

PRACTICAL GODLINESS.

IN

THIRTEEN DISCOURSES,

ON THE

DUTIES OF THE CLOSET, AND FAMILY,
AND SANCTUARY.

BY ALEXANDER PROUDFIT, D. D.

*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that
they may have right to the tree of life, and
may enter in through the gates into the city.*

REV. XXII. 14.

SALEM:

PRINTED BY DODD AND RUMSEY.

1813.

TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE FRONTIER SETTLEMENTS,

THE following discourses, published chiefly for their use, are now inscribed with the most tender, unfeigned solicitude for their everlasting salvation by their servant in the labors of the gospel.

A. P.

SALEM, September, 1813.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
PREFACE.

Brethren Dearly Beloved,

SOME years have elapsed since I offered you a series of discourses on the "ruin and recovery of man." In them I endeavored to exhibit in a plain, scriptural manner those miseries in which we are involved by transgression in the present life, and the unspeakably more awful wrath of Almighty God which awaits the impenitent in the life to come : I also attempted to illustrate the scheme of our redemption through the sufferings of the Eternal Son, and the infinitely important result of this scheme as it issues in the highest glory to God, and blessedness of his redeemed.

The design of this volume is to explain and enforce those means by which this salvation of God is ordinarily commenced, and carried on, and completed in the souls of his favored children. The deliberate, impartial trial of your spiritual character is recommended in the *first* discourse as lying at the foundation of all religion. Without union to Jesus the Surety, and reconciliation through his righteousness, your discharge of external duties will be utterly useless ; it must be unprofitable as an attempt to rear up a superstructure without laying the foundation, or to cultivate a branch while the root remains rotten, or to

purify the stream while the fountain itself is impure. In the *second* I have attempted to enumerate the various ordinances of religion as exemplified in the life of Zacharias, and Elizabeth; and shewn that each ought conscientiously to be observed in its proper connection. Secret prayer is the *third* duty illustrated and enforced, because it is the immediate transaction of the individual with the heart-searching Jehovah, and although this does not constitute the corner-stone, it may certainly be considered as lying near to the foundation of all religion. If a man is not devout in the closet, it may with safety be asserted that he will not be devout either in his family, or in the church, or in the world. The daily and diligent perusal of the scriptures is the *next* ordinance to which your attention is called, because it is a tribute of respect due to the great God that since he condescended to become an Author, his word should be frequently and affectionately read. The *fifth* duty enjoined is the sanctification of the sabbath.—This which is reasonable in itself becomes our exalted privilege when we realise the return of every sabbath as another pledge of that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God: After shewing the importance of family devotion, of parental instruction, and the obligation of each member to aim at promoting the edification of the others, I have endeavored to point out the advantages of being ha-

bitually in "the fear of Jehovah." The grace of God does not merely teach us *occasionally to act*, but *uniformly to live* "soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world." The *thirteenth*, and last discourse in this series is designed to animate you to diligence in the work of the Lord by exhibiting the happy issue of a life spent in his service and communion. "To those who by patient continuing in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life," through the aboundings of free grace, shall be awarded.

Brethren, I can assert, without the least ostentation, that I have "longed to impart to you this spiritual gift;" and in return make a single request of every reader, whether parent or child. The request is reasonable, and I entreat, and adjure, and must even demand your compliance by all the solemnities of that hour when we shall stand *face to face* at the judgment-seat of Almighty God. The request which I make is this, that if any duty recommended in these pages appears founded on divine authority you instantly and sincerely perform it. "The servant who knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Feeble as the execution of this work may appear, it has cost me some labor of body, and much anxiety, and even anguish of spirit, lest these truths which are intended for edification should is-

sue, through the neglect of any, in their greater condemnation. Often when sitting in my study, or lying awake upon my bed, I have passed in imagination through your settlements: I have painted to my mind some who are altogether unconcerned about their future destinies; others living from day to day without prayer, or any improvement of the scriptures; others wasting the sabbath in fishing, or fowling, or unnecessary visits; parents who labor arduously for the bodies of their children, but rarely offer up a petition for their souls, or speak to them of Jesus, who alone “delivers from the wrath to come.” God is my witness that after such a survey of your situation, I have sought with melted heart, and on bended knees some truth which might be effectual for your conviction and salvation; and the thought, that these discourses should be blessed for that end, would be as “life from the dead.” How much should I consider my debt increased to sovereign mercy which disposed my mind to this labor of love? How would my helpers in Christ Jesus, who contribute to its circulation, rejoice that the sacrifice of a little perishable gain on their part should conduce to your eternal profit?

“O Lord, I know that all instruction will be unprofitable without thy blessing; it must fall like water on the flinty rock making no impression; or like dew upon the barren mountain producing no fruit. But thou hast com-

manded us to be instant *in season*, and *out of season* ; to watch for souls as those who must give account ; and although incomparably the most weak and worthless of thy servants, I can appeal to thyself that this work has been prosecuted in some measure in obedience to these commands, and to the operations of thy free Spirit it is now committed. Wilt thou in thine abundant mercy accept of this offering, and crown it from age to age with thy blessing : Seal it upon the hearts of many sinners for their saving conversion, and of thy true followers for their greater enlargement in running the way of thy commandments : Surely the more insignificant or contemptible the messenger is, the more illustrious must thy condescension appear both to angels and men in honoring him as the instrument of advancing the interests of thy kingdom : And, now, to thee most Holy Father, with thy Dear Son, our Divine Redeemer, and the Spirit who gives *everlasting consolation and good hope* through the riches of *his grace*, be glory attributed by all the heirs of this grace world without end." AMEN.

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SERMON I.

2 CORINTHIANS XIII. 5.

Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith ; prove your own selves.

IT is my design to deliver, as the Lord may afford opportunity, a series of discourses on the duties of the closet, and family, and sanctuary. These I cannot introduce with a subject more appropriate than that of self-examination. The beauty and stability of a superstructure intimately depend on the solidity of its foundation : The verdure, and fruitfulness of a branch necessarily depend on the health, and vigor of the tree, more especially of the root from which it grows : Thus if we expect to remain “ stedfast, and unmoveable ” in our christian profession ; if we expect to attend the ordinances, or discharge the duties of religion to the acceptance of God, or our own spiritual profit we must see that the principle by which we are actuated be pure. “ Without faith it is impossible to please God ; ” Without this grace we can neither serve him acceptably here, nor be admitted to the enjoyment of his kingdom hereafter. Self-examination ; an impartial trial of our spiritual condition is a duty frequently enforced in the oracles of God, and is unspeakably important whether we consult our safety or comfort. It is enjoined “ that every man prove,” examine by the unerring test, “ his

own work ; that he give all diligence to make his calling and election *sure* :” This same duty is urged with peculiar earnestness in the verse which is chosen for our present consideration. “ Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith ; prove your own selves ;” make a fair experiment of your religious pretensions, as the real weight of metals is ascertained by the scales, or their genuine quality proved by the fire. It adds no inconsiderable force to this injunction to reflect on the time when the Apostle addressed it to the Corinthian Church. He had labored in person among them nearly two years, and seen his labors crowned with abundant and glorious success ; he had in a former epistle illustrated at large their duty and privilege ; he had explained to them the nature of that union to the Son of God which secures peace in this world, and salvation in the next ; he had addressed them by the honorable appellation of *saints*, *saints* by outward visible profession, yet in this last epistle, and in the very conclusion of it he presses them to an examination of their character. This circumstance may admonish us to entertain a holy jealousy of ourselves ; to try occasionally the foundation of our hopes, as the man who travels to a distant country will often enquire whether he has taken the road which leads to it, or the mariner in sailing to a foreign port will enquire whether the course which he pursues will lead to that port. These Corin-

thians are exhorted to examine whether they be in the *faith*. By this faith we are not to understand an assent to the truth of revelation, or a persuasion of the excellence of the christian religion, because of this fact the apostle was already assured. "Many of them," the sacred historian relates, "believed and were baptized;" they yielded to the testimony of the gospel, and expressed their general faith by asking admission to the privileges of the church in the ordinance of baptism. But thousands who are recognized as members of the sanctuary on earth, we have reason to fear, will never be admitted to the worship of the sanctuary in heaven. Our claim to the privileges of the church visible, however desirable, is no certain evidence of our claim to the immunities and glories of the church invisible. The form of godliness is possessed by many who are destitute of its power: The lamp of a profession may be carried in the hand when the oil of saving grace has never been communicated to the heart. Our master has taught us to expect that "many will say to him in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? To whom he will profess I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." The faith mentioned with such emphasis by the apostle is that principle which actually embraces the Saviour; which claims him on the general grant of the gospel for remission of sin, for sanctification and future

glory ; which takes shelter beneath the covert of his atonement and righteousness from the thunders of the broken law, and the tempest of almighty wrath. This is that faith in the possession of which none ever perished, and without which none need expect salvation. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, and there is no salvation for a sinner of the human family in any other. These Corinthians are not admonished to examine whether they had repented of their past imperfections, or were purified from their former immoralities, but to enquire “ whether they be in the faith,” because faith by holding communion with Jesus the ever-living Head gives vigor to every other grace, just as the living tree imparts nourishment to all the branches which grow upon it, or as the living fountain feeds the various streams which issue from it. “ Faith worketh by love ; it purifies the heart ;” it has its “ fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.”

Brethren, the duty enjoined by the Apostle is infinitely interesting to you and me ; it most intimately concerns the peace of our consciences now, and the safety of our souls forever. May the Holy Ghost shed light upon the understanding both of speaker and hearer while I attempt to shew—

I. How we may ascertain whether we *be in the faith*, and

II. Why we ought immediately and earnestly to examine ourselves in this matter.

I. The reality of our faith may be known by its internal actings and exercises. It is defined in scripture *a looking unto Jesus Christ, receiving him ; resting upon him ; counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord ; turning to him as a strong hold, and fleeing for refuge to him as the hope set before us in the gospel ; coming to him for rest ; depending upon him for righteousness and strength, and rejoicing in him as our Beloved ; particularly improving him as our Shepherd, our Father, our High Tower, our Deliverer and Shield.* Now, by a patient and impartial examination of our own hearts we may ascertain whether these exercises have been experienced there. We know that we possess a rational faculty by the operations of this faculty ; by our fears and hopes, our joys, our affections, our aversions, our recollection of what is past, and our anticipation of what is to come ; and we may know that we possess the principle of grace by the operations of that principle, by our hatred of sin, by our desires after holiness. by our love to God, by our cordial delight in his communion, by our unfeigned respect for his commandments, and ordinances. Retiring for a season from the company, and cares of the world let us propose to ourselves the following solemn enquiries. “ Have there been particular moments when we beheld our miserable, and truly awful condition by nature ; that as transgressors of the law of God which

is *holy* and *just*, we are under the curse, heirs of wrath, plunged in infinite arrears to his justice without the least ability to cancel this debt either in whole, or in part ; from this discovery of our own exceeding sinfulness, and the purity and majesty of that law which we had violated were we driven utterly to despair of relief by any penances, or performances of our own ; did we afterwards discover a remedy for our diseases, a redemption for our offences in the obedience and blood of Jesus Christ “ the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world ;” did we obtain some affecting apprehensions of him as suffering for us, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, as set forth by the Father to be “ a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin ;” have we discerned this righteousness of Jesus the everlasting Surety to be infinitely meritorious in its nature, fully answerable to all the demands of justice, and acceptable to God the Father ; have we discovered this redemption to be free for the chief of sinners, and consequently free for us ; and renouncing all other refuges have we solemnly rested our souls on this Mediator for pardon, and peace, adoring his condescension that he should pity our perishing world, and give his life a ransom for our sins ? Is it the deliberate and full consent of our hearts, nay, our most ardent desire to be redeemed, and sanctified, and saved, and thus stand forth both in time and

eternity monuments “to the praise of the riches of the glory of his grace?” Amidst the numerous failures with which we are chargeable; the omission or the imperfect discharge of duty have we constant recourse to the blood of his cross for new pardon before God, and new peace to our own consciences? “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. I count all things but loss, 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.” Amidst the various evils and perplexities of life have we recourse to Jesus Christ for rest, and support, and consolation? “The Lord is my portion saith my soul,” one inspired writer asserts, “therefore will I trust in him: Though my flesh and my heart fail he is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Amidst all the vicissitudes of this changing world, amidst the variety of our inward feelings, and outward circumstances is it the source of our glorying and joy that our Redeemer is strong and without change; that his love, and promises and purpose, and covenant are the “same yesterday, and to-day, and forever?”

