has received, but rejected the last offer of eternal life, and is sealed over to the second death! O what must be the desolation, the agonies of such a soul while breaking away from the death-stricken body!

We said that this death was not that enemy which Paul, in my text, declares to be the last, and which shall be destroyed. As the immortal soul of the sinner is concerned, it is not; for that is a death which never ends. Yet Death, in the sense of his reign

over all that is mortal, or over the bodies of all our race, will yet be destroyed—destroyed by a universal resurrection. For “all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth. They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” The second death is not under the power of the king of terrors. That is the doom of the finally impenitent soul, as pronounced upon it by the Judge of all.

And this leads us to contemplate Death, in the second place, as finally and completely subdued by the Lord Jesus Christ; “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.” And this can only be done,

1. By completely restoring what Death had destroyed by the body's resurrection from the grave, to which Death consigned it. It must be substantially, and to all purposes of identity, the same body. Were a different body, however resplendent and glorious, created for the immortal spirit which had laid aside its former one, Death would not be destroyed. His dominion would suffer no encroachment. His reign were still distinct. He had laid the body in the grave, and so long as the grave retained it, he would not be destroyed nor conquered. In the case of Moses, who appeared in glory on the Mount of the Saviour's transfiguration, and in a body, Death was not destroyed. He was not despoiled of his prey. For the body in which he then appeared was not the one which he

had laid aside; while in the case of Elijah, Death had never laid his hand on his body. So, when Christians at their death lay aside the earthly house of this tabernacle, and are clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, or receive bodies adapted to their spirits in the intermediate state, if such is the fact, this is no destruction of Death. He still retains the bodies which he had laid in their graves. And were they never to rise, the last enemy would never be destroyed. The resurrection of the body, therefore, does not rest solely on the promise of God. Nor merely on the fact of the Saviour's resurrection. For his resurrection was but a partial victory over that last enemy. It was complete in relation to himself; and a pledge of the resurrection of all who sleep in him. As certainly, therefore, as Christ shall reign till he has put every enemy under his feet, and as the last enemy to be destroyed is Death, and he can be destroyed only by the resurrection, so certain is it, that there will be a resurrection of all the human bodies which go down to the grave. And this is plainly proclaimed in the word of God. Daniel taught it when he wrote, "The multitude of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The Saviour taught it when he said, "The hour cometh when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth." Paul declared it in his defence before Felix, "That there shall be a

resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." The Saviour's Mediatorial work will not be complete, He will not have conquered his last enemy, until he shall have rescued every human body from the grave to which Death had consigned it.

But this is not enough to complete the triumph.

2. The body must be raised, to die no more. It must never be liable to return to the grave, or to sink again into the arms of Death, as was the case with the body of Lazarus, and of the others that Jesus raised; and perhaps the bodies of those saints who came forth from their graves, and went into the holy city, after our Saviour's resurrection, if indeed they returned to their graves. Those were but partial triumphs over Death. He reclaimed them, and still holds them in his dark domain. That was but a temporary check to his power, and afforded him new cause of exultation.

All, therefore, must be raised to life to die no more. The bodies both of saints and sinners must be immortal. Hence the falsity of the notion which not a few espouse, that the finally wicked will be annihilated. Annihilation would be a complete and eternal triumph of the King of terrors. But that cannot be. The Omnipotent Son of God will reign, as Mediator, till every opposing power is subdued, every enemy put under his feet; and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. He must reign till the kingdom is delivered up to God; till all sin, which gives to

Death his sting, shall cease, save the blasphemies of the eternally lost, and that second, endless death of soul and body, which is not an enemy, but a state of righteous retribution to the finally impenitent, under the control of Him "who openeth, and none can shut, and shutteth, and none can open."

We close with two or three reflections.

1. What a commentary is here furnished on the nature, the tendency, and tremendous consequences of sin, and the folly of the sinner! Present experience supplies a mighty volume. Death set up his empire in the workings of Sin. Sin built his throne and placed him upon it, and furnished him with his bloody and cruel sceptre. On every hand we witness his desolations. What disappointments of every kind! What sundering of strong and tender ties! What breaking of hearts! What streams of mingling blood and tears follow along his march! What deathbed agonies! What consternation at the approach of wicked demons to conduct the sinner's soul to their own abodes of hopeless despair! But look beyond the parting moment, beyond the bounds of time. The effects of Death's power, when it has crushed the body of the impenitent sinner into the grave, reach beyond this world. He cannot always retain the body in that dark and cold prison-house. He must give back all the trophies which in his long reign he had ever gathered. The sinner's body shall come forth. The just and the unjust shall awake, and arise, and gather

around the judgment throne. The bodies of both shall be immortal. But ah! those of the lost shall bear the very marks of perdition upon them. They shall awake to "shame and everlasting contempt." O sinner, what a doom is before you, if impenitent but a little longer! None but the Omniscient One knows where is fixed that limit, beyond which all hope forever dies. How loud and urgent that voice of mercy which now cries in your ears, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." If considerations like those which have been suggested fail to produce a happy effect upon the sinner's heart, all motives, all warnings, all entreaties, would seem in vain. He must rush on to his doom, and leave it for an agonizing deathbed, a shameful resurrection, and a wretched eternity, to convince him of his guilt and folly.

But let us turn from reflections so painful as these and remark,

2. On the unlimited confidence which may be reposed in our Saviour, and through him, the triumphant victory and glory which await all who believe in him. There are, indeed, evils to be endured, and powerful enemies to be encountered. But all these evils will be made to issue in good, and every enemy shall be forever overcome.

Let Death strike his blow and hand the body over to the corruptions of the grave; that grave shall be

re-opened. That body shall rise again. And although substantially the same as that which went down to the grave, it will be adorned with peculiar splendor and glory; its pattern, the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom John in vision saw, beyond the brightness of the sun when he shineth in his strength. Yes, every saint will yet sing the triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." These are the glorious events, the animating scenes, to which I would direct the attention of you all. If looked at and regarded as they should be, who can longer remain in his impenitence, who longer suffer opportunities for obtaining an interest in them to pass without improvement, and especially when we reflect that distant as some of them may be, the time for securing or forever forfeiting them cannot be far off, and may be just at hand! For Death has but to lay his hand upon the body, and the unchangeable destiny of the soul is forever settled! And what view can the Christian take better calculated to kindle his zeal in the service of his Redeemer, to bind him to his cross and his cause, to arm him against all those foes that would cheat him of the ineffable glories of heaven, and resist every influence that would diminish them? How would such a view, if steadily maintained, improve the character of the Christian, increase his faith, confirm and ani-

mate his hope, sustain and comfort him under his trials, brighten his prospects, divest his last enemy of every terror, and make welcome the blow which sends his body to a peaceful grave, and his soul to the unspeakable glories of an eternal heaven ! God grant this may be the happy experience of us all.

XXII.

THE RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

—DANIEL 12 : 2.

THIS is language of the most solemn import. No one can read or hear it, without instantly sending his thoughts forward to the scenes of the resurrection. It is so difficult to prevent this direction to our thoughts, that the strongest advocates of the sentiment, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is not taught in the Old Testament, have taxed all their ingenuity to place a different construction upon it. The language is appropriate as describing the transactions of the last day, and the final and eternal disposal of the human race.

That it is difficult to perceive its connection with the main object of the Divine communications made to Daniel, is certainly no good ground or reason for rejecting its most obvious meaning. For it is equally difficult, by their own showing, to assign any other meaning to it, or show its connection with what pre-

cedes and follows it. Besides, it is no uncommon thing for an inspired penman suddenly and abruptly to introduce a topic which is foreign to the leading or main one under consideration. It is not irrelevant to remark here, that the closing sentence in this prophecy referred to the close of time itself. "Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Surely this could not mean that Daniel should live to see the fulfilment of those events which he was inspired to predict, some of which are still future. And if his thoughts were directed by the revealing angel to his own future and eternal state, nothing could have been more natural than to have glanced at least to the close of all time, and the succeeding realities of eternity to the whole human family. There is, however, at first sight, a difficulty, if we assume the most obvious meaning of the text as the true one,—that is, as referring to the resurrection. For the text says, that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

In the clearer and fuller revelations of the New Testament, however, on this deeply interesting subject, terms of absolute universality are employed. The Saviour himself, whose prerogative it is to raise the dead, has declared, that "all that are in the grave, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life;

and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Paul, by the same authority, says, "There shall be a resurrection, both of the just and the unjust." And John, in his inspired visions of that day, tells us, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works: and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every man, according to their works; and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." No truth is more clearly taught than the universality of the resurrection, and the different eternal destiny of the righteous and the finally wicked. But the language of the text is, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The most obvious meaning of the word "many," though it may mean a large number, denotes a number less than *all*—so, also, the word "some," a smaller number. But even in this more obvious sense, it is as difficult to apply the expressions to those events which were the immediate subjects or main topics of revelation to Daniel, while the term, "everlasting," as applied to the destiny of those

different classes—those raised to “life,” and those raised to “shame and contempt,”—clearly relates to a much farther future than the fulfilment of those prophecies. But is it uncommon to employ the word *many*, when all are meant? In the following instances the word *many* is certainly used in the sense of universality. “For, if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, the gift by grace, hath abounded unto many. For the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.” But the Apostle adds, “By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” which shows that, by many, he meant all. This is probably the meaning in the text. And in addition to this, it may be remarked, that the prominent idea of the prophet was the vast multitude of human beings to be raised from their graves, in the last day, and to be arraigned before God to be judged, and to receive their sentence for eternity. If we substitute the word *multitudes* for that of *many* in the text, as we may with perfect correctness, the sense is freed from all obscurity. “The multitudes that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

My object in this discourse is to give this subject a practical bearing.