The reality of faith may thus be known with a great degree of certainty by its inward exercises and operations. All christians do not correspond precisely in the circumstances attending their conversion, or their experien-

ces afterwards. Some are brought to a knowledge of the Saviour in early life, others are permitted to continue to a more advanced period before they are called by divine grace : Some undergo a severe conflict with their own consciences and the terrors of the broken law ; they are tossed long on the tempestuous ocean, without a cheering view of either sun, or stars, and in their own apprehensions must finally perish, while others by a gentle gale of the spirit are wafted at once into the haven of " joy and peace in believing : " Some experience a more abundant measure of spiritual light, and strength, and hope ; like Abraham stagger not at the promise of God through unbelief, while " others walk in darkness, and through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage." But whatever be the diversity of their exercises previous to their saving conversion, and whatever the diversity of their attainments in joy, and peace, and heavenly hope in future life all christians will correspond in rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and renouncing all confidence in the flesh, they most cordially embrace him as the Father's gift, and exult in him as all their salvation, and hope. Each according to the measure of grace communicated will be disposed to appropriate the elevated language of the prophet, " behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song ; he also is become my salvation."

2. Faith may be known by its fruit, or effects both on the heart, and the life. This principle does not consist in a cold speculative assent to any system of doctrine, or in a barren unproductive belief of that revelation which the scriptures afford of Jesus Christ, and his salvation: It is a living, operative principle, and necessarily manifests its existence by its effects, as the life of a tree is known by its foliage, and fruit, or the sun is known by the light which beams from it.

Peace of conscience through a persuasion of the remission of sin, and reconciliation to God is frequently represented as one fruit, or effect of this faith. The Apostle therefore pleads in behalf of the Romans that "the God of hope would fill them with all joy, and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost:" And he mentions again that "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith secures peace to the awakened, accusing conscience by applying that blood of atonement through which the law is magnified, and the Father is well pleased. The believer in the exercise of this principle appropriates all that Jesus underwent for the redemption of sinners as undergone for himself, in his own room, and for his own salvation, and then considers that "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of his righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever:" He beholds the Fa-

ther as fully pacified through the cross of his Son, as there assuming the endearing characters of the “ God of peace, of patience, and of hope,” as not merely *pacified*, but “ able to do for him exceeding, abundantly above all that we can ask, or think,” and therefore rejoices in him as an infinitely enriching, unfading portion.

Love is another effect necessarily produced by the instrumentality of this grace residing in the heart. “ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision but faith which worketh by love.” This divine principle while it contemplates the love of God to us, his rich unmerited, amazing grace in providing a Saviour, in forgiving innumerable offences through the merit of his sacrifice, mortifying innumerable corruptions through the efficacy of his spirit, and thus fitting us for, and giving us a title to an “ exceeding, eternal weight of glory,” faith contemplating these things produces love to God, both unfeigned, and ardent : The christian transported in the contemplation of the wondrous theme is constrained to cry out, “ behold ! what manner of love hath the Father bestowed upon us that we should be called the Sons of God ?” What shall I render to the Lord for grace thus astonishing, and distinguishing ? What tribute of gratitude shall I offer to the Father, who *spared* not his Son, or to the Son who *spared* not himself, but submitted to be wounded for my transgressions,

or to the spirit of adoption who has enabled me to believe in Jesus, and through him to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God?” In proportion therefore as *faith* is strong *love* will be ardent in the heaven-born soul: Each recollection which the christian has of his former character and condition as a child of wrath; each contemplation of what he is rendered by grace, and each anticipation of that crown which he expects shortly to receive, and those joys which he will participate kindles afresh this sacred flame, and makes him long for the full fruition of his Saviour and God.

Faith is represented also as “purifying the heart:” It centers immediately upon the ever-living, immaculate Jesus as its object; it imitates the example, and derives all influence from Him who was emphatically “the Holy One of God,” and consequently as the branch resembles in quality the tree upon which it grows the soul which is joined to the Lord the Saviour will necessarily become assimilated to him: it will aspire after holiness as he is holy. The principle of faith when produced in the heart commences a warfare with surrounding corruption, and never ceases from the conflict, until it is crowned with victory in the end. The believer’s heart which, while unconverted, was the haunt of impurity where “the devil, and the world, and the flesh possessed the undivided dominion, is now converted into a theatre of war. While

the child of adoption therefore complains "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," he can also add, "the spirit," the gracious principle supported and cherished by constant communications from Jesus Jehovah, "lusteth against the flesh," carries on its warfare against every remaining corruption, "and these two are contrary the one to the other;" they are essentially opposite in their origin, in their nature, and the hostility is never suspended until grace triumphs over all opposition, and the believer stands "faultless before the throne with exceeding joy." Such is the effect of saving faith when produced in the heart; it aims at regulating every thought, and expression, and action according to the glorious gospel; it influences the individual to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world. The christian reflects that it is his Father's will, the divine pleasure, and purpose even his sanctification, and therefore he ardently aspires after holiness as his duty, and glory, and privilege. It is to him the source of deep humiliation, and sorrow that he cannot be more spiritual in his desires, more circumspect in his deportment, more exemplary, and edifying in his conversation, and it is his joy, his triumph that the seed of grace already implanted is imperishable, and in due time will infallibly ripen into a harvest of glory.

Faith which purifieth the heart is also represented as "overcoming the world." The

believer elevated on the wings of a lively faith, and hope soars above the world with its empty honors, and joys, and realises the invisible, yet sublime, substantial glories of the heavenly state, contrasted with which every thing created sinks into insignificance as the stars disappear when the sun sheds his radiance in the east. Through the influence of this purifying, elevating principle we hear Paul declaring, "what things were gain to me," those which constituted the source of my rejoicing, and were the theme of my chiefest glorying in the former days of my vanity, "these I counted loss for Christ: God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And by the power of the same faith, "Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, for he had respect to the recompence of reward." The magnificence of the Egyptian court, and the splendor of its crown appeared uninteresting, nay contemptible when brought into competition with those unmingled pleasures, and unfading glories which are reserved for the faithful followers of the Lamb. The christian is industrious in the duties of his calling, he is careful of that wealth which a bounteous God has bestowed upon him; he enjoys in temperate measure the pleasures of this world;

he values the esteem, and confidence of his fellow-creatures, but all these privileges he considers as transient in their nature, as not worthy to be compared either in value, or duration with the friendship of God, or the immunities of his everlasting kingdom.

Such are the effects of a saving faith generated in the human heart, *peace* of conscience through the sprinkling of the blood of reconciliation, *joy* in Jehovah as his eternal, satisfying portion, *love* to Him as a being incomparably glorious, and good, *purity* of heart, and *victory* over this present evil world, and by an impartial, deliberate self-examination we may ascertain whether we have felt these effects. I may know whether I rely on the general, uncovenanted mercy of an absolute God, or whether I meditate upon him, draw near to him, transact with him, cast all my cares upon him, and expect every blessing from him only as he is reconciled in Jesus the Mediator: I may know whether I place any confidence on my own performances, my prayers, my tears, my fastings, my charities to the poor, my benevolence to all, or whether renouncing these deeds in point of merit I desire "to be justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:" I may know whether I supremely follow after holiness, endeavoring to reduce not merely my actions which are obvious to the view of men, but even my secret thoughts in subjection to the glorious gospel; whe-

ther I am ardently aspiring after higher degrees of sanctification as agreeable to the will of God, and conducing to the glory and happiness of my nature : I may know whether I truly, and fervently love the Lord God, whether I take pleasure in meditating upon him as my friend, and Father, in reading of him in the promises, in praying to him in the closet, imploring the forgiveness of all my offences, and the supply of my numerous wants, or whether he is rarely in my thoughts : I may know who among men are the companions of my choice, those who fear God, who work righteousness, who are lowly in their carriage, and chaste in every part of their conversation : whether “ out of love to him who begat I love those who are begotten of him,” and choose rather to mingle in the society of such than with the children of this world however splendid their rank, or affluent their fortune. “ If any man be in Christ,” made alive to God by his resurrection from the dead, “ he is a new creature ;” he is governed by *new* motives ; he experiences new joys, new fears, new aversions, new affections : “ It is so great a change that it cannot pass upon a man unknown to him. He may not know, indeed, the hour, the day, or perhaps the month of this translation, but the translation itself he must know, or he hath found none. He once was darkness, but now he is light in the Lord, and can a man emerge from darkness into light without perceiving

the change? Can any creature pass from death unto life without a perception of the change? * Impossible."

Is the certainty of our spiritual condition really attainable, it becomes us to enquire,

II. Why we should *give diligence, all diligence* to attain to this assurance?

1. A concern for our own safety should excite to all possible earnestness in making our calling and election sure. In pursuing the enquiry whether we are in the faith, we are really enquiring whether we are in a state of reconciliation, or of wrath; whether we are the vassals of the Prince of darkness, bound fast in his iron chains, and led captive by him at his pleasure, or whether we are the freemen of Jesus, and interested in the glorious liberty of his sons; whether we have entered "the strait gate," and are pressing on in "the narrow, unfrequented way which leads to life," or whether we travel the broad way which conducts to never ending perdition. Thus interesting is that question, "am I in the faith." For the truth of Jehovah hath asserted, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." And is it possible to conceive an interrogatory more important than one which involves the welfare of our souls for eternity? The failure of a stone in any part of the building may deface the beauty,

or enfeeble the strength of a particular part of the building, but if the foundation is defective the whole superstructure must totter, and fall. A disorder upon a remote member of the human body, upon the finger or foot, may effect our comfort and impair our strength, but the disease which seizes upon the vitals affects not a single part merely, but the whole system, and unless speedily removed must prove fatal in its consequences. Thus an error in principle, an irregularity in practice may injure our character, our comfort, our usefulness, our influence, but a mistake as to the reality of our *faith* in the Son of God, and our interest in his covenant righteousness is fatal ; it strikes upon the very vitals of all our hopes, and leaves without a remedy for ever. He who does not improve the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth, of him who suffered without the gates of Jerusalem as a propitiation for human guilt, neither does, nor ever shall enjoy the offer of any other sacrifice : “ But there remains a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary : ” He who is not careful to put on by faith that “ garment of salvation, that robe of righteousness which he prepared, is left without covering, and must stand forth naked, a spectacle of derision, and scorn to God, and angels, and men. Surely then this examination to which we are urged by the Apostle is the most interesting which can occupy the attention either of male or female :

it does not merely concern our health, our property or reputation in the present life, but involves all that is dear throughout the ages of eternity. Brethren, hear the declaration of the "Amen, the faithful and true Witness," of him the decision of whose mouth will hereafter fix our everlasting destiny, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

2. A concern not only for our safety, but for our comfort should excite us to earnestness in the duty of self-examination. If we occupy a particular house, or farm, the enjoyment is greatly enhanced from an assurance that our title is inviolable, and that neither intrigue nor violence can deprive us of the possession. He who is travelling to a distant region feels much more composure in his mind and is animated to greater diligence in the prosecution of his journey ; he can also bear with more patience every inconvenience to which he is exposed, when he entertains a full assurance that the road which he travels leads to the place of his destination : The mariner in performing a voyage sails along with inconceivably greater satisfaction, encounters with more resolution every storm which beats upon him, if confident in his own mind that he is pursuing the proper course, and will reach the desired harbor at last. But a full

assurance of an interest in the covenant, and our title to eternal life is a source of inconceivably greater consolation, because the object in expectation is inconceivably more important. With what submission, and fortitude can the christian carry along every cross, when assured that it will soon be succeeded by the crown? With what elevated pleasure can he read the promises, when he is enabled in the language of confidence to say, "these promises which are all yea, and amen in Jesus Christ, are unalienably my own; they are my security in the very hand writing of my heavenly Father for all blessings both temporal and eternal." With what transports of joy can he sit in the sanctuary, and hear of the lovely Saviour, of his glories as God, of his excellence and sufficiency as Mediator, of the plenitude of his salvation when he can confidently say, "this Jesus whom you are now describing; whom you represent as fairer than the children of men, and heir of all things is my portion, my Beloved, and Friend; I am a joint-heir with him who is the heir of all things and I am persuaded that neither height nor depth, nor angel, nor principality shall ever separate me from his love, and I expect shortly to taste more of his grace, and behold more of his glory in the temple above than language can now express or imagination conceive." With what emotions of joy can the heir of salvation either read, or hear of the heavenly city, of its golden streets, of its ivory palaces,

of those trees of righteousness which there expand and flourish in unfading bloom, and of the pure river of water of life which proceed from the throne of God and the Lamb, when he can contemplate this fair inheritance as his own in reversion, and in the triumph of faith is enabled to exclaim, "thou wilt shew me the path of life; thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." How patient has this full assurance of hope rendered the righteous amidst the various evils of life; how cheerful in every act of obedience, how crucified to this world with its most gilded prospects, and how eager for the enjoyment of the purchased possession? Have we not often seen them *glorifying in tribulation*, have we not heard them exulting in prisons, and on scaffolds, when their title to the kingdom was clear and the eye of faith was steadily fixed on that title? One rapturously exults, "although my house be not so with God, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Another sings in strains equally elevated, "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine: the labours of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no head in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." It is the triumph of a third enlivened by the same hope of immortality,

“ It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with Jesus we shall also live with him. If we suffer we shall also reign with him. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory.

3. A concern not only for our own comfort and safety, but also a regard for the honour of religion, and for the encouragement, and edification of others should excite to a holy earnestness in self-examination. When the professors of christianity are always labouring in doubts ; when they appear disheartened, and dejected under the afflictions of life, and entertain no more than a trembling hope of salvation in the life to come, spectators naturally become disaffected towards religion ; they are tempted to imagine that it consists merely in melancholy and gloom ; that it calls its votaries to the sacrifice of many earthly enjoyments, and gratifications without affording as a substitute any other consolations : Enquirers after the truth are thus discouraged, and its open enemies are confirmed in their prejudices. But when the professed disciples of Jesus are able “ to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness, and fear ; ” when they appear unshaken in their reliance on his merits for pardon, and glory ; when they can assert from personal, repeated experience “ that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory

that shall be revealed," how is our holy religion recommended and confirmed : The drooping pilgrim in hearing the testimonies of such, turns his face again towards Zion, and goes on his way rejoicing : Enquirers after truth are roused to greater eagerness in their enquiries : strangers are encouraged to join themselves to the Lord, and the open enemy of the cross if not convicted of the reality of religion, and constrained to embrace it becomes at least ashamed, and afraid openly to oppose it. When two travellers go along together, and both are doubting whether they have taken the proper road for the country in view, instead of encouraging, and assisting, they will rather retard the progress of each other : If either is fully assured that the road which they travel will certainly conduct to the desired place ; if he traces a variety of marks which have been described by others who have gone to the same place before him, he not only prosecutes the journey with resolution, but he can take his fellow-traveller by the hand, and animates him to go on amidst all the obstacles which intervenes. Thus it is with the spiritual pilgrim in his journey to his eternal home. When he possesses satisfactory evidences that he is sanctified by divine grace, and led by the spirit of God ; when he feels the same fears, and desires, and joys, and hopes which were felt by those who "now inherit the promises," he is capable not merely of enduring the toil of the journey, but of

encouraging others in the paths of righteousness : With peculiar propriety, and emphasis, he can expostulate with his former companions in sin, “ to taste and see that the Lord is good ; ” he can assure them from his own certain experience that “ happy is that man whose God is Jehovah.”

Is it not truly astonishing that men are usually so indifferent about their spiritual and everlasting interests ? Although faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely important ; although it involves our safety and comfort, both in this world and in the next, yet how few can be persuaded to “ examine whether they are in the faith ? ” By what arguments can we prevail with our beloved hearers “ to work out their salvation with fear and trembling ? ” Propose to them any scheme which will probably conduce to their temporal ease, or interest, or honor, or happiness, and their attention is instantly excited and engaged, but in the all-important concerns of eternity, no considerations, either of misery or joy, either of reproach or glory are sufficient to rouse them to reflection. Open your door to a traveller exhausted with fatigue or want, and how readily will he turn in, but although a door of hope is thrown open in the gospel for sinners of the human family, for the *poor*, the *miserable*, the *blind*, and the *halt*, how few can be persuaded to enter ? Offer bread to the hungry, or water to the thirsty, or clothing to the naked, or the healing medicine to one who

is pining away with some malignant disease, or propose to the miserable slave to break off his galling chains, how eagerly would these offers be embraced, but may not the "bread of life, the water of life, the balm of the covenant, the liberty of the Sons of God" be a thousand times offered yet wantonly rejected? When any office of emolument, or honor becomes vacant, how many candidates appear? What various means will they devise for insuring their success, and how prudently and patiently will they persevere in the use of these means? If a new region is explored where the soil is fertile, the climate healthful, and other enjoyments may be obtained, what multitudes flock to it from all directions? And what fatigue will they endure, and what dangers either by land or water will they encounter to reach it? Yet although the scriptures hold out to view "a city which hath foundations whose builder and worker is God, an house eternal in the heavens, an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," a country where the inhabitant shall not say, *I am sick*; where there shall be no more disease, nor death, and although so many profess to believe that the accounts, which the scriptures afford of the heavenly country, are true, yet how few are eagerly enquiring after it, or duly anxious to secure their interest in it? Was it suggested to any who are present that their title to a certain house, or farm was defective, and that with proper attention it might be

confirmed, what anxiety would they feel, and what diligence would they exercise until the defect was corrected? But I solemnly ask you what means have you employed for making *sure* your title to the inheritance of eternal glory? You have often heard that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth to life," with what eagerness have you been striving to enter? "O Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory, and everlasting torments are, would they behave as they do; would they read and hear things as they do?" What meaneth this unconcern about those eternal, awful realities which alone are worthy of our concern, and what meaneth this indolence in pursuing them? Is not the soul precious? Is not life precarious? Have not many weeks, and months, and years of your accepted time already passed away, and is it to you a dreadful uncertainty how long the season of mercy may be continued to you? What shall I say of the infatuation, the madness of men? They are fond of pleasure, and yet by their wilful unbelief run the hazard of never ending pain? They are careful of the body; they are diligent in feeding it, clothing it, in using the means of restoring it to health when diseased, and yet carelessly slight the nobler part, the immortal soul? They are professedly attached to life, and yet amidst admonitions, and entreaties throw themselves into the arms of the second death? "Turn ye, turn ye, why will

you die, O house of Israel ?” Sinners, by all that is dreadful in the miseries of the damned, and by all that is inviting in the joys of the redeemed be entreated to shake off your slumbers. “Hear ye, and give ear ; be not proud for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death.”

Beloved brethren, consult your safety, and interest, and glory by believing without delay in the Lord Jesus Christ : Then having laid the foundation sure by union to his Person, and a full reliance on that redemption which is in his blood how cheerfully may you proceed to carry on the superstructure of holiness : You may be daily discharging the duties of religion, and in return receiving its consolations. You may with all freedom enter the closet, and on bended knees, and with grateful hearts be lisping forth the language of adoption, “our Father which art in heaven :” You may search the scriptures, not as the student looks over the map of a distant country, but as the heir examines his title to a large estate, as a deed of conveyance securing to you all grace in time, and all glory through eternity : you may sanctify each returning Sabbath as a memorial of the resurrection of your dear Lord, and an earnest of that *eternal rest* to which you will shortly be introduced : You may enter the sanctuary, and

sit down with the congregation of the faithful as a pledge of being admitted hereafter to the heavenly Jerusalem, and enjoying intimate, uninterrupted communion with the redeemed of all kindreds and countries : You may submit to every trial as the rod of an indulgent Father, and receive every earthly comfort as a foretaste of those “ everlasting pleasures which are at God’s right hand :” You may exercise patience in the season of darkness, and disquietude in the prospect of that morning which shall be obscured by no cloud, nor succeeded by any night.

Beloved reader, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit, AMEN.

SERMON II.