1. The first and most obvious reflection is the stupendousness of the events and scenes we are des-

tined to witness—ah! and in which to share! How is the presumption, the folly, the weakness, to say nothing of the criminality, of infidelity exposed and reproved, which asserts, as often it has asserted, that Divine revelation contains nothing truly great and sublime, and is, therefore, unworthy of great minds! But where is greatness, where is sublimity to be found, if not in the events and scenes which are here brought to view? What has this world ever witnessed which admits comparison? It has, indeed, seen great revolutions. It has seen great and powerful nations and kingdoms suddenly overthrown, and blotted from existence. It has even seen a world drowned with a flood. And though the suffering and abandoned generation was more than twenty times the duration of those which succeeded it, yet countless multitudes have, since that awful judgment, been embosomed in the earth, above all who had previously existed. And there are comparatively few, in all probability, who are yet to descend to the grave. But fix your thoughts, if indeed, the scene is not too mighty to be contemplated, on that last of days, when Death shall have made his last arrest of those who are born to die, and behold them all rising again, those before and all since the flood, down to that last generation, who instead of experiencing the doom of all preceding generations, shall instantly be changed from mortal to immortal. The whole surface of the earth cannot, indeed, contain them. And hence, from the scriptures we learn

as they rise, and as they are changed, they will be caught up into the air, in clouds, to meet their descending Judge.

Ah, how do all things this world has ever witnessed, all scenes yet to precede those of that day, dwindle in the comparison to perfect insignificance! These to some may seem mere fancies. But no; they will prove solemn realities. They are what each of us will witness—more than witness. We shall all participate in them. Our sleep may be long in the graves to which our bodies must descend. But there will yet be a voice that will open those graves, and awake our bodies from their long deep slumber, and call them up in new and immortal forms. And we, like Daniel, shall stand in our lot at the time of the end, the end of all time. And need I ask what bearing the prospect, the anticipation, the absolute certainty of these scenes has on our present condition, as well as what we are destined to be when they actually occur? So far as Christians are concerned, their present condition and future hopes, the Apostle Paul has told us in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

Indeed the whole truth of the Sacred Book rests on the certainty of the body's resurrection. Every hope of the Christian centres there as the ground of his salvation. In the preaching of the Apostles, no subject was a more constant topic of discourse. What Christians are to become, what they are to be on that day when they will all be gathered into one vast as-

sembly, and in bodies fashioned according to the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ, to spend an eternity together, and with him, in that new heaven which shall be prepared for them, teaches them what they should here be, the estimate they should place on this world, on the trials incident to their present state, and the feelings they should exercise and cultivate towards each other. There can be no happiness in the society of those whom we do not love. It is love which makes heaven a place of happiness. The force of all the principles of the Gospel, and of all Gospel motives, is derived from what we are to be when we shall have done with this world, and entered on our fixed eternal state. But,

2. The mere resurrection of the body, the instantaneous rising of all the dead, though an event, a scene grand and sublime beyond the power of the imagination to conceive, is not the most interesting, or solemnly affecting which is yet to occur. That of the resurrection derives its chief importance from what follows, and to which it introduces. They are indeed most closely associated in the communication, that the angel sent from heaven for that purpose, made to the Prophet Daniel, and which he communicates to us in the text: "And many of them (that is all) that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." That is, there will be two great divisions of the entire human race. No other meaning can be at-

tached to the word, "some," as here employed, if the common interpretation of the passage is correct. The fact of such a separation in the last day, depends not on this passage. The Judge himself has declared it in language which none can misunderstand. In the twenty-fifth of Matthew we read : " When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." And then, at the close of that examination, he proceeds to pronounce a sentence which will render that separation eternal. " These (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

But there are some things taught in the text, which are not taught with equal clearness, at least, even in the New Testament. These respect the finally wicked. In the New Testament, the main object on this point evidently was, to show the awful intensity, as well as eternity of their misery. Hence the imagery employed to represent it. Such as the " worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched;" " the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," into which the wicked are cast; " the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up forever and ever;" and much of a similar character. Little or nothing expressly is said in the

New Testament, of the manner or external appearance in which they will come forth from their graves. From the peculiar splendor and glory, however, with which we are most plainly taught the righteous will be adorned, when their bodies are called out of their graves, in the resurrection, even "fashioned according to the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ," the inference is irresistible, that the bodies of the wicked will be externally adapted to their moral character; a deformity external and internal answerable to each other. What else is implied in the words, "some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt?" No words in our language, or indeed in any other, can express more acute mental anguish, than is implied in those of *shame* and *contempt*, and the latter, especially, under a deep consciousness of its being deserved. And these, the text tells us, will be eternal ingredients in the cup of misery which is prepared for the finally lost. "Shame and everlasting contempt." The feeling of shame may be secretly endured. But contempt implies exposure to the view of others. And such is the representation of them in the Bible. "They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." This, as one of the most approved commentators remarks, "may mean, either that the angels will be present, at their condemnation, or that the punishment will be actually witnessed by the angels, as it is most probable it will be." The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is re-

ferred to, as furnishing strong ground to believe that all the glorified will be witnesses of the misery of the finally lost. But whether this will be true, while the ages of eternity roll on, or not, it will certainly be so at the resurrection. Nor can the condemned ever rid themselves of the feeling of shame, and the consciousness of deserving the holy contempt of all holy beings, God, angels, and men. While the eye of Jehovah will forever be upon them. For if they make their bed in hell, we are assured, God is there. Every eye, in the vast congregation of angels and men, will be upon them in the scenes of the final judgment. And it is far from being a vain or idle conjecture, that their loathsome deformity, as they rise from their graves, will point them out to the whole assembled universe, as the final rejecters of Christ and his dearly purchased and freely offered salvation. Such a distinction is clearly intimated in the words immediately following the text: "And 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." No imagery could be more beautiful, no comparison more striking, or expressive of the splendor and glory of the external appearance of the saints in the resurrection; or in the language of the text which points to that day, when they shall awake from their sleep in the dust of the earth! The Apostle Paul employed the same figure, though to express more clearly the difference between different saints at the resurrection,

when he says, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead;" speaking of Christians on that day. It is probable the Apostle had this passage of the Prophet in his mind while penning the above. For the same distinction, though expressed in more general terms by the latter, is made by the former.

But if the immortal bodies of the saints shall possess such lustre, such glory, what are we left to infer will be the appearance of the bodies of the wicked, when they awake "to shame and everlasting contempt?" O, with what loathsome deformity will they come forth from their graves! How does the feeling of shame change the very aspect of the countenance in the present state! There is a stage of iniquity, indeed, at which the wicked often arrive, when even the blush of shame is not produced; where all the natural sensibilities of the soul are extinguished. This pitch in vice and crime is often reached. But it will not be so hereafter. The natural sensibilities will be rekindled; yes, and raised to the highest degree. Shame and the deep consciousness of deserved contempt will flash with far deeper power in the countenances of their new immortal bodies, bodies fashioned for the very purpose; and each stand exposed, in all the deformity of sin in its ten thousand forms, to the vast multitudes assembled in judgment. The most vigorous imagina-

tion can paint no picture to exceed in horror that which is here presented. And we may here add, that the Saviour himself has confirmed its correctness, in the fearful language he employed in describing the place and the doom of the finally lost. "Where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

These are indeed awful subjects of thought. And I wonder not that those who cannot give up their sins, endeavor to make themselves believe that they are fictions; or if they cannot succeed in that, put the evil day as far off as possible. But even that experiment, that attempt, will prove of short duration, and only lead to deeper disappointment. My impenitent hearers, it is to prevent this, if I know my own heart, that your thoughts have been directed to these subjects. I look around on this congregation, and as my eyes fix on this individual, and that individual, on this person and that person; on him already far advanced in life, but who has no solid hope that he will be saved; on this youth and that youth, who are still in all their thoughtlessness, I ask myself, where, O, where will they appear when they "awake from the dust of the earth?" Will it be with those who "awake to everlasting life," in bodies as glorious as that of the ascended Son of God? Or shall it be "to shame and everlasting contempt," and with all the visible proofs that they died in their sins, with all the tokens of that endless perdition, to which at the close of the judgment, they are to be sentenced? With the one or the

other, certainly; as certainly as these are truths of God's revelation. As certainly as these bodies are handed over to the grave, so certain is it they will rise again, and rise with inconceivable beauty, or unutterable deformity, and *which*, depends on no future state of probation, but on the condition of the soul when it leaves the body. And who can fail to reflect, how near the point of the irreversible decision we may be! Some of us have well-nigh reached it, even according to the most presumptuous calculations. While many a junior in years may reach it first. And that is the point which will decide all that lies beyond, in the endless ages of eternity. Then commences that state of bliss or woe, which will be consummated, and rendered eternal, at the closing scenes of the final judgment. But remember, that death introduces the soul to a judgment, as decisive and irreversible as that at the last day. The object of the latter is to receive the testimony of all the witnesses in the case of each individual, which could not be given at his death, and to vindicate God's dealings towards his creatures, and the righteousness of his sentence which dooms the finally wicked to eternal death. To prepare for death, therefore, is to prepare for the final decision of the last judgment.