LUKE. I. 6.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

“ ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Each part of the sacred volume possesses some excellence peculiar to itself, and is calculated to alarm the secure, to enlighten the enquirer after truth, or to animate the drooping, disconsolate pilgrim in his course to Zion. In the precepts of the

moral law we have an interesting display of the purity of the divine character, and government ; by them we are also taught the nature and necessity of that holiness without which we can neither please God on earth, nor enjoy him in heaven : In the promises of the gospel we have a lively exhibition of his love in providing a Saviour, and of his goodness in communicating to his chosen through him all the blessings of grace and glory. But perhaps no part of divine revelation is more instructive, or animating than those which exhibit the lives of illustrious saints either male or female. In these we behold the precepts and promises blended together, and reduced to actual life, and the effect produced on the mind as far exceeds that of any speculation on moral virtue, as a view of the man himself is more impressive than a glance at his picture, or portrait : In the historical parts of scripture we also discover the reality of religion by the change which it effects on the heart, and conduct ; we admire its excellence by the excellence of those fruits which it produces, piety to God, benevolence to men, forbearance amidst injuries received, and patience under the complicated evils of life. In reading the history of the just as presented in the inspired page we are constrained to believe that those *sayings* must be *faithful* which effect a change so obvious and lasting ; that they must be *worthy of all acceptation* which are instrumental in producing tempers so excel-

lent in this world, and opening to our view the prospect of rewards so abundant in the world to come. Few characters presented in sacred history appear more amiable, or instructive than the honored pair which we now intend to consider. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless."

They are pronounced *righteous before God*. This is a character which is applicable to none by nature. "for the scripture has concluded all under sin. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God," and what was the result of this enquiry? "They are all gone aside," he declares, "they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good; no, not one." They are indiscriminately pronounced children of wrath; they have not merely forfeited that favor of God which they once enjoyed, and which constituted their happiness, and glory, but they are without either ability or inclination to recover it. But thanks be to God, what was impossible with man is now fully accomplished by his own wisdom and love: Although none are righteous by nature, there are millions rendered righteous by grace, by their interest in that divinely condescending Saviour "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." That righteousness which had been forfeited by the *first Adam* is fully restored by the obedience

and blood of the *second Adam, the Lord from heaven.*

They were *both* righteous before God. It is peculiarly amiable when those who are one in the intimate, endearing bonds of nature are one in the still more intimate, endearing, indissoluble bond of grace. How is every enjoyment enhanced, how is every difficulty diminished; with what resolution is every duty discharged, and every temptation resisted when the husband and the wife prove help meets in things spiritual no less than temporal; when they cordially walk together in the fear of Jehovah, cheering the hopes, dispelling the fears, solving the doubts, and sympathising in the sorrows of each other. In the great concerns of religion infinitely rather than in any other concern "two are better than one." Each virtue by mutual reflection shines with double lustre, and every grace burns with double ardor. "What a live coal applied to devotion when the solitary *my* Father, and *my* God is changed into the social *our* Father, and *our* God? How is the hope of glory ennobled, and animated by the prospect of participation? Here am I, holy Father, with her whom thou gavest to be an help meet for me: we were one in interest and affection; one in the faith of the gospel, and the practice of piety; our prayers ascended in one stream of incense, and every gift of thy providence and grace was sweetened to each by being bestowed on the other. Sweet were our labours of

love to our joint offspring ; sweet our united efforts to improve the bounty of our common parent ; sweet the sympathies of kindred spirits in sickness or health, in sorrow and in joy ; in good report or in evil report, but sweeter far the consolations of religion, the prospect of life and immortality brought to light by the gospel.'

They walked in his commandments, and ordinances. As the nature of the tree is known by its fruits, and the fountain by its waters, so the condition of the man, and the woman before God is best known by their conduct before the world—All who are relatively righteous in virtue of the righteousness of Jesus the Surety imputed are really holy through his holiness imparted, and will aim at regulating their lives by his law. "They are created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and while they glorify the SAVIOUR by submitting to his righteousness they put honour on the PRINCE by bowing to his authority. The truth of this principle is happily exemplified in the character of Zecharias and Elizabeth. Being "righteous before God they walked in all his commandments and ordinances." Their religion was not that solemn mockery which consists in calling, "Lord, Lord, without doing the things which he requires," but with the homage of their lips they offered him also the homage of their lives. In these ordinances *they walked*. Their obedience was not occasional, but uniform, and universal.

The character of no man is formed by a solitary act either virtuous, or vicious. The most circumspect are sometimes thrown off their guard, and betrayed into irregularities, and the most impudent in impiety are occasionally devout. The petrified atheist, had he honesty to speak as he feels, would sometimes utter the confession "my flesh trembleth for fear of thee ; mine iniquity is greater than I can bear." It is our *usual* deportment which fixes the stamp upon our character as men, and it is our uniform, persevering attention to the duties of religion which puts the stamp upon our character as christians. It is recorded of Enoch that he *walked with God*, and the patriarch Abraham was solemnly admonished, *walk before me and be thou perfect*. This righteous pair are also represented as walking in *all* the commandments, and ordinances of God : They did not regard their duty to their Creator as a "by work," as an inferior service which might be pressed out of its ordinary course by the pleasures or business of the world : They considered the fear of God, and the observance of his commandments as "the whole of man," as the most dignified of their daily exercises, and the most delightful of their daily enjoyments.

In the history of Zecharias and Elizabeth we behold religion as not only refining, and ennobling the human character, but receiving even in the present world a great reward. He was favored with the visions of the Almighty,

and they were honored with a Son who was great in the eyes of the Lord, and was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. We learn also from their example, and conduct that notwithstanding all the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the allurements of the world a high degree of perfection may be attained. Christians are sometimes so discouraged through a consciousness of their own frailty, and a recollection of the innumerable instances in which their hearts have betrayed them that they almost despair of making any considerable advancement in holiness ; they sit down contented with a bare hope of future salvation without aspiring after great attainments in sanctity, or usefulness here. But this reasoning proceeds rather from indolence, and irresolution than from any real conviction that little can be done. The very consideration that we are commanded "to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect" obviously intimates that by keeping our hearts with all diligence, by watching the door of our lips, by attending in a humble, spiritual manner the means appointed for our edification, by avoiding the company of those whose conversation might pollute, and associating with those whose conversation may profit very high degrees of perfection may be attained, and that after these we ought most earnestly to aspire.

As a mean of encouraging you to press on towards this perfection permit me to enumer-

ate those *ordinances* which are appointed of God for that purpose, and also to shew that each of them, in its own place, should be carefully observed.

1. Prayer may be noticed as one very important ordinance to which we ought conscientiously to attend. This is a duty explicitly enjoined by the Head of the church, and has been acknowledged by the children of the kingdom in every age as a principal mean of fellowship with the Father of Spirits. We are thus commanded to "pray every where; to pray always, and not to faint, and to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation:" After the apostle had pointed out the various parts of the armor of God; after he had recommended to our use the shield of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit; after he had shewn their importance in the spiritual warfare he concludes with the exhortation, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." From this passage we are taught the necessity of mingling prayer with every service of religion. Although a complete armour is furnished for the spiritual soldier yet he is unable successfully to wield it in opposition to the enemies of his salvation without strength derived from above, and this strength is to be derived by prayer as the principal mean. Whatever be the circum-

stances in which the christian is placed ; whether he be called to resist a strong temptation, or perform an arduous duty he ought by prayer to look up for grace sufficient to the occasion. We thus find Jacob in the solitary wilderness, Jehoshaphat in the field of battle, Jonah in the midst of the waves, David driven by an unpitying adversary, Paul in the prison, and Stephen in the arms of death all importunate in prayer to him who was able to support or deliver them.

2. The frequent and careful perusal of the scriptures is an *ordinance* of the Living God, and calculated to promote our spiritual edification. When a very inconsiderable part of the sacred cannon was written, the use of them was solemnly enjoined upon the nation of Israel, and through them upon the church of God in every age. “ These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way ; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” The very occasion when this command was delivered may tend to enforce the observance of it. The Israelites were enjoined “ to love the Lord their God with all their heart,” and as a mean of cherishing this love to be familiar with the oracles of divine truth: to be reflecting upon them when alone, and talking of them when together ; more especially to be frequently reading and

repeating them in the circle of their private families. We ought to revolve them in our own minds as our "joy and rejoicing:" we ought to teach and recommend them to our children as their inestimable portion. It was mentioned as the distinguishing privilege and glory of Israel that to them pertained "the giving of the law, and the promises," and the authority of God will unite with their own interest to constrain every true Israelite faithfully to improve them. After David indulges himself in describing the excellence of the inspired oracles, that they "rejoice the heart," that they "enlighten the eyes;" that they "endure forever," he adds with elevated emotions of gratitude and love, "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb; I have chosen thy testimonies as mine heritage forever, they are the rejoicing of my heart." The use of the living oracles which was early enjoined under the former dispensation is urged by our Lord with additional arguments under the present; "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life;" *there* the treasures of grace and glory are clearly revealed; *there* they are unconditionally offered: And he proposes another reason for improving them which must powerfully interest the hearts of all who have tasted of his love, "they testify of me;" they reveal my glory as God, my condescension and grace as Mediator, my ability to save

to the very uttermost, and my readiness to receive with open arms every sinner who returns.

3. The sanctification of the christian sabbath is another *ordinance* of religion which it is equally our duty, and interest to observe. The consecration of a seventh part of his time to the immediate service of his Creator was required of Adam, and enforced by a consideration which remains equally impressive throughout all generations, the example of Jehovah in the creation of the world. This command relative to the sanctification of the sabbath was repeated with almost every new revelation during the dispensation of Moses, and is recommended to us by the example of our master, and his apostles. There is no institution of christianity against the neglect of which severer judgments are denounced, neither is there any to the conscientious observance of which greater blessings both temporal, and spiritual are promised. “If thou wilt call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable, and shalt honour 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.” The experience of the christian in innumerable instances can bear testimony to the truth of these promises.

He generally finds that his soul prospers through the week ; that he feels delight in Jehovah and enlargement in the various exercises of religion in proportion as he was enabled to *keep holy* the sabbath. It is mentioned again that the “ Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ;” consecrated it to all his followers as a lively memorial of his goodness both in creation, and redemption ; a day which he designed to distinguish from all others by the communication of blessings to his worshippers, and in affording them elevating pledges of that glorious day when they should cease from the labors of this world, and be admitted to his full fruition.

4. The preaching of the word is another *ordinance* to which the children of the kingdom are obligated to attend, and by which their edification is often promoted. God in his unsearchable sovereignty has been pleased “ to put the treasure into earthen vessels ;” he imparts to man a competent portion of the spirit in his illuminating and sanctifying influences, and employs him as the instrument of salvation to his fellow men : And to the labors of those who are regularly called to the ministerial office it is the duty of others diligently to attend. He who respects and hears *them* respects and hears their *Master* who sent them, and in pouring contempt upon them, contempt is poured upon him in whose name they appear. It is required that the “ lips of the Priest should keep knowledge,

and that the people should hear the law at his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The gospel ministry is the great mean instituted of God for preserving a visible church in the world; it is also his principal mean for bringing to a participation of grace here and glory hereafter those who were chosen from eternity as vessels of mercy. "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ until we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." He who commands his ministering servants "to take heed to their ministry; to be instant in season and out of season" enjoins others "not to forget the assembling of themselves together, to give the more earnest heed to the things that are spoken," and both are animated to fidelity in their respective stations from the assurance that "the Lord delighteth in the gates of Zion; that he will clothe her Priests with salvation, and cause her saints to shout aloud for joy."

With the preaching of the word we may also connect the seals of the covenant as ordinances of religion faithfully to be improved. As the great God has been pleased uniformly to transact with man under the form of a covenant it has been his ordinary method to annex seals to these covenants: he thus strengthens our faith by giving a body to spiritual

blessings, and rendering them obvious to our natural senses. During the dispensation of the covenant of works “the tree of life” was to Adam a sensible pledge of that eternal life which he might expect as a reward for obedience, and “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was to him a constant memorial of that good which he should forfeit, and also of that evil which he should incur by transgression. After the apostacy of man, and the introduction of another covenant, seals were annexed to it. During the economy of Moses circumcision and the passover were appointed, though obscure, yet real representations of spiritual blessings, and these after the ascension of our Lord were succeeded by baptism, and the holy supper. The administration of the sacraments may be considered a chief part of ministerial duty, and the conscientious observance of them a chief part of christian worship. While our Lord authorizes his apostles to teach all nations he also directs, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” By this institution we are formally initiated into the church of Jesus Christ, and assume the badge of his visible followers. We find therefore from the history of christianity in early ages that those who believed the doctrines preached by the Apostles immediately submitted to this ordinance. Paul at his conversion, the Eunuch, the Jailor and his household, Lydia and her household received the rite of baptism as

a seal of the righteousness of the faith which they professed to embrace. In the sacrament of the supper other elements are employed to represent blessings which are substantially the same. The bread is consecrated to be a symbol of the Saviour's body, and the wine a representation of that blood which was shed for the remission of sin. We behold our Lord, "the very night in which he was betrayed," taking bread and wine, setting them apart as signs of spiritual blessings, and solemnly commanding his disciples to receive them in remembrance of him. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until he come." In observing the ordinances of baptism and the supper we more formally *come out* from the world than by our attention to any other ordinance; "we more publicly avouch the Lord to be our God," and yield ourselves up to be his exclusively, and everlastingly.

We are called,

II. To enquire why the christian is obligated "to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of God."

1. The christian should aim at walking in all these *ordinances*, because they are all enstamped with the same high authority. We cannot consider that child as respectful to its parents who obeys some duties enjoined by them while it neglects other commands equally explicit, nor that subject as loyal to his prince who obeys in part the laws of the king-

dom, and either through neglect or contempt tramples upon others. When all the laws are sanctioned with the same royal seal to treat either with indifference is practically to despise that authority from which they all proceed. If any are knowingly and wilfully neglected, this neglect plainly evinces that the others are obeyed rather from convenience than from motives of real respect for the crown. The violation of one statute may not be considered of such deep and extensive mischief in its consequences, yet it argues the same want of fidelity on the part of the subject. The application of this remark is obvious. Upon the same principle that the professed follower of the Lamb is bound to keep any commandment, or ordinance of Zion's King, he is bound to keep whatever he has commanded, and ordained. If he observes one institution rather than another, because the performance is more easy, this is virtually to make his own ease and inclination and not the will of his Lord the foundation of his duty: If he observes one, and neglects another which might require a greater sacrifice of interest or honor, this is making his own interest and honor rather than the interest or honor of Jesus the principle of his conduct. It is an awful evidence that he is ashamed of the Son of man, and consequently has never cordially enlisted under his standard. When the Apostles were sent abroad to convert the nations to the gospel it was with this positive

instruction, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." An implicit, cordial submission to his authority by an observance of all his institutions is the test established by our Master for ascertaining his real disciples. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." This is a consideration which in fidelity to Him, and friendship to you I wish to impress upon your consciences. There are many in the visible church who profess to believe the scriptures, who are regular in their attendance at the sanctuary, and whose moral character is unstained by the pollutions of the world, and yet habitually neglect those more discriminating ordinances of religion, baptism and the supper of our Lord. Now, is not the discharge of some duties, and the omission of others which are enjoined with the same solemnity both inconsistent and dangerous? Has not he who commanded the heralds of the cross "to preach the gospel to every creature" also commanded *go and baptise*? And has he not added for the instruction and encouragement of his followers, *he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved*? But we cannot preach to men unless they will hear, neither can we baptise unless they offer themselves for baptism. Is the institution more clear, more solemn, "search the scriptures; remember the sabbath day to keep it holy" than the institution, "take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you. This do ye in re-

membrance of me ?” Surely then if gratitude to the Son of God as our Saviour, and respect for him as our Prince should constrain us to keep *either*, they should constrain us to keep all *these* commandments ; or if there be any discrimination our anxiety to observe the latter should be the greatest, because it was his *dying* injunction, and in discharging this duty our confession of his name is more public and formal. It is readily acknowledged that the ordinance of the supper is peculiarly solemn, and the denunciations against the unworthy communicant are awful. Some therefore who consider it their duty and privilege to attend other ordinances of religion have not freedom to approach the table of the Lord : With such we ought to sympathize, but are they who labor under these fears diligent in using the means by which their doubts may be removed, and their minds more enlightened and established ? Do they meditate often upon the promises which exhibit a plenitude of grace for the supply of all our wants ; which reveal pardon for the guilty, holiness for the polluted, and consolation for the oppressed and disconsolate ? Do they converse with experienced christians, and with the ministers of religion expressing their doubts, and asking counsel at their lips ? Above all, are they importunate with the Holy Ghost who as the Spirit of light “ leads his children into all truth, and makes darkness light before them ;” as the spirit of liberty

looses the chains from the spiritual captive, “sets his feet upon a rock, and establishes his goings ;” as the Spirit of joy “comforts the mourner in Zion, and gives quietness and assurance forever ?” Are they thus giving all diligence in the more private exercises of religion that their souls may become light in the Lord, and they enabled to attend this and all his ordinances “without distraction ?” Surely the affectionate, dutiful child would regret that any thing should occur to prevent it from complying with the request of a beloved, revered Father, or the generous soldier would feel mortified that any accident should render him incapable of appearing at his post, and performing his duty, especially that he should be absent on some great occasion when the honor of his Captain peculiarly required his presence ; and is it no grief, no humiliation to a professed christian to neglect from year to year one of the most sublime, interesting ordinances of New-Testament worship, the last injunction of “him who was slain, and redeemed us unto God by his blood ?”

Bare with me while I notice another irregularity with which many professors are chargeable, particularly in relation to the ordinance of the supper, Some who I believe are conscientious in performing the other duties of religion are easily tempted to absent themselves from the table of the Lord. An offence taken at a member of the church, or some supposed irregularity in the manner of admin-

istering the ordinance is considered a sufficient reason for their neglect of it. But however conscientious such persons may be in their conduct, conscience in this instance is not properly enlightened. Suppose that one child in a family should give offence to another child would this justify the latter in trampling on the command of their common Father? Or if one soldier in a corps behaves disorderly, would his disorder justify another in departing from the ranks, and deserting the service of his Captain? I know it is often objected that if "our brother have ought against us we are commanded to leave our gift at the altar, and go and be reconciled to our brother." But suppose that he refuses to be reconciled; suppose that his bosom burns with rage against us, still it becomes us to forgive and to aim with humility at performing our duty. Our obedience to Jesus Jehovah should not only be universal, but uniform: It is not sufficient that "we keep all his commandments and ordinances," but this observance should be rendered at *all* times when opportunity is enjoyed. I have spoken freely and largely on this subject from a conviction of its great importance. I am persuaded that many christians by making their own feelings, perhaps in some instances yielding to their own caprice as the rule of their duty rather than the authority of the living God lay a snare for their own consciences, militate against the edification of others, tarnish the beauty of the

church, and expose themselves to the rod of their heavenly Father.

2. We are obligated to "walk in all the ordinances of God," because there is an intimate connection between them, and each is essential in its own place. When the institutions of religion are considered separately, they may not all appear of equal importance, and the observance of some may seem more indispensable than that of others. The omission of prayer in secret may not perhaps appear so evil in its consequences as the neglect of some more public part of christian worship. In the former instance the omission is known only to God, and he alone can be offended; in the latter instance the neglect is obvious, both to him and the world: God is therefore dishonored, the righteous are grieved, and the profane, ready to consider all religion as a matter merely of convenience, are encouraged in their iniquity. But it ought to be considered as important, being appointed for our spiritual edification; to the due performance a promise is annexed, and in the wilful omission of any the frown of our Father may be expected. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." All the stones in a particular arch may not in the view of a spectator be equally necessary: They are not of the same size, nor alike splendid in

their outward appearance, yet a single stone cannot be removed without defacing the beauty and diminishing the strength and stability of the whole arch : All the members of the human body are not alike elegant or useful ; the hand has not the brilliancy of the eye, nor is the foot so exquisitely nice in its structure as the organ of hearing, yet by severing one member from the body, the beauty and perfection of the whole frame would be destroyed. Thus every ordinance of religion is important in its own place : There is an intimate connection between the duties as well as the doctrines of christianity. Besides, the very consideration that any institution has the authority of Jehovah as its sanction, is a sufficient reason why we should scrupulously and at any expence observe it : And a departure from any known ordinance is an impeachment of that wisdom, and sovereignty, and love by which it was appointed.

I would apply this doctrine by exhorting all to become followers of this honored, thrice happy pair, “ who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises.” Their example is recorded both for our instruction and imitation. True it is, diligence is requisite, and a little sacrifice of our fleshly ease must be made in discharging the duties of religion. We cannot “ search the scriptures,” nor excite our souls to a devout contemplation of divine subjects without labor ; without labor we cannot attain to a becoming fervor in

prayer ; we cannot be instant in attending the services of the sanctuary ; we cannot be vigilant “ in keeping our hearts ; ” we cannot retain divine truth frequently revolving it in our memories, and incorporating it with our souls ; we cannot watch, nor fast, nor sanctify the sabbath by performing its various duties ; we cannot solemnise our hearts, and rouse them up to a suitable frame “ for eating the bread and drinking the wine ” which are consecrated as symbols of the body and blood of our Lord. The discharge of these duties will require attention, and be accompanied with toil ; but for what will we consent to toil if not “ for that meat which endureth to everlasting life ? ” For what will we submit to a little labor of body, or exertion of mind if not in performing the pleasure of Him who created us, and in promoting the salvation of that soul which shall never, never die ? Besides, by a disinterested zeal in “ walking in the commandments and ordinances of God,” we become assimilated to the most honorable of our race who have lived in all preceding generations ; to Enoch who “ walked with God ; ” to Abraham who at the divine command left “ his own people, and his father’s house, and went out not knowing whither he went ; ” to Moses who “ through faith kept the passover and sprinkling of blood ; who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy ” the luxury of an earthly court, or the splendors of an earthly crown : What is an

infinitely more interesting consideration, we become assimilated to the holy Jesus who considered it "his meat and drink to do the will of his Father that sent him, and finish his work."

But let every reader of these pages be admonished that in deliberately neglecting these ordinances of the Living God they shall not, they cannot escape. "To them who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness he will render tribulation and anguish." Has he commanded you to read his word, and can you neglect it from day to day with impunity? Has he enjoined you to "pray without ceasing, to ask that it may be given you," and do you expect in the omission of this duty to escape his righteous indignation? Does he require you to "remember the sabbath day and keep it holy," and in the profanation of that day by idleness, or amusements, or secular employments are you not liable to the stroke of his avenging arm? As citizens you could not neglect your duty to society without injury to your character, and comfort, and interest, and are the laws of almighty God less reasonable in themselves, less righteous in their sanctions, or is he less able to execute these sanctions upon the wilful transgressor? "If I be a Father, where is mine honor? If I be a Master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts?"