XXIII.

THE RESURRECTION BODY.

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.—PHILIPPIANS 3 : 21.

THESE words are familiar to us all, as expressing the last solemn rite, at the grave of a friend, and especially of a pious friend. Our fondly cherished hopes of such are not buried there with the lifeless body, nor yielded up in despair. They survive that sad and gloomy hour, and extend far down the lapse of ages, to the close of time itself. They reach to the resurrection morning, when the dead, the “dead in Christ, shall rise first, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality,” and “death itself be swallowed up in victory.” Then, as the dust of each saint, collected into form, leaps from its prison-house, will be heard the triumphant song, “O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Who

shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." Our thoughts are here directed to events and scenes of the deepest and most solemn interest, scenes and events which, in their turn, are both melancholy and joyous. Would that, for a little season, we could tear them off from surrounding objects, and place them, if not by faith, yet by fancy, in the midst of them. The first topic which the text naturally presents for consideration is couched under the phrase, "our vile bodies." This phraseology does not convey the correct idea. Nor is it a just translation of the words employed by the Apostle. Without explanation, the phrase might convey a wrong idea. There is nothing in the original word, here rendered "vile," which properly denotes vileness. If the word vile, in any of its forms, must be retained, a literal rendering would be "our body of vileness!" And though the body is the instrument of much that is vile, this surely was not Paul's meaning.

The word does not and was not intended to express any moral qualities. It means humiliation, depression, being brought low, or to a low estate, as it is elsewhere rendered in the New Testament. "Who shall change this body of humiliation," this body subjected to a low and humiliating condition. In itself, the human body is one of the noblest specimens of God's creating power. It is in relation to that structure, the Psalmist

exclaims, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (See 139th Psalm, for many particulars which refer to this part of man.) As the bodies, too, of the first human pair came from the forming hand of their Creator, there was nothing that was even humiliating in them. Sin, and only sin, has subjected them to numberless evils and ills. It is sin that has made them the subjects of disease and pain, infirmities, and the crushing power of death. This is one part of the original sentence denounced against the first act of disobedience, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." A few years impose a burden which cannot be borne. And ah! how often does the fairest form, in blooming youth, decline and fade, and sink into the grave! and all that was once so beautiful, become the food of worms! Ah! is not that a condition of humiliation? But even this conveys not the full idea. For though the mere body is the subject of no moral qualities, yet is it a part of a moral being, an endeared and cherished part of man, and so closely connected with his immortal part, that all the operations of the soul exert some influence, and leave some impress, which Omniscience sees, if men always do not, on the body. It is the instrument of all actual crimes, all overt sins. It is this, and only this, which has subjected it to so many evils, and doomed it to such a humiliating end. And this is one argument, corroborative of God's express word, to prove that the bodies of all the finally wicked will be raised, to become the instruments of increased and endless agony

and torture, to the souls that here dwelt in them. This remark, however, is but incidental to our present topic.

A second topic presented in the text, is the change which is to pass on the body of every Christian or true child of God. The bodies of all that go down into the grave will be raised, those of the wicked as well as those of the saints. No doctrine is more expressly or clearly taught in the Bible, than that of a universal resurrection. The bodies of those who shall be alive at that day will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. They will all be made immortal, and adapted to their eternal condition, whatever that may be. But the Apostle in the text speaks only of the body of the saint; for its pattern is the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Who shall change their vile body," this body of humiliation, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," literally, "the body of his glory," such splendor and glory as it has in his exalted and glorified state in heaven. Such as that is, the saints will have in the resurrection; "fashioned like unto his glorious body." Of its nature, its splendor, and glory, we shall not know, till we see the Saviour in his body of glory.

The same Apostle has told us, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, fifteenth chapter, that it will be "a spiritual body." But of such a substance we now have no conception. He has however told us of some of its properties. It is no longer, as here, a corruptible body.

“It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.” It is no more a mortal body. “This mortal shall put on immortality.” It is no more a weak or infirm body. “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” It is no more a loathsome body. “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.” These are properties of which we know nothing, save by their contrast with what it now possesses. It will not be sustained in the manner it is now. It can never grow weary. It will be perfectly adapted to the heavenly state, to the wholly sanctified soul, and probably add to its happiness, beyond its disembodied state in heaven. This is legitimately inferred from the fact that all the New Testament writers constantly pointed Christians to the resurrection, as one of the most powerful motives to perseverance and Christian devotedness. It is the nature of the mind to be active, and but from its connection with the body, would repose never be necessary to refresh and invigorate it. The resurrection body will be such as to relieve it from that necessity. From this mutual and increased activity of the new body and the wholly sanctified spirit, after their reunion, we justly conclude that saints are not stationary in any part of the universe. They may go from world to world, and with a celerity equalled only by thought itself. This multiplicity of worlds, as constituting heaven, seems in perfect agreement with the Saviour’s declaration to his Apostles, when he said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I

would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." But this is not the particular point under present consideration, and we dismiss it. The Apostle in the text is not speaking of the new organization of the body, with reference to its new powers, with which it will then be endowed, but chiefly, of its external appearance, in which it will be like the glorious body of Christ; that body with which he ascended to heaven, and which he now exhibits on the eternal throne. That body, as he ascended to heaven, while his disciples beheld it, though rendered immortal from the moment of its resurrection, was still composed of flesh and blood. For this he had declared to them, when they supposed that he was a spirit. "See," said he, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." But "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Though immortal, it must have undergone a change before he entered that world; and probably, in that cloud, as reasonably conjectured, which received him out of the Apostles' sight. What the change in external appearance was we know not. Only three on earth ever beheld the Saviour in a body of glory like unto it. Those were the favored Peter, James, and John, on Mount Tabor, when he was transfigured before them; and the same John, in the Isle of Patmos; and the description is nearly the same in both instances.

In the latter case he certainly appeared as he was, and is, in heaven. The former was probably the

foreshadowing of his latter appearance. They also had examples of it in Moses and Elias, who appeared with Christ, at his transfiguration. For they also "appeared in glory;" that is, their appearance was glorious. Verily, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but if we die in him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

To be like Christ in all possible respects, is the strongest desire of every true believer in him. David expressed this for himself, and his desire is that of every true child of God, when he said, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness." This is the full consummation of the Christian's hope. This the glory of his victory over his last enemy, Death. For Death is not conquered so long as he retains the body in the grave. But it is not a mere release of the body from its dark and gloomy prison-house. His victim comes forth clothed with peculiar and transcendent lustre and glory.

There is another prominent thought presented in the text, namely: By whom this mighty change is accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Surely no creature could do this. This is a work which Omnipo-

tence only can effect. And he that possesses this attribute must be God. With direct reference to this work, he himself said, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. They that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." If indeed one instance of raising the dead, or of raising all the dead, of our race, can require the highest possible energy, it is the raising of oneself from the grave. And Jesus Christ did this. This power he claimed, and in his own resurrection exercised. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man (literally no one) taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And this he did on the cross, notwithstanding the agency of wicked men. For the words rendered, "he gave up the ghost," literally mean, "he dismissed his spirit." What a display of omnipotence will that be, in the last day, when, at his voice, earth and ocean, land and sea, shall heave forth the countless multitudes, from the body of Abel, the first that went down to the grave, to the last that shall slumber there! What a discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, who here lie by each other, mingling their dust together! For "the dead in Christ shall rise first." Not a child of his will be missing from that glorious company.

Not one of the finally wicked be found among them. Nor will they mingle together even at the judgment. For the one shall be on the right hand, the other on the left hand of the Judge. Ah! death, my hearers, is the moment of final separation between the righteous and the wicked. However close the relationship, however constant their association with each other, in this life, they shall never more mingle together when death shall have parted them! No friendships, no alliances, no ties of kindred, between such on earth, can be resumed when death has struck his blow! The strongest ties are then dissolved, and dissolved forever!

And now, what improvement shall we make of this subject? What influence should it exert on us? One of deeper solemnity, one of more direct personal bearing on each of us, the sacred volume does not contain. It involves all that is desirable, and all that is dreadful in the eternal world, as each of us is concerned. The subject itself, every topic embraced in it, makes an appeal infinitely stronger than words can express, than man or angel can make. Yet in the earnest hope that God may bless, and with his own grace make efficient, the feeblest instrument, suffer a few words. And I address them chiefly to Christians. Beloved child of God, what matters it what your lot on earth is, or may be! With what holy indifference should you look on all the things of earth! View them all in the clear light which beams upon you from.

eternity. If you are poor, draw from your treasure in heaven, for it can never fail. If you are borne down with affliction and suffering, you have only to look forward to the hour of death, which is near and rapidly approaching, for an eternal release from them all.

Earth will give you a sweet and peaceful lodgment in its bosom. Let it not pain you that this body must go down to the grave. He who styles himself the "Resurrection and the Life," will watch its every particle. His power will collect it all, and reconstruct it, and "fashion it like unto his glorious body." If enemies assault and reproach you now, the day is not distant when you will triumph over them all. He that conquered his worst foe, even while bleeding on the cross, will make you more than conquerors over all yours. You will eternally be separated from all that can harm you, and blessed with all fulness of joy in mansions prepared for you. Yes, one moment after death shall have done his work on your frail, crumbling tabernacle of clay, you will forever be beyond every evil and every fear. All the strange commotions of this earth and yonder heavens, in the last day, will cause you no alarm. When this earth is enwrapt in flames, and the elements are dissolving with fervent heat, in your new and immortal body, you will be caught up into the air, to meet your descended Lord, and from his lips hear the thrilling welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." What, in that day,

what in the succeeding ages of eternity, will you then think of this world? You will not have a thought to bestow upon it, save to recall your pilgrimage through it, and call forth new praise to Him who led you all the way; not a thought, but to raise your gratitude and love to higher degrees to Him who plucked you as a brand from everlasting burnings. And all this, in no small degree, may even be made a present enjoyment. Faith has power to bring them near to you. Increasing trust and praise are now the best returns you can make for all his love.

These will give you a foretaste of heavenly joys before you enter that world, and this will lighten all your burdens, sweeten all your labors, and afford relief under every pain and suffering that may be your lot, while on your way thither. These faithfully performed, and cheerfully borne, will furnish the only solid or satisfactory proofs, that you are in the strait and narrow way to life. And this, beloved Christian, is your only proper improvement of this subject.

If such views and prospects fail to wean the Christian from the perishable, unsatisfying things of earth, to cause him to set more lightly by this world, to think less of this decaying and more of his glorified body, and arouse all his energies, joyfully and triumphantly to meet the scenes upon which he is so soon to be ushered, neither time nor eternity can furnish motives of sufficient weight to do this. And if these fail, so will probably fail his hope that those blessings will

ever be his. And if this is his present state, a state of impenitence still, then with all the motives which heaven furnishes, are combined the terrors of the world of woe. And these are the fearful considerations which make their appeal to every impenitent sinner in this assembly. My hearers, final impenitence will not prove a mere forfeiture of heaven and its unspeakable glories, but it will insure an eternal duration of unutterable woes!

XXIV.

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE ACTIONS OF MEN IS PERFECT ;

AND HIS DEALINGS WITH THEM WILL BE VINDICATED
BY THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

“Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing.”—JEREMIAH 32 : 19.

THIS portion of Scripture contains some of those great and fundamental truths, on which is based the whole government of God over the intelligent part of our world, and which give such immense importance to our existence ; truths which have equal bearing on every individual of our race. They involve the endless destiny of every human being, from Adam to the last-born of his posterity. They are also among the most obvious truths of Divine revelation ; requiring simple but frequent announcement, but little or no exposition. They are level with the feeblest intellect, and equally demand the most solemn consideration of all our race.

“Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons

of men ; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing."

1. Of the important truths to which I invite attention, the first is, God's constant and minute inspection of all the conduct of men. This fact lies on the very face of the passage. "Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men." This none question who have any just views of God. Omniscience is an attribute of his nature. It is inseparable from his existence. He can no more cease, or fail to know, all things actual and possible, than cease to be. It is one of the first attributes with which reason itself clothes him, where his existence is believed and acknowledged. If we might make any distinction among the essential perfections of Jehovah, we should be justified in placing his perfect knowledge of all things at the very head of the whole catalogue of his attributes. Omniscience, which involves infinite wisdom, so to speak, superintends and directs all the Divine operations. Strip him of that, and we might well ascribe all things to blind chance. It is the basis or ground of right and wrong; of all moral obligation in man; that which gives activity and power to conscience, on which indeed the conscience itself exists, and without which there could be no accountability. Where this great and cardinal truth is denied, it is a practical, not a speculative denial. It proceeds from a wrong heart, not a defective intellect. It is because the sinner wishes it untrue, rather than believes it untrue. This,

and its essential importance, are the reasons why so plain and self-evident a truth is found reiterated so frequently in the Bible. Let me recite a few of the many instances of this. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts." "Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" "His eyes are upon the ways of men, and he seeth all his goings." In addition to all these mere examples, I refer you to the 139th Psalm. What truth, then, is it more important to impress on the heart, and not to believe only? What is calculated to exert a more important practical influence? When properly realized, what a check it imposes on sin; the sin of the heart, as well as of the life; on the sins of thought and feeling, as on their outbreak into words and actions! The solemn and awful conviction of this great truth, prompted the earnest petition of David, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults, keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me." But,

2. A second interesting topic furnished us in the text, is the object of God's inspection of man's conduct. This too lies on the very face of it. "Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give

every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing.”

This general object includes several most important particulars. And

1. There will be a period when this righteous award will be made. This period in regard to each individual is the time of his death. This is evident from two considerations.

The first seems reasonably to be inferred from the fact, that the moral character, that on which the righteous decision is to pass, is completed at the moment of death. There is not a doctrine more clearly taught in the Bible, than that a state of unchangeable moral character is reached, at the instant the immortal spirit leaves the body. Probation is everywhere spoken of in this connection, that is, wherever this point is alluded to, as limited to the present state of existence. In many places it is expressly declared. Let the following instances suffice. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” And if so, where is the possibility of any change of moral character? “Work while the day lasteth,” evidently that is, while life continues; “for the night cometh,” that is the close of life, “wherein no man can work.”

2. This view will be confirmed by another consideration, viz., that happiness or misery, according to moral character, and either eternal, actually, and im-

mediately, succeeds death. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man, with utmost clearness, teaches this, as its main design in our Saviour's putting it forth. No one who had not a false doctrine to maintain, ever undertook or ever thought to controvert it, or place any other construction upon it. This doctrine, taken in connection with another equally clearly taught, viz., the continued existence of the soul after its separation from the body, necessarily implies that such soul is either happy or miserable. If the soul exists at all, after the body's death, it must exist in the possession and exercise of its appropriate faculties,—those faculties which constitute it a soul. We can conceive no idea of a soul separate from its own proper faculties, nor of the existence of faculties separate from their appropriate exercise. If these are suspended, the soul is annihilated. To speak of its being revived at any subsequent period, is, in fact, not a revival, but a new creation. From both Scripture and reason, therefore, it is most evident, that the soul is either happy or miserable, according to its moral character, at the moment of death. Or, in the language of the text, God will “give to every one according to his ways,” at the termination of his present state of existence. What formalities are observed, or whether any, at the moment of death, by which the departed spirit receives its destination to a state of happiness or a state of misery, we are not told. No formal examination, certainly, is necessary, in order to know

the character or the desert of the disembodied spirit, by its omniscient Judge. It is only necessary for that spirit itself to know and feel its just deserts; and this, undoubtedly, every soul perfectly knows and feels, at the instant it leaves the body. It is then that every faculty of the soul is raised to the highest state of activity. Memory instantly recalls every item in the moral history of one's whole life; conscience awakes to its highest exercise, and utters its own decision with perfect clearness and unbiassed impartiality. It needs no other decision than its own, to assign the soul to its appropriate condition of happiness or misery. And so far as revelation teaches us anything on this subject, this appears to be the fact. When the soul of Lazarus left the body, it was immediately taken by angels and carried to Abraham's bosom,—a mode of expression by which the Jews set forth their views of heaven, and the happiness of its inhabitants; and therefore the Saviour employed it for that purpose in that parable. The same immediate transition from time to his place in misery, is represented as taking place with the rich man. His first glance into eternity seems to have been into the pit of woe. "He died, and lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments," which appears to have been the very moment he entered eternity. And this is, unquestionably, the solemn fact. And such will continue to be the condition, that is, one of happiness or of misery, according to its character at death, of every disembodied spirit,

during the body's slumber in the grave, or till the resurrection. Hence, we are told that at that day, the souls of the redeemed or glorified, who went to heaven at their death, will accompany the Saviour at his second coming, to change the then living, and raise all the dead; and also, that hell itself will give up its dead, that is, the spirits of those who had died in their sins, and went thither, at their death.

3. And this introduces a third general topic suggested in the text, viz., a public, universal, and final judgment. For it is not only said that God will give to every one according to his ways, or his individual, personal character, and which, we have seen, takes place at the death of each, but that he will give to every one "according to the fruit of his doing."

That there will be a general, or rather a universal judgment, I need not stop to prove. The Judge himself, who has the keys of death and of hell, and shutteth, and no man openeth, and openeth, and no man shutteth, has expressly declared it. Indeed, it is the crowning, great cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, that the whole moral universe shall be assembled for a final judgment. There are evidently two great objects to be secured by a universal judgment. The one is the vindication or manifestation of God's own administration over the world, as a moral Governor. As such, he has a character to vindicate, if I may use this expression, in the view of all his intelligent creation. It will not be enough that the condemned sinner has no

complaint to make. There are countless other intelligent beings who have witnessed God's government over this world from its beginning. They may know the general character of every individual of our race, and have the most perfect confidence in the rectitude of the Divine government. But they are not omniscient. And it is easy to conceive, that short of the full disclosures of a universal judgment, they cannot see the whole bearing of the Divine administration. It is indeed difficult to conceive the contrary. This is the reason, or this is one reason why men shall give account of even "every idle word" which they speak, and the inmost secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest.