"O merciful God, have pity on thoughtless, benighted, deluded sinners, and rouse

them to a sense of their danger : In the exercise of grace infinitely rich, thou hast provided a Saviour for our guilty world, even thine own Son who has, by much sorrow and travail of soul ; by much ignominy from earth and hell ; through exquisite agony inflicted upon him by thine own hand, procured a full redemption : Thou hast in thy precious word revealed clearly thy will and our duty, offering a free salvation, and declaring that thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but art rather desiring that they should repent, and turn, and live : Thou art raising up, and sending forth men of like passions, praying them to be reconciled unto God : Wilt thou not accompany these outward means with the operations of thy most blessed spirit effectually to apply this great salvation : Rain down his influences on all of every age and character into whose hands these pages may come, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened they may know what is the hope of thy calling, and what the riches of the glory of thine inheritance among the saints : May they be all righteous before thee through the imputation of the righteousness of thy dear Son, and holy through a constant supply of grace from him the ever-living Head : By their walking in all thy commandments and ordinances blameless may it appear to the world, and by the pledges of thy love secretly communicated to their hearts may they possess an inward assurance that they are adopted into thy family, and

heirs to that kingdom which thou hast prepared for thy chosen : And to thee, Holy Father, with the infinitely condescending Son our Saviour, and the Spirit of all grace shall the glory be ascribed *now*, and everlastingly. AMEN.

SERMON III.

ACTS X. 2.

A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people ; and prayed to God always.

THE design of this discourse is to recommend the important, yet neglected duty of secret devotion ; and perhaps few passages are more happily calculated to enforce it than the verse which I have chosen. Cornelius whose example is here presented for our imitation was a centurion, an officer of considerable rank in the Roman army. It is to be lamented that gentlemen of the sword are more frequently distinguished for their profligacy than their piety ; they are more in the habit of imprecating curses on themselves and others, than importuning for blessings. The nature of the soldier's occupation tends to inspire him with a degree of hardihood ; with a defiance of danger which often degenerates into a forgetfulness, and even defiance

of his God. His unsettled situation in life ; his want of the regular ordinances of grace ; his exposure to ensnaring company, and various other considerations have a natural tendency to divert his attention from things divine and eternal. But the inspired historian here presents to our view a noble exception. *Cornelius a centurion*, an officer in the Roman army, the most illustrious then in the world, was a *devout man* ; he walked in the fear of Jehovah, and was actuated by a zeal for his glory : He reflected that no distinction of rank, no peculiarity of situation could *now* conceal him from the eye of an omniscient God, nor would *hereafter* be admitted as any apology for impiety : He considered that although the splendor of talents, or fortune, or outward condition might dazzle the eyes of mortals, “ the Lord God looketh to the heart, and will render to every man,” whatever be his occupation in life, “ according to his works.”

He feared God with all his house. Living Godliness is communicative in its nature : As the opening rose diffuses its fragrance through the surrounding air, or as the living fountain sends forth its waters to refresh the neighboring ground, or as the sun revolving in his orbit sheds abroad his rays for enlightening and cheering the nations ;” so out of the abundance of his heart” the devout man must be occasionally “ speaking.” The parent who truly fears God will aim at infusing this principle into the souls of his children, and the

godly master will recommend Godliness to his servants as their duty, and honor, and interest.

It is another part of the character of Cornelius that he *gave much alms to the people*. They who abound in acts of piety to God usually abound in acts of charity to men, and the latter is no less necessary in its own place for evincing the sincerity of our profession than the former. That same Divine Teacher who has commanded us "to love the Lord our God with all our heart" has also commanded "that we love our neighbor as ourselves," and can our love more disinterestedly appear than in promoting his welfare temporal and spiritual, as *our* circumstances admit, or *his* circumstances require. He who has enjoined us to "add to our faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance" connects as links in the same golden chain "brotherly kindness, and charity." Indeed we rarely read of either male or female eminent for their attainments in holiness without finding a charitable disposition to constitute a prominent part of their character. Zaccheus immediately after his conversion resolves "the half of my goods will I give to the poor," and the apostle "thanks God without ceasing in behalf of the Thessalonians because," he adds, "your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one to each other aboundeth."

Cornelius is also represented *as praying to God alway*. We are not to conclude from this

account that the centurion was constantly retired in his closet, or that his soul was always elevated to his God in acts of devotion : Neither the frame of our bodies, nor the relations which we sustain to our families, or the church, or society, admit of unceasing attention to the exercises of religion. There are certain obligations binding upon us as men, no less than christians, and the duties of neither relation need by any means interfere with the duties of the other. A man is not obliged to become "slothful in business" who desires to "be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Diligence in our secular employments, and attention to the various duties of our civil relations are highly ornamental, and when discharged from proper motives will become hand-maids to religion. But the expression *he prayed to God always* implies that he had stated seasons for devotion, and that these were punctually observed. "Thus in common language we say that a tree is *always* fruitful which yields its fruit at the proper period ; the sacrifice which was offered up every morning and evening among the Jews was called the continual burnt offering, and the Israelites who duly attended divine service in the temple were said to be always there." To pray *always* therefore implies to have stated periods for the discharge of that duty. But the phrase as applied to Cornelius probably implied more than this : We are justified in inferring from it that his soul was fre-

quently lifted up in silent supplication to the throne of his Father, as peculiar circumstances required. Prayers, secretly and suddenly offered up in the moment of necessity are often the most successful, because they are generally the most unfeigned, and ardent. Thus Hannah prayed in the company of Eli and others ; thus the traveller may pray on his journey ; the husbandman when employed in the labors of the field, and the soldier when actually wielding the sword in battle. “ The eyes of the Lord are always upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,” and therefore in all danger or distress they may have recourse to him for support. The latter is commonly called ejaculatory prayer, and may be considered in a certain degree as growing out of the former. The believer generally experiences that in proportion as he is frequent and fervent in his stated devotions he is also frequent and fervent in his occasional devotions : The more punctual that he is in offering up his sacrifice morning and evening, the more importunate he will be in breathing out his soul in supplication amidst the various pursuits and enjoyments of the day.

I already mentioned it as my design to recommend on this occasion the duty of secret prayer, and this I would attempt by shewing,

I. That it is a most reasonable service, and

II. By offering some arguments as an inducement for all to perform it.

This duty must appear reasonable when we consider,

1. That it is explicitly enjoined by the Living God. The very consideration that any ordinance is sanctioned by his supreme, sovereign authority is a sufficient reason why it should be observed by us. He has instituted prayer as the principal mean by which we should express our dependance on his providence ; and in the discharge of which we may expect all blessings from his hand. We are therefore commanded “ to ask that we may receive ; to call on God in the day of trouble ” with the assurance that he “ will deliver us, and enable us to glorify him.” Indeed, it appears to be the general arrangement of Jehovah that every blessing in the natural and moral world is to be obtained in the use of appropriate means. The husbandman who expects his corn in autumn must plant it in spring : The student who desires to encrease in his knowledge of the sciences “ must search for them,” by reading and reflection, “ as for hid treasures,” and he who would receive mercy of the Lord must expect it in the use of means divinely appointed for that end.— Although the benefits of redemption are purely of grace, purchased by the Divine Redeemer, and offered unconditionally in the gospel, yet we must “ ask in order to receive them. For this I will be enquired of by the house of Israel that I may do it for them. Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask of

the Father in my name he will give it you." No prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost "making intercession in the heart," and committed to Jesus who makes intercession in heaven shall be unsuccessful ; it shall meet with a gracious return either sooner or later. "For every one that asketh receiveth ; he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." But as prayer is the ordinary mean by which the blessing is to be expected, the secret performance of this duty is explicitly enjoined on each individual. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet ; and when thou hast shut thy doors upon thee pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Here it is represented as the duty of all to enter their closet ; to retire from the view of the world where no eye sees but the eye of their heavenly Father, and there express their wants to him with this assurance "that he will reward them openly ;" he will crown them in the present world with all that is best for them, and hereafter acknowledge them in the presence of angels and of the universe.

2. This duty appears reasonable when we realise our relation to the Lord God as our Creator, and Preserver, and Redeemer. He framed our bodies so admirably nice in every part of their structure ; he formed the soul with its nobler endowments, capable of perpetual advancement in knowledge, and thus attaining to a higher degree of perfection

and bliss. “ If Jehovah be thus a Father to each individual may he not reasonably claim some tribute of honour.” The artist who constructs an instrument with particular care naturally expects a little advantage from it ; and is it not proper that he who gave being to man should receive some expressions of our homage ? But there is another consideration still encreasing our obligation to God which perhaps is not sufficiently realised, on him we constantly and necessarily depend for support. “ In him,” as the apostle elegantly expresses it, “ in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Our creation at first was not a greater miracle of his wisdom, and power, and love than our preservation from day to day. It is he who from moment to moment imparts vigour to our bodies, who continues the exercise of our intellectual powers, and from the unexhausted treasures of whose bounty all our wants are supplied. Do we thus stand related to the Living God as both creator and preserver, and shall we refuse a portion of each day for holding communion with him, for expressing our love to, our veneration for, our delight in, and our dependance upon the Greatest and the Best of Beings ; that Being from whom our all is derived at present, and to whose friendship we look for all blessedness in time, and eternity to come ? Do I require his power each moment for my support, and shall I not ask the exertion of that power ? Do I depend on his bounty for the supply of

every want, and shall I not ask the effusions of that bounty ? Do I need his mercy to pardon innumerable offences, and his patience to bear with innumerable weaknesses, and shall I not ask the exercise of this mercy and patience ? Secret prayer is thus an act of homage due to Jehovah for his creating and preserving goodness. We are therefore instructed to address him as *our Father in heaven* ; not merely to adore him as a Being infinitely Great, the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, but to acknowledge him as *our Father*, and Friend ; offering thanksgiving to him for past privileges, and expressing our reliance on his mercy for all that is requisite hereafter.