But there is another weighty consideration, which demands a universal judgment, at the close of the affairs of this world, viz., that men will not fully know their own character, and especially their full deserts, without the disclosures of the last day.

Men exert an influence for good or for evil, not only on those with whom they here associate, or with whom they are connected in business, or other relationships, that exist after their removal from this world; but an influence which descends to future and far remote generations. Though dead, they continue to speak; speak by the example they set while living, and the various ways by which they exerted an influence over others. How often has this been seen and remarked of the eminently pious Christian. There are numerous

examples of this familiar to you all, in the memoirs and writings of those who lived in far-back generations. It is true of every devoted saint whose memory has come down to us, or will descend to future generations.

Nor is it less true or certain that the wicked, by various ways, transmit an evil influence to those who succeed them; and thus a torrent of iniquity, retraceable to a far-back fountain, is rolling onward, not to be arrested, till the generation of man shall cease. In all such instances, both of the good and the bad, higher praise or deeper guilt attaches to those whose influence thus descends after them. But how shall the whole intelligent universe become acquainted with these important facts and results, without a universal judgment at the close of all time? Omniscience indeed sees it. For God sees the end from the beginning. His eye marks the good or bad influence and effects of every man's life, through all time.

But this is not enough, if any judgment at all is necessary. The whole universe must see it, if it be any part or object of the judgment for God to disclose his dealing towards men, as a moral Governor; or even for men to know their own true character and real deserts. And so far as he himself is concerned, he has expressly declared that this is one great object of the final judgment. For it is called the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." And as men themselves are concerned in its most important transactions, this is clearly announced in the text.

For they shall receive according to the fruit of their doings. The distinction is clearly expressed between the immediate influence of our personal acts, and that which legitimately flows from those acts; between that which he actually does, and that which his life occasions to others, however far his influence may extend. "Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruits of his doing;" its remote as well as immediate effects and results.

From this subject, important practical inferences follow.

The first which I will state, is the infinite preciousness of the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ,—the plan of salvation which his Gospel teaches.

The law is the only rule of judgment in the government of God, as in all other governments. But on the ground of law, not an individual of our race could have been saved. All must have perished. "For all have sinned; and the wages of sin is death." Those therefore who are saved, must be saved on other grounds. And what is that ground, but the mediatorial work of Christ? He took the sinner's place, even under the administration of law. He was made under the law, that he might take the sinner's place. Its penalty, not one iota of its threatened, fearful curse, could be remitted, even in behalf of God's own dearly beloved Son. He bore the whole fearful, crush-

ing weight of it. On this ground, and on no other, could sin be pardoned, and the sinner saved. His bloody death has effected a complete atonement, the full benefit of which is secured to all who repent and believe in Christ. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This, in few words, is the Gospel-plan of salvation. Christ takes the sinner's place, bears the curse of the law for him, and admits him, through faith, to all the benefits resulting from the death and perfect righteousness of God's immaculate, suffering Son. Hence the heart-cheering declaration, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death." Such are the glorious prospects of the Christian. On his entrance into eternity, his sanctified spirit goes at once to the bosom of his Redeemer, his best, his everlasting friend. And though, in the final judgment, all his sins may be disclosed to the universe, he can point to his Judge as the Being who bore them all for him, and without one fear await his final decision.

There, too, multitudes of them will learn for the first time the happy fruits of their devoted piety, their godly example, their benevolent charities, and

their fervent prayers, while pilgrims on earth, in the salvation of others of whom they here never heard. But,

2. We have an awful contrast to present. It is furnished by those who live and die in all their sins. Untold millions of such will go from Christian lands. They lived and died amid all the splendors of Gospel light. The offer of eternal life was often and urgently pressed on their acceptance, but they as often rejected it. The compassionate Saviour was evidently set before them, crucified and slain, but they turned away from him. He called to them, in all the tenderness of dying love, "Why will ye die?" "Come unto me and be ye saved." "Though your sins be of a scarlet color and a crimson dye, they shall all be cancelled by my blood." Yet they heeded not his voice. "They would none of his counsels; they despised all his reproofs." His warnings and his invitations found no yielding response in their hearts. But this cannot always be. Death approaches. His first chilling touch banishes all their idols, and dries up all their sources of pleasure; and they have no substitute. He lays his crushing hand on the body's vital spark, and it is quenched! The immortal spirit escapes. It carries with it all its immortal powers quickened to their highest activity and the keenest sensibility. O! how changed the scene now! Their sins have gone before them to the judgment. Their awful doom is fixed! They at once sink to their own place. They

will, however, be released, though not relieved. They too must stand before the great white throne, and have all their deeds read out to assembled worlds; the long black catalogue of sins of word, of acts, of heart. Not one of them forgotten, not one blotted out. Not one ever seen before, as seen then. There too they must confront multitudes, to whose endless destruction they had contributed by their example, their temptations, by which they had been beguiled; among them infidels, and scoffers of religion, and authors of vicious productions, handed down through successive generations.

But I recall these thoughts, which experience alone can ever fully know, and urge in conclusion the motives, or rather the combination of all the motives which three worlds furnish, that none of you may ever thus know them. These motives are addressed to the strongest passions of our nature, hope and fear; hope of endless and ever-increasing happiness, of glory; and fear of eternal and ever-augmenting misery and despair! What an urgent demand is here made on all the energies of the soul, to secure the one and avoid the other! They make their appeal to all classes, of all ages; to those who are just beginning to gather items in the account to be rendered to the Judge, whose decision must settle their destiny forever! Every day will be adding to those items, till death close and seal that account, to be opened and read out to a listening universe. How then, let me ask the

youths before me, how, if spared to maturity of years, and especially to old age, shall the blank that now remains, be filled? Whether long or short, the roll will all be filled. It will be filled with items, every one of which will bear on your eternal condition. They will all be your own, and you must answer for every one of them. They will not consist of open acts, or outward expressions only, but of feelings you never disclosed, thoughts to which you never gave utterance, designs you never divulged, and desires you closely concealed in your own breast. But one day they will all be revealed, the day when God shall judge the secrets of all men; the day for the revelation of which he exercises the closest inspection over us all. O, then, why will these youths, why will any of you, now in your sins, delay an hour, or a moment longer, to gather materials, the disclosure of which, in the last day, will fill you with joy, and not with grief. Why will those delay longer, who have already long delayed? One offer more is made to you, and made in view of the solemn day which will decide your eternity. That day may be nearer than you suspect. Death seals the eternal state of all on whom he lays his crushing hand.

The final judgment is to show the rectitude of God's conduct towards his creatures, to the perfect view of the whole assembled world, and show and make one feel the full weight of his deserts. O, then, give us one assurance that it is, at least, with deepened serious-

ness, with increased thoughtfulness, with quickened consciences, with strengthened resolution, with some yielding, softening of the heart, you appear in God's house to-day, and have had your thoughts directed to events and scenes of awful solemnity; events and scenes on some of which you must soon enter, and which will decide your condition forever.

We have used the language of terror, only that we might with God's blessing persuade you. The compassionate Redeemer would, indeed, win you all by his love. But thus far, with every impenitent sinner here, that language has failed! He has tried it, as it beamed from the bloody cross on your hearts, but that heart has not melted! Terrors are reserved, as the last expedient and last resort. If these also fail to drive you to his arms, one crowning terror awaits you. "Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

Sinner, prepare to meet thy God.

XXV.

THE CONDITION OF THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN.

“But are as the angels which are in heaven.”—MARK 12 : 25.

THIS was a part of our Saviour's reply to a question which the Sadducees put to him respecting the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees not only denied the resurrection of the body, but the existence of the soul after the body's death; and also that of angels and created spirits of any order or kind. As they admitted the Divine authority of Moses, and had just quoted him, the Saviour replies to them by referring them to what Moses had taught: “Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Ye, therefore, do greatly err.” But when Moses wrote that, they had been long dead, Abraham more than three centuries, and Jacob nearly two centuries. And yet God was their God. Their souls must, therefore, still be in existence.

This, it is true, is an argument to prove the immortality of the soul, rather than the resurrection of the body. But as this latter point was the topic under consideration, and as the Sadducees denied the existence of spirits as well as the resurrection of the body, the argument of the Saviour equally embraced and established both points.

But neither of these is the principal idea contained in the text. Nor was the declaration which the text expresses necessary to the Saviour's argument. That argument was complete without it. But, as was his constant practice, he improved the opportunity which the occasion afforded, to utter a most important, consoling, and animating truth in relation to all the pious dead. "They are as the angels which are in heaven." We, indeed, know but little about the angels; of their physical constitutions, or mode of existence, next to nothing. In regard to these things, as well, probably, as many other things, we must wait till we become their companions, if that happy destiny await us.

But God has been pleased to give us some important information respecting them. And it is an interesting inquiry, In what respects saints, in eternity, resemble them? This is not a question of mere speculation. The Saviour has clearly revealed the fact; and it is easy to perceive its practical bearing.

Let us attempt to trace some of the points of resemblance, not being wise above what is written.

1. Angels are the highest order of created intelligences of which we have any knowledge. We have reason to believe, the most exalted God ever created. Heaven, certainly, contains none more so, save the human nature of Jesus Christ, who was, and will forever remain, proper man, as he eternally was, and must forever be, proper God. He in his humanity excepted, the angels are the highest order of created beings. While we read of none more exalted, the prophets and apostles, particularly Daniel and John, in the visions with which they were favored of the heavenly world, beheld none more highly exalted around the throne of God. To that throne they occupied the nearest place. The most honorable testimonials which any of the saints on earth ever enjoyed or received, were direct interviews with and Divine communications through angels, save only where God himself, by some visible or audible manifestations, condescended to commune with them. But whatever of dignity and exaltation now belongs to those beings, will yet be shared by the redeemed of our earth. The text refers to the saints at and after the resurrection. "When they shall rise from the dead, they shall be as the angels which are in heaven." The resemblance is to be perfect there. So far as it respects the energy and grasp of their intellectual powers, there may be a relative difference between them forever, though the tallest and the brightest angel in heaven will never reach a point which every saint, even the last ad-

mitted infant, will not attain to and immeasurably surpass.

But after the resurrection, angels will not be the nearest to the throne. Aye, the saints shall occupy the throne. Hear the words of Christ himself: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."

In some respects the saints will enjoy a peculiar distinction over the angels; a distinction proportioned to the price of their purchase; indeed, a peculiar glory, derived from their Redeemer himself. Is not this sustained also by his own word? "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."

2. The saints will resemble the angels which are in heaven in moral character. They will be free from all sin, be perfectly holy. In their measure, as holy as God is holy. In intensity of feeling, no creature of course can more than distantly approximate the infinite God. In comparison with him, even the heavens and all they contain are not clean in his sight. The ardor and intensity of an emotion or feeling in creatures, does not depend alone on mere capacity; and consequently their holiness, the motive which prompts that emotion or feeling, that which calls it forth, must be taken into account. The degree of holiness is eminently dependent on love, and gratitude,

and joy, with which the impression of indebtedness must have its influence. I need not say, that in these respects, the condition of angels who never sinned allows no comparison with the redeemed of our race.

It has been often and truly said, that “angels cannot sing the song of redeeming grace.” And that is the song which will be sung in heaven forever. Angels will join in it, but only from the promptings of benevolence, and not from personal indebtedness. Holiness will be as perfect as those affections of the redeemed are pure; and these will forever be impelling the wholly sanctified saint to nearer and nearer resemblance to the infinitely holy God. But there is no occasion for argument on this point. And I remark,

3. Saints will be like the angels in heaven, as being forever confirmed in their holy and happy state. They were placed on probation no less than men. They were placed under laws no less than mankind. Every created being must necessarily be under a law adapted to its nature. And every intelligent moral agent must be naturally capable of violating that law. This was proved by the angels themselves, some of whom transgressed, and were forever banished from heaven. “The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” This very language denotes that a portion did keep their first estate. These are repeatedly called “the

elect angels." How long their trial was, or what was the test of their obedience, we are not told. We only know that they sustained it, and were confirmed forever in holiness and happiness. Every true Christian too will be confirmed in holiness and happiness. His probation is confined to this life. At death he will become wholly sanctified, no more to be placed on trial, no more to be exposed or tempted to sin. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still." "Neither can they die any more," says the Evangelist Luke, in a parallel place with the text, "for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." In a word, the Judge of quick and dead has himself declared, of both the wicked and the righteous, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

4. The redeemed in heaven are like the angels of God into their employments.

It should be borne in mind that all the instances in which saints are said to be like unto and equal with the angels of God, reference is expressly had to the resurrection. There are but three such instances recorded in the New Testament. These are from the pens of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and they all relate to the Saviour's conversation with and refutation of the notion of the Sadducees, that "there is no resurrection." And it had respect to a particular case which they presented, but which will be considered

under our next general topic. This it is important to bear in mind, inasmuch as many have inferred from the expressions of the Saviour in those places, that the departed spirits of the righteous, from the moment of their death, are like the angels, in all their offices as well as the fact of their perfect holiness and happiness, and their confirmation in that state; and which indeed we learn, not from their comparison with the angels, but from numerous declarations of the Bible.

Hence many have supposed, and cited these passages as confirming the correctness and truth of the supposition, that they are employed like the angels, as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." Or of those of whom the Saviour, speaking of little children, said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven:" that is, as they suppose, are their guardian angels. But this supposition, whether true or not, is not a just inference from this passage. For it was applied to those Christians who resemble little children, in certain characteristics, but which it is foreign from my object now to state. Unquestionably, the angels are employed as God's ministers in various ways. But in regard to the like employment of the spirits of the deceased saints, the Scriptures are, so far as I can find, entirely silent. And we have instituted this comparison, not for the purpose of stating anything respecting disembodied saints, which is not directly taught respecting them, without any reference to

angels, but simply for the purpose of more deeply impressing what God has clearly taught us respecting them. For comparisons are always more impressive than mere declarations. Who does not feel this, when a standard is set up, so far beyond all which he can now conceive, in holiness and happiness, in enlarged capacity, in amount of knowledge, and that forever augmenting—in forever exploring the illimitable works of Jehovah, in making new discoveries of his infinite nature and perfection, and eternally swelling the heart with new and more elevated emotions of wonder, and gratitude, and love—who, I repeat, will not feel the force of such a comparison, with an order of holy and happy and elevated beings, who never sinned, when he reflects that in all these respects he is to be like them, and equal to what they now are, and immeasurably surpass even that standard? And in all these respects the comparison is just, and every Christian is destined to realize it. He will be the fit companion of those pure spirits forever. But I remark,

5. Saints will be like the angels of God, as it respects the natural relationships which the former sustain in their present state of existence. This was the main point involved in the controversy between the Sadducees and the Saviour. It had particular respect to the conjugal relation, on the supposition that it existed at and after the resurrection, as in this world. For although the Sadducees disbelieved a resurrection

of the dead, yet on the supposition that there was to be a resurrection, they took it for granted that the same natural relations would exist then as now. The case which they stated, was that of seven men who had here been the husbands of one woman ; and the question which they put was, "Whose wife of the seven she would be in the resurrection ?" Our Saviour's answer included, not that only, but all other natural relations, as they existed in this world. "Jesus answered and said, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven." There will then be no occasion for that relation, and consequently, of no other relation growing out of it. As there are no such relationships among angels, so there will none such among the glorified in heaven. They may and probably will know one another, as having been, in this life, "heirs together of the grace of life." Or as the Saviour himself expresses it, "They are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." There will be no other relationship in heaven. They will all be members of the same family, of whom God is the common Father.

This fact (for it is thus established by this most plain declaration of our Saviour), if allowed its proper influence, will relieve the Christian from what now appears to him to be inconsistent with his perfect happiness, even in heaven. What Christian has not

often felt, in view of the judgment, in the last day, that to see those who in this world were their nearest and dearest friends and relations, but who lived and died in all their sins, placed on the left hand, and hear them sentenced to endless misery; who, I repeat, but has felt, that to be eternally separated from them, and to know that they are suffering the keenest agonies, without the possibility of relief, must necessarily prove an occasion of unspeakable pain to the redeemed themselves? What desire so strong in Christians, as that their friends should be saved! O! what agony so severe, as that they should be eternally lost! Hear how Paul expressed himself, not for his nearest relatives, but even his whole nation: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." That it should be so in this life, is a most wise and benevolent arrangement. But when the destiny of our race is decided, and everything settled for eternity, it will not be so. Christians will feel towards their lost impenitent friends, just as the holy angels feel towards those of their order who sinned and fell beyond recovery.

No creatures can love more ardently than all the angels once loved one another. And we know that

the happiness of the sinless of their order is not marred by the perdition of the fallen. And the Saviour tells us that it will be so with the children of God, towards those who have sustained the tenderest relations toward each other. "For," says he, "they shall be like the angels which are in heaven." This seems impossible to Christians now. And there are obvious reasons, though we cannot now state them, why it should be so. And yet, no Christian doubts that all the inhabitants of heaven will be perfectly happy, though their nearest relatives on earth who die in their sins will be as perfectly miserable.

And hence, various reasons have been conjectured why or how this can be. Some have placed it on the ground that the redeemed will be so perfectly absorbed with the glorious displays of the infinite God, as utterly to banish from their minds all thoughts of the lost. Others, that as all the attributes of Jehovah are equally important and glorious, the redeemed will equally admire and rejoice in the manifestation of his justice, in the destruction of the wicked, as his mercy in the salvation of the righteous. Others, again, that the very memory of their impenitent friends will be utterly blotted out, and buried in eternal oblivion and forgetfulness; that they will only remember those of their former friends and associates who became the subjects of like saving grace as themselves; that this will be true of the members of the same household, who here sustained the most

endeared relationships, but between whom an eternal separation shall take place at the judgment. But these are mere conjectures; and to assign them or any other reasons as satisfactory, or as what will be, on this point, is, at least, to be wise beyond what is written.