3. This duty appears reasonable, being recommended to us by the example of the righteous amidst all circumstances, and under all dispensations. “ To which of the saints can we turn ” who have not esteemed it as equally their duty and privilege to approach the Father of their spirits in acts of secret devotion, to acknowledge their imperfections, and implore his mercy to pardon ; to express their grievances, and ask his covenant consolations for their support ; to mention their wants, and ask a supply from his infinite fulness ? “ This is the generation of them that seek him ; that seek thy face, O Jacob.” Christians in the most obscure situations of life, and the lowest attainments in grace have entered the holiest of all with boldness, and poured forth their complaints into the ears of their heavenly Fa-

ther, while those of the most elevated condition, and the greatest advancement in the spiritual life have deemed it their glory to bow as suppliants at the mercy-seat, and become debtors to free grace for all. Behold the importunity of the venerable patriarch Jacob : *He was left alone*, and when sequestered from the society of men, and surrounded with the shades of the night “ he wrestled with the angel ; he wept and made supplication ; ” and he was not more earnest than successful. “ The redeeming Angel blessed him there. ” The dreary wilderness was converted into the house of God, and the gate of heaven. Who would not be importunate for a blessing thus satisfying and permanent ? Who would not exchange the splendors of a palace for a solitude so highly favored, or the society of men for an interview thus intimate with the Father of mercies and the God of glory ? To the example of Jacob the Patriarch we may add the exercises of Daniel the prophet as peculiarly instructive for enforcing this duty. “ He kneeled three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks. ” He is represented as *giving thanks*. Petition and thanksgiving are very properly connected in all our approaches to God. While we humbly expostulate for other mercies we ought thankfully to acknowledge those which we have already received. “ Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer, and supplication let your requests be made known with thanksgiving. ” This

service was performed by the prophet *three* times a day, and such also was the practice of the royal David. “Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.” In the history of Peter a chief apostle of our Lord we have another instructive example for recommending the duty of prayer. “He went up about the *sixth hour* for this exercise, and this fervour in supplication to his God was amply rewarded. “He saw the heavens opened, and under the vision of a sheet with all manner of four-footed beasts, and fowls of the air” he was admonished that the distinction of meats was shortly to be destroyed, the partition wall between Jew and Gentile broken down, and all nations admitted to the privileges of the church. But this ordinance is recommended to us by an example infinitely more illustrious than that either of patriarchs, or prophets, or apostles; Our Lord and Saviour by his own practice has consecrated the exercise of prayer as both the honor and interest of his followers. Although he had no guilt to be pardoned, no corruption to be subdued, yet he was fervent in supplication for blessings upon others, and asking the acceptance of his work for the restoration of our fallen world. He is often represented by the sacred historian as going apart into some *solitary place for prayer*; sometimes as “rising up a great while before day,” and at other times as spending whole nights in that exercise.” By a view of the righteous in all

circumstances and ages we find them to be a generation seeking after God, and this may be considered as a powerful recommendation of the duty to us. If we expect to be partakers of their peace, and triumph in death ; and their joys and glories forever, we must walk in life as they also walked. We have daily favours to acknowledge ; daily offences to be forgiven ; daily wants to be supplied in common with them, and if we have received an unction from the same spirit we will like them be giving ourselves to prayer.

Permit me to add a few arguments urging you to frequency, and fervour in the duty of supplication.

1. It may with propriety be pronounced a most dignified employment. We feel ourselves honored by being admitted into the presence of the great ; in associating familiarly with those whom we consider as our superiors in rank, and by whose conversation we may be entertained, and edified : How great then, unutterably great is the honour to which the christian is promoted on every occasion that he is permitted to approach the throne of his Father : He enters the "presence chamber" of the only wise God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords : He is admitted to familiar communion with him in whose presence angels bow with reverence, and the expressions of whose love they esteem better than life ; a Being whose understanding is infinite, and connects infallibly his glory with the eternal

good of all who confide in him ; a Being whose mercies are ineffably tender, and extend from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him ; a Being who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly beyond what we can conceive, the stores of whose bounty are not lessened by all the blessings which he communicates : Jacob felt honored when introduced to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and Danel when bro't into the presence of the Assyrian monarch, how honorable then must the christian appear when in the boldness of faith he approaches the uncreated majesty ; he addresses him not with the diffidence which the subject feels in approaching an earthly sovereign, or a servant his master, but with all that freedom which is felt by one friend in approaching another, or which is felt by a child in drawing near the most fond, indulgent father.

2. As prayer is an honorable it is a most profitable exercise. Every blessing temporal and spiritual is made over in the gospel, as their charter, to the heirs of salvation, and in prayer they present their draught for that particular blessing which their circumstances require. Wrestling with a holy fervour they have often obtained direction in darkness, joy in sorrow ; liberty in bondage : inward peace when all was gloomy, and tempestuous without : they have either obtained the removal of some cross which appeared absolutely insupportable, or received strength to carry it comfortably along with the full as-

surance that it would finally issue in their advantage. To relate all the sweet, transporting manifestations of the divine love which have been enjoyed in the devotions of the closet, all the strength received, all the doubts resolved ; all the conquests obtained ; all the tears dried up would be to give a history of the christian's experience in all generations. One acknowledges for the encouragement of those who should come after him, " I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears ; he brought me up out of an horrible pit, he set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings ; he put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God." While Jacob wrestled with the angel the obduracy of an unnatural brother was melted, and the formerly implacable foe was changed into an unfeigned friend. While Paul earnestly sought that the thorn which had long tortured his flesh might depart he received in return that animating assurance, " my grace is sufficient for thee," and that fiery trial through the importunity of his prayer resulted in abundant honour to his master, and exultation to himself. " Most gladly therefore," he resolves, " will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me : Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake ; for when I am weak then am I strong." Others without number, amidst similar conflicts, have received similar assurances of di-

vine support in answer to their prayers. They have experienced in their retirements seasons of joy which will not be forgotten through time ; nay, which they will recollect with gratitude and praise through the ages of eternity. A Lady of eminent attainments in piety used to declare that “ she would not be hired out of her closet for a thousand worlds ; that she never enjoyed such hours of pleasure, and such intimate communion with her God as she had then ;” she often expressed her astonishment “ that any could live without prayer, and deprive themselves of one of the greatest privileges allowed to men.”

3. As prayer is a profitable, it is also a delightful employment. We find it a great relief in the hour of perplexity to have a prudent, faithful friend whom we may approach for counsel, and on whose fidelity we can repose with confidence : The child feels relieved by telling its woes to an affectionate parent or one friend in communicating his sorrows to another. But the relief to be derived from the duty of prayer is inconceivably greater : we may in this exercise approach our heavenly Father with the most unrestrained freedom, “ and cast all our cares upon him ;” we may relate concerns to him which we should feel ashamed to mention, or afraid to entrust with the most confidential friend upon earth ; and this familiarity may be used with the fullest assurance of being accepted. “ The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and deliver-

eth them out of all their troubles. Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him; though he bear long with them: I tell you, saith the faithful witness, he will avenge them speedily." There is no trouble the most inconsiderable which disturbs our peace; no concern whether relating to ourselves or families, which we may not without reserve make known to a reconciled, gracious God, and the more freedom that we exercise in asking his advice or aid, he is the more pleased: And he will either remove the burden which is humbly cast upon him, or support us under it "In all their afflictions he is afflicted." Nothing which troubles and perplexes them, however trifling, is beneath his attention, neither shall they sink under the pressure of any cross however great while omnipotence is their support. He who counts the very hairs of their heads, and puts their tears into his bottle will not refuse a listening ear to any complaint which they carry to him. Is it possible for a gracious God to have employed language more affectionate, encouraging us to come boldly to his throne, or to have given stronger assurances that our petitions shall be heard? "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit unto them that ask him?"

Is such the reasonableness of the duty of

prayer and are such the pleasures, and advantages arising from the discharge of it.

1. We may infer how inexcuseable they are who live habitually in the neglect of this ordinance? They manifest a contempt of that wisdom which has appointed prayer as the great mean of our communion with Jehovah, and of that authority which enjoins us to "pray without ceasing, to ask that it may be given us:" They are chargeable also with slighting that bounty which has made ample provision for our spiritual wants, and that condescension which has assured us that these blessings shall be communicated to those who diligently seek them: To all this impiety against God the person who lives habitually without prayer discovers a most criminal indifference to his own everlasting interests. Suppose that a rich man should approach a number who were suffering with hunger, and express compassion for their misery; suppose that he should condescend to assure them that he had bread enough, and to spare; that he could abundantly supply their wants without materially diminishing the stock, or injuring his own interest; that he invited each or all of them at any time to acquaint him with their wants, and a liberal supply should be afforded, and they, notwithstanding, through a contempt of his generosity or an utter regardlessness of their own welfare refused: Must we not stand amazed at their stupidity without dropping a tear over their misery? But in-

comparably greater is the stupidity of those who refuse to arise, and seek after God. Is he not known as *the hearer of prayer*? “ ‘This is his name forever ; it is his memorial unto all generations.’ ” Has he not in the riches of his grace made provision for our perishing world, and does he not offer out of this fulness to dispense freely to those who ask ? It is really difficult to determine whether the prayerless person is chargeable with pouring the greatest contempt on the divine mercy, or shewing the greatest cruelty to himself. The Lord God has declared that “ except we repent we must perish,” yet he will not ask the grace of repentance : The Lord God has declared, “ cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,” yet although conscious of innumerable transgressions he refuses to ask remission.

Various pretensions are offered as an apology for the omission of this duty. Some attempt to excuse themselves by the consideration that “ the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,” and they are therefore afraid that their prayers might be rejected. But I would ask those who raise this objection, is there no abomination in *not* sacrificing when the Living God has required it ? Surely if it is offensive to the purity of Jehovah not to obey his command in a proper manner, it must be at least as offensive to his majesty to make no attempt to obey. A parent

will be more disposed to excuse a child who failed in the performance of any service required, than one who through indolence or obstinacy did not even attempt to perform it. As therefore you love your souls, as you would consult your true peace either in life, or in death silence all these reasonings of the flesh, and "seek the Lord while he may be found." Approach the throne of his mercy and supplicate in the following manner, "I acknowledge, blessed Father, that although thou art infinitely glorious in thyself, nay, the fountain of perfection, and excellence; although thou hast done much for our world in sending thine own Son to become a propitiation for our sins, and much for me by giving thy word, and every mean of salvation, yet my heart is enmity against thee, and thine ordinances: it has never been awed into obedience by all the displays of thy greatness, nor melted into contrition by the many expressions of thy love; I have long lived at a distance from thee the source of light, and love, and joy: I have not taken pleasure in perusing thy most precious word, in meditating on thy perfections, or calling upon thy name by prayer, but I am now convinced both of the guilt, and folly of my former ways, I know that thy favour is life, and that all who are far from thee shall perish. O send down thy sanctifying Spirit to soften this enmity, and shed thy love abroad through my heart; thou didst subdue to the obedience of

faith thousands of the unbelieving, impenitent Jews, the betrayers and murderers of thy dear Son, and is not thy mercy yet as plenteous to pardon, and thy grace as powerful to soften, and subdue? Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner: I bring mine understanding with all its darkness to be enlightened by thee, and taught the truth as it is in Jesus; I bring my will with all its obduracy to be subdued, and made to acquiesce with thy holy and gracious will: Thou Son of David have mercy upon me; let thy compassion move at my miseries, and thy healing balm be administered to my complicated, desperate diseases: I throw myself on thy sovereign, unmerited mercy, and am willing to become nothing both now and forever that thy free grace may appear all and all in every part of my salvation: thou fountain of light shine graciously on my benighted heart and give me some transporting discoveries of thy glory: Thou fountain of love impart to my thirsty soul refreshing communications of thy love, and raise my affections from the sordid, unsatisfying pleasures of this passing world: Fill me from this hour with all joy and peace in believing that I may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.