One thing, however, is certain, and that is enough for us to know, till taught by experience,—that all who reach heaven will be perfectly happy, whatever may be the condition of others, or however closely related to them in this world.

I proceed to make some practical reflections.

1. We see, from our subject, the benevolence of God, both in the existence and the destruction of the natural relationships of this life: in their existence, as sources of the purest and highest happiness which this world can furnish. Man was not made to drag out a solitary existence here. He was made a social being. It matters not in what else he may be prospered, if deprived of society, he would be a miserable being. He might call the world, in all other respects, his own, and he would be wretched. His life would be a continual violation of all the laws of his very nature. Besides, he is capable of forming social relationships which are not limited to this life—which death cannot destroy.

These, however, are not founded in nature, but in grace, or nature sanctified by grace. For the social principles of human nature are not in themselves,

sinful. Those which spring from relations which the Creator himself established, though they have all felt the effects of the fall, require only to be purified and sanctified, and when thus purified and sanctified, will exist forever, and prove sources of joy and happiness in heaven. This is one of the strongest reasons, and, indeed, the only satisfactory one, for believing that Christian relatives and friends on earth will recognize each other in heaven. Death cannot dissolve one sanctified social tie which binds the children of God together. That Divine influence of the Holy Spirit which renders social, natural relationships, in this world, stronger, sweeter, and more endearing, as it never fails to do, must render them also permanent and eternal, and sources of the purest and highest enjoyment in heaven; and the mutual, mingling praises of earthly friends before the throne of God will experience an elevation and an ardor which must and will be peculiar to such as sustain such relationships.

Is not the benevolence of God most manifest in this? What Christian who has lost Christian friends does not enjoy the highest satisfaction in the prospect of meeting them in heaven, and resuming an intercourse there, far more delightful than could exist here? An intercourse never to end. How the very thought allays the grief of survivors at the parting hour, and reconciles to the temporary separation, which death occasions, between the members of the same household of faith! It banishes much of the darkness and

gloom which otherwise would hover over the grave. I know I address not a few who are able to appreciate this reflection.

But if the benevolence of God is manifest in such a constitution of things, in the existence of those strong, natural, social relations, which, when purified and sanctified by the grace of God, afford such satisfaction in this life, such relief to the sorrows of surviving Christians at the short separation from their pious relatives and friends; the prospect of soon seeing them, of recognizing them and forever enjoying their society in heaven; is that benevolence less manifest in the utter destruction of those natural relationships which here existed between the friends and the enemies of Jesus Christ? Should those relationships, or rather those social impulses and influences, exist in eternity, as they do in time, in heaven as they do on earth, it were indeed difficult not to believe there would be grief and pain even in heaven. What occasions such agony now in the hearts of Christians, as the thought that those whom they so tenderly love, will die in all their sins, and eternally perish! Knows the Christian any bitterness like this? Ah, it is this that makes their sorrows so keen at the death of impenitent friends, that provokes the deep regret that they were ever born, or had not died in their very infancy! And alas! what multitudes thus live, and thus die, for whom it is impossible for the nearest Christian relatives to indulge the faintest hope! That such strength of at-

tachment and affection should exist in this life is benevolent and kind. It subserves many most important purposes. Indeed, without this principle, this binding influence of social ties, this world were a very hell. Besides, when under the influence of grace, it is the strongest impulse to Christian effort and earnest prayer for the conversion and salvation of impenitent relatives and friends. But as all these efforts in their behalf must cease at death, so will all those natural ties forever cease to operate with the Christian after his death. The very memory of their lost relatives will probably be buried in eternal oblivion. It is certain, at least, that the recollection of them, if recollected at all, will never diminish the happiness of the glorified; although their salvation would be a new source of joy.

But, on the other hand, the finally lost will undoubtedly forever remember the efforts and counsels and prayers of their pious relatives and friends in their behalf. And every such remembrance will not fail to add to their misery. This, no doubt, will make a part of their punishment, when those efforts, which perhaps only called forth their ridicule, will be to them the gnawings of the worm that never dies.

Finally, Christians may see from this subject, to what a state of dignity and exaltation they will be raised. They will be "like and equal to the angels which are in heaven." Yes, that highest order of created intelligences is the standard to which they will be exalted. They are to be their associates. They

will vie with the highest and brightest of that order, yes, with Gabriel himself in extent of knowledge and amount of happiness. Nor will he ever reach a point in intelligence, dignity, and glory, to which they will not attain, and even surpass. They will surpass them in the glory of their resurrection-body. For it will be "fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ," while their souls will bear and reflect his perfect image. "Verily, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

XXVI.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

“Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die and not live.”

2 KINGS 20 : 1.

THIS was the solemn message which the prophet Isaiah was charged of the Almighty to deliver to Hezekiah, king of Judah, who was sick, and, as expressed in the Divine record, “sick unto death.” That is, the disorder, whatever it was, was in itself mortal. No human skill could arrest its progress. It must terminate fatally, unless cured by the direct agency of the Almighty. The strong expressions that “he was sick unto death,” and that “he should die and not live,” denoted no more than the fatal nature of the disease if left to its own course, or without the special, direct interposition of Almighty power. The event showed that this is the proper construction to be placed on those expressions, or otherwise it were an impeachment of the Divine veracity. For in this manner he was cured, and to his life fifteen years were added. But the warning and the direction contained

in the prophet's message had been equally pertinent and forcible, whether Hezekiah's death were an event of immediate or remote occurrence. Nor is the message and its solemn import less pertinent and weighty, as addressed to us, and to every living man, than it was to that individual. True, through the sovereign goodness of God, we are not the subjects of any known fatal disease. And if we were, we could not expect a miraculous interposition of Divine power. But no mortal is for a moment exempt from liability to it. And our reprieve from the stroke of death may be much shorter than that which was granted Hezekiah. Fifteen years hence, and many, very many of us, in the ordinary course of nature, will have gone the way of all the earth! Even one-fifteenth part of that term will, in all human probability, find some of us, and God only knows how many or who, inhabitants of another world. In this dying world, in which death observes no order; where were the wonder, if during that whole period, much the larger portion of this assembly were in eternity! Certainly to a large portion of us, the hope of surviving that term is slender. To some of us, there is no ground to indulge the hope. The fact of the uncertainty of that event, which is to fix our condition forever, gives to it all the weight and solemnity, as though it were immediately to occur. What, to every one unprepared for it, is delayed a day or an hour, may be finally and fatally postponed.

Surely, then, it is our wisdom and interest to con-

sider well, both the command and the admonition contained in the text, "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die and not live." These words naturally furnish two distinct topics for our consideration.

I. The command, "Set thy house in order."

II. The reason of this, "For thou shalt die, and not live."

The term *house*, as here employed, I scarcely need remark, is to be understood in its widest extent of meaning. Within its legitimate sense is, I remark,

1. The arrangement of one's temporal affairs, as far as possible, as he would desire finally to leave them. The manner in which this should be done, it is not my province to direct nor suggest. Nor can it, perhaps, always be done. But the duty, so far as it can be discharged, is clear, and the reasons for it many and obvious. With persons advanced in life, or of fixed and unfluctuating possessions, such an arrangement may and should be made; and in all cases, should be made in view of one's final and eternal relinquishment of all earthly things, that he may be influenced by no undue bias, partiality, or groundless favoritism; and if possible leave no ground for disappointment.

But there is one special reason to which I more particularly and chiefly refer, the force of which almost every minister of the Gospel has felt, namely: when a man defers the arrangement of his worldly affairs to his dying day, or final sickness, as how often is it the

case, the attention is entirely diverted from those subjects which ought to command and engross all his thoughts. His lands, his houses, or other possessions, instead of his final Judge, the eternal interests of his immortal soul just going to his last account, receive his most anxious and perhaps his very latest thoughts. The very last hour of probation, with many a sinner, has been thus spent. But for this unseasonable attention to their worldly affairs, multitudes, perhaps, might have been saved, who are forever lost!

It were folly for even the good man to be thus engaged in the last hours of his life; but madness in the sinner. That this point is embraced in the direction or command to "set one's house in order," is evident, not merely from its importance, but from the same expressions as applied to another individual, in whose case it was the only point to which those expressions could apply. "When Ahitophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and went and hanged himself and died." Here nothing else could have been meant but a final disposition of his worldly affairs. He showed concern for nothing else, but by a sealing act of his condemnation, rushed into the presence of his Maker and Judge. But there is another reason in connection with that above stated, which enforces the duty in the text with reference to a seasonable arrangement of one's worldly affairs; and that is, it tends to weaken attachment to the things,

and especially, the possessions of this world, much too strong in the hearts of most men. No man can make a final disposition of his worldly possessions, in the serious view of his final and eternal relinquishment of them, and still hold them with the same unyielding grasp. His attachment to them will give way.

They will be regarded as *less their own* after such a disposition of them. It is inordinate attachment to this world, that prevents so many from making their last will and testament, till they feel compelled to do it. There is too much the feeling of giving up the world in such an act. They wish to hold on to it to the last.

But this is among the least important thoughts or duties enjoined in the text, and I dismiss it, and remark,

2. To "set one's house in order" implies due preparation on his part to leave the world. No one can properly discharge any other duty included in this command, who is not prepared for death. The reason assigned denotes or implies this, "For thou shalt die, and not live." It was addressed to Hezekiah, apparently in view of his death. "He was sick unto death." Hezekiah was, indeed, a good man. This testimony was given of him by the Almighty, on his accession to the throne: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Like testimony is renewed or furnished at the close of it, and of his life. But good men often have much to do in order to a

proper preparation to leave the world. They have sins to repent of, down to the close of life. Their past repentance often requires to be recalled, reviewed, and renewed, and sometimes to be repented of, as the Bible expresses it. Few good men live each day as though it was their last. Few, to whom such an event, should it occur, would not produce surprise and pain; few who could say with that pious king, on receiving the prophet's message, "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." Who of us could say this, were a similar announcement made to us, as was made to him: "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," and producing the same impression on our minds, as evidently was produced on his, that his days were numbered, and his death very near at hand?

But there is a darker side, a gloomy aspect to this picture. It is not the good man only to whom the message of the text addresses its solemn admonition. All are equally liable to the stroke of death, or to disease, rapid and fatal in its progress and results. Multitudes, the vast majority of those thus removed without repentance, the first essential work to be performed, are hurried in all their sins into the fearful presence of their final Judge! To the unprepared, the impenitent, the import of the text is, "Repent and do thy first works." Inquire seriously into the state of your souls. Reflect on the immortality of their existence,

the nature of that existence, as absolutely depending on their condition in the present life, a life which may any hour end. On the one hand, consider the crown of life, the endless happiness and ever-augmenting glories which await the penitent and the faithful ; and on the other, the fearful doom of the finally impenitent, the burning pit into which they sink at death !

These are the moving considerations which God himself has addressed to every sinner who lives under the revelations of his word. If the sinner cannot be won by all the glories which heaven opens to us, is it unreasonable, is it an attempt uncalled for, to alarm his fears? So thought not Paul: "By the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." So thought not Jude: "Of some have compassion, making a difference. Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." So thought not a greater than all: "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." "He that believeth not, shall be damned." "Those mine enemies that would not that I should rule over them, bring hither and slay them before me." "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

These are indeed fearful expressions. But they fell from the lips of him who came to save us, and freely offers eternal life to all who will penitently and gratefully accept the offer ; him who desires not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn and live.

With what solemn emphasis then does the text say to every impenitent sinner here, "Set thy house in order;" repent, "for thou shalt die, and not live." Die, we all must. Die, we all soon may. But let the impenitent sinner die, and hope dies with him. Another hour's continuance in unrepented sin, is an hour of fearful peril.

3. To set one's house in order implies, or rather requires, that God be honored and worshipped in our dwellings. Every habitation lacks the order which God requires, where he is not supremely regarded. There may be the order of worldly discretion, of careful and thrifty prudence, where no family altar is erected to God, no voice of prayer or praise is heard, where his word is unread, and even his name profaned. But such order in God's account is confusion. Where he is not supremely honored, some idol is worshipped. And he himself has declared of such, their "idols are a wind and confusion." Men and families may receive many temporal blessings, while yet they may be without the special favor of the Giver of them all. "God is good and doeth good, even to the evil and unthankful."

Temporal mercies therefore are no evidence of his favorable regard. They often prove a snare. The prosperity of such as do not fear the Lord is a snare. "Such," said one of old, "are the dwellings of the wicked, and the place of him that knoweth not God." "Their table is a snare." "They sit down to eat and

to drink, and rise up to play." Under the present topic also may properly be included all those religious duties which result from family relationships; the duty of parents to give their children a religious education, as God has prescribed their duties in his word, by personal instruction, by Christian example, and by habitual prayer. It also includes the duties of masters to their servants, as no less plainly and fully inculcated in the New Testament. Every family, embracing all who appertain to it, in all the domestic relations of life, should be a branch of God's household; and a faithful discharge of all the duties appertaining to one's family would be likely to make it so. For to their faithful discharge God has promised his richest blessings. What he promised to Abraham in relation to him as a father, is still pledged to all parents who follow his example: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

What parent, indeed, ought to require stronger motives to the performance of these duties, than those which grow out of the nature of the relation itself? And yet God has added the whole weight of his authority to enforce them; and even superadded to that, promises of the richest blessings, both temporal and eternal, to secure the performance. I may, under this topic of our discourse, sum up whatever else falls naturally under it, in a few general remarks.

The injunction, "Set thy house in order," requires,

in its proper observance, such a course as will secure the greatest amount of good ; one's own salvation, the hopeful, if not certain salvation of those who are dependent on him, or over whom he can exert a salutary influence ; blessings which will accrue to others by a proper disposition and application of his worldly possessions, his fervent prayers, his recollected example, and pious instructions, long after he shall have been removed from this world ; all which, too, will immeasurably enhance his own eternal reward. All these infinite blessings are summarily included or implied, in the command, "Set thy house in order."

II. Let us now briefly consider the reason assigned, "For thou shalt die and not live." As already remarked, the real force of this reason did not depend on the supposition, or the certainty, that death would immediately take place. For in the case to which it refers, the fact was, that it did not, for at least fifteen years after. The importance and the force of the reason, even to that individual, to Hezekiah, were the same as though his sickness were immediately to terminate his life. And he was evidently a more pious man, although he betrayed greater weakness as a ruler, after, than before his affliction. But with how much greater force does it bear on us, to whom the hour of death is an utter uncertainty ? What has the force of that very uncertainty to urge to the performance of all those things, which we would wish accomplished when that hour arrives ? Is this true of the most de-

voted Christian among us, unless he that is on the very verge of heaven and longs to depart, and be with Christ? And even while he lingers on these mortal shores, he has yet more to do, by showing the power of religion to support and comfort him, and thus recommend it to all beholders. But most probably, with all of us, there is much to be done, much in regard to many, at least, of those duties implied in the command, to "set our house in order." We may not have large possessions to arrange, or to make such a disposition of as we would wish, did we even know that we should soon be called to relinquish them. Nor in all cases would it be a present duty. But abating that item, have we done all, the obligation of which we readily acknowledge, and the force of which we could not but painfully feel, even in the serious contemplation of the event which removes forever from earth? Are there no known and cherished sins, of which to repent? No neglected duties, penitently to resume? No wanderings from Christ, from which to return? No heart-broken renewal of solemn self-dedication to God? And even if our own soul's salvation is secure, have we done all that acknowledged duty requires to save the souls of others, members of our households, and those over whom we might exercise a happy influence? Let an enlightened and a tender conscience answer; a conscience that will be honest, when we feel that death is near at hand. And it is in view of that hour which we should daily and

solemnly anticipate, that these questions are presented and urged.

But there is another class on whom they have a most solemn bearing. There are those here, I fear, who have never, in any proper sense or meaning of the words, begun to "set their house in order." They have made no preparation to leave their earthly dwellings, whether the habitations of their persons, or of their immortal spirits. Their attachments to this world, instead of abating are gathering strength. "Their inward thought is, that their houses will continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names."

Less preparation is made for their change of worlds, than is made for a change of place in this. Less concern for the amazing interests of that eternity, from which there is no return, than for their temporal affairs, which they leave for a short season only. In the latter case, how many things to provide for and arrange! How many directions to give, and to be left in charge of others! All this, when their expected absence is for a short period only. Yet they are going a journey not a step of which can be retraced. Every moment bears them onward. Some have long been pursuing it, and have well-nigh reached its termination. A few steps more, and the last is taken. It is a step into the grave; a step into the immediate presence of their final Judge; and if unprepared, a step into the pit of despair, from which there is no escape—no release!"

With what solemn emphasis does the text address all of us, but especially, those who have made no preparation for the change that awaits them. "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." The uncertainty when that shall arrive, is no ground of security. On the contrary, it is the strongest reason for alarm. The work enjoined in the text is not the work merely of a day. No allotted term of life is too long for its accomplishment. The last day of our existence on earth, distant as it may be from the present, will still find much undone we shall wish to have accomplished. This will be true of the most faithful of God's own people, who have labored longest in his service, while the reason assigned in the text, has the same force one day as another—to-day, as the last day of our earthly existence. "Thou shalt die, and not live," has no more reference to a future day in our case, than in his who lived fifteen years after its solemn announcement; nor any greater pertinency to the aged than to the young. For the same uncertainty attends every step of life from the first to the last. Less or deeper regret, and even disappointment, will be experienced by most when they lie on the bed of death. With the good man, many things which now occasion no painful apprehensions, will then be recalled to embitter his last hour, and to be wiped away with the last tears of repentance.

But who can anticipate the disappointment and lamentation, or describe the agonies, of him who, till

that late hour, has never directed his serious thoughts to any proper preparation to meet it? We would prevent this. We would prevent the terrors of an impenitent death-bed to every soul here. We would have you come to that hour with all the composure and calmness of a hope sustained by a life devoted to the service of God, a hope animated with the bright prospect of an unfailing and glorious inheritance, when all of earth is forever relinquished.

“Set, then, thine house in order.” Delay it not for a day, lest it may be fatally postponed to that day which shall close your earthly existence!

THE END.

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