2. Let those who have experienced the pleasures, and the advantages of the devotions of the closet be exhorted to abound more and more in this exercise. Prayer has ever been considered a principal mean of our commu-

nion with Jehovah, and this communion must be commenced on earth if we expect that it will be perfected in heaven. Let no pressure of worldly business be deemed a sufficient apology for the neglect, or careless performance of your devotions morning and evening. Immediately after you awake from the repose of the night, before your minds are distracted with the cares, or your hands occupied with the labors of the day appropriate a little time for conversing with the Father of Spirits, and humbly committing yourselves to his protection through the day ; take a view of the duties which you may probably be called to discharge, or the difficulties to be encountered, or the temptations to be resisted and then expostulate for the sympathy and support of your Master throughout the whole. Many christians can attest from long, and repeated experience that they have been supported under every trial, and prospered in every pursuit just in proportion as they were enabled to begin the day with a humble reliance on the Lord. “ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. They that trust in the Lord are like mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. Commit thy way to the Lord ; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.” These are the promises of a covenanting God, and they have been realized times without number in the experience of his children. The most trifling disappointment has frequently unhinged them

when relying on their own wisdom, or strength, while on the other hand the heaviest cross has been easily borne along when their confidence was placed on the sufficiency of Jehovah for support. In the one instance they have "been wearied in the land of peace," while relying on an Almighty arm by the prayer of faith "they have easily surmounted the swelling of Jordan." Stir up your souls therefore by frequent contemplations of your own weakness, and the plenitude of promised grace to a holy importunity in this duty. Upon no occasion venture forward to your secular employments without reading some particular portions of scripture, and afterwards committing yourselves to the divine direction by supplication. It is unreasonable to object that such is the poverty of your lot, or, such the pressure of worldly business that you have not opportunity for the exercises of religion. You can easily find leisure for every thing that involves your temporal prosperity or comfort : You find leisure for eating when nature requires nourishment ; you find leisure for dressing your bodies when you wish to go abroad, and make a decent appearance among men ; you find leisure for sitting and conversing with a friend who occasionally calls to visit you ; and is the living God, who created you, who sustains you from hour to hour ; who is constantly "crowning you with loving kindness, and tender mercies" the only friend to whose call you cannot attend, or are

the interests of your souls and eternity the only concerns which may lie neglected? Oh, brethren, if there be any consolation in Christ; any reality in the fellowship of his love “be not henceforth slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” How may we sink in humiliation when we consider the importunity to which others have attained in the duty of prayer wrestling two, or four, or six hours in the twenty-four with the Living God, and how may we deplore our own loss when we recollect the advantages which they have derived from this exercise? At the throne of their Father they have often received “the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Employed in pouring out their souls before him in devout supplication they have felt secure amidst all the storms of life; they have experienced “a peace which passeth all understanding;” which the highest earthly prosperity could not impart, and which all the shocks of adversity could not ruffle. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” And the same prayers which issue in the peace and profit of his own soul, may descend in showers of blessing on his family, on the congregation with which he is connected, and on the church throughout the world.

“Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence: And give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” **AMEN.**

SERMON IV.

ACTS, xvii. 11.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they—searched the scriptures daily.

THESSALONICA, which is here noticed by the Evangelist, was the chief city of Macedonia, and celebrated for its commerce, and wealth, and luxury. There a church was planted by Paul at an early period of his ministry, to which as is generally supposed his two first epistles were addressed. *Berea* to which the apostle repaired after his departure from Thessalonica was also a city of Macedonia, but inferior to the other in extent, and population, and splendor : Yet the citizens of Berea were pronounced *more noble* than those in Thessalonica : “ The Lord God seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance,” on the dress, the address, and other external accomplishments and advantages, “ but the Lord looketh on the heart ; he notices whether it be humble, and contrite, and spiritual : He esteems his own image impressed on the soul, and appearing in the general behaviour, infinitely more than all the endowments either of learning, or wealth : Lazarus with the divine love shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, although exposed in the open street, and o-

bliged to ask his bread from door to door, is beheld with complacence by angels, and the God of angels while the rich man, swelling with pride, although clothed in purple, and occupying a palace is regarded with indignation, and scorn—An individual, or a family, or a city rises in the estimation of God in proportion as they obey his commandments, and act for his glory. “Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” The Bereans were therefore reckoned “more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they searched the scriptures daily.”

Secret prayer, on a late occasion, was recommended to you as a reasonable and profitable service. It is designed at present to enforce the reading of the sacred oracles as an ordinance no less important, and an ordinance encumbent on each individual. Indeed these two duties are very properly connected. In prayer we converse with God, and while we search the scriptures we hear him conversing with us: In the former exercise we familiarly make known to him our fears, our desires, our hopes, and in the latter he communicates to us his pleasure and purposes concerning us both in time and eternity: As example is usually more impressive than precept the part of sacred history which I have chosen must be considered as peculiarly appropriate for recommending to our attention the scriptures of truth. The citizens of Berea are represent-

ed as patterns for our imitation, and the Lord grant that in contemplating their conduct we may be excited to become followers of those who through faith, and patience do now inherit the promises. The righteous *then* no less than the righteous *now* were afflicted with a body of sin often tempting to the omission of duty ; *they* no less than *we* were encumbered with family cares, and involved in the various pursuits of the world ; yet amidst all these temptations, and discouragements they persevered “in searching the scriptures daily,” and their labor of piety was not in vain for the Lord God expresses his approbation by pronouncing them *more noble* than others. “His eyes are always upon the righteous :” He knows the person by whom his oracles are read, and the house where his throne is addressed by prayer, and over such he watches with peculiar concern, and affection.

May a portion of that same unction by which the living oracles were originally inspired descend on you and me while I attempt to give some general directions for their profitable perusal.

1. It is proper to search the whole scriptures, both the old testament and the new. We are not to conclude that the use of the former scriptures has ceased since the writings of the evangelists, and apostles are finished. They were all written by men under the impulse, the infallible direction of the Holy Ghost, and therefore out of respect to their

Author they ought all to be read. These two parts of divine revelation are intimately connected, and interwoven with each other ; they are both necessary for forming one perfect *whole*, one complete system of doctrine, and duty. The old testament presents to our view the type, and the new exhibits the anti-type ; the former contains various prophecies and promises relative to Messiah, and his undertaking, and offices, the latter represents these as literally accomplished in the coming, and sufferings, and ascension of the Word made flesh : And therefore we cannot omit the use of either without lessening the evidence, and obscuring the glory of the other. As a mean of recommending revealed truth in all its parts, and exciting us conscientiously to improve it, one apostle declares, “ that prophecy came not in old time,” under the former dispensation, “ by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;” and another apostle asserts that “ all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The wisdom and condescension of God eminently appear in the great variety of his word, and in thus furnishing a system for the admonition and consolation of his children in every possible circumstance. Some parts of it are obscure which readers of the

greatest leisure, of the most profound genius, and extensive learning may spend their time and talents in attempting to explore : Other parts, again, and those which most intimately concern the welfare of all, are easily understood ; obvious at the first view, and to the lowest capacity. In the historical parts of scripture we see the church for her apostacies plunged in the depths of adversity ; scourged alternately with the sword, and famine, and pestilence as the rod of divine wrath, and we are thus admonished “ to walk humbly before our God ; ” we are taught that although “ he pardons the iniquities of his people he will take vengeance on their inventions ; ’ Again, we behold him, upon her repentance, seasonably interposing for her deliverance, and we are thus encouraged not to mourn in the hour of adversity as those who have no hope ; that although “ in a little wrath a righteous Father may hide his face from us yet with everlasting loving kindness he will have mercy upon us. ’ The psalms of David present the militant believer in all the diversity of his exercises and frames. We find that royal saint rejoicing at one moment in the light of his Father’s countenance, enjoying the full assurance of his love, and experiencing the foretastes of endless pleasure at his right hand : Again, we behold him involved in darkness, and doubt ; apprehending that “ the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, and that his mercy was clean gone forever. ” We learn from this

variety of his frames that unclouded light, and unmingled joy are not to be expected in the present world. The history of Job presents in a very interesting view the precariousness of all earthly enjoyments ; we see this saint of the most High suddenly falling from the very summit of earthly prosperity to the depths of adversity, stripped at once of his health, his children, and property, and we are admonished by this fact not to place our confidence in any created good ; we behold him, again, after the trial of his faith and patience restored to his former prosperous condition, and we are thereby instructed not to despond in the season of affliction ; that however dark the cloud which now hangs over us, the sun of prosperity and health may suddenly beam forth. In the gospels and epistles there is a clear exhibition of Jesus of Nazareth in the merit of his cross, and in the fulness and freedom of his covenant for the salvation of all who improve him. I might thus consider the various parts of divine revelation, and shew that each possesses some peculiar excellence ; that they are all worthy of our cordial acceptance, and diligent perusal. It was the observation of a pious experimental divine* of a former age that “ although one star in the firmament of the scriptures differs from another star in glory, yet whenever God speaks we should hear, and the diligent searcher will find much excellent matter in the parts of scripture which

* *Mr. P. HENRY, page 70.*

we sometimes think might have been spared.” And a late very profitable writer* remarks, “ I know not a better rule for reading the bible than to read it through from beginning to end, and when we have finished it once to begin again. We shall meet with many passages that we can make little improvement of, but not so many in the second reading as in the first, and fewer in the third than in the second.”

2. The scriptures ought to be read with all humility of spirit; with a sincere disposition to believe whatever they reveal, and to obey whatever they require. Man through the pride of his heart often searches the scriptures rather as a critic to cavil than as a sinner who earnestly desires to become wise unto salvation; he is disposed presumptuously to arraign them before the bar of his own vitiated reason, and sit in judgment on their language, their arrangement, or sentiment instead of prostrating his own reason before this bar as the truth of Jehovah by which he must be finally judged. This presumptuousness, this self-sufficiency of heart is peculiarly offensive to the gracious Spirit, and publicans, and harlots will sooner receive saving advantage from the scriptures than such readers. “ The Lord God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly.” It becomes us to open the sacred volume with all the simplicity of children; to consider our own insignificance

* JOHN NEWTON, *vol. 6. p. 418. Lon. ed.*

as creatures, and more especially our unworthiness as sinners ; to realise the perfections of that God by whose inspiration the scriptures were written, and then reflect that whatever he teaches must be *true*, and whatever he commands must be *right*. This was the temper which the apostle so highly recommends in the Bereans. “ They received the word with all readiness of mind ;” they regarded the authority of God as the highest possible evidence for the truth of any doctrine, and therefore that it was their duty, and glory to subject their reason to his revelations. This same humility of mind he most honorably notices in his epistle to the Thessalonians ; “ For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God which effectually worketh in you that believe.”

3. The scriptures ought to be read with fervent prayer to the Divine Spirit for his influences to enlighten our understandings, and enable us savingly to comprehend them. No truth is more obvious from the word of God, and universal observation than the insufficiency of all means without his energies accompanying them. “ Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” “ Without his powerful agency,” as an evangelic, elegant au-

thor* expresses it, “ to enlighten our understandings, and apply the doctrines of the bible to our hearts, we shall be even with the word of light and life in our hands as blind Bartimeus sitting amidst the beams of day, or like the withered arm with some valuable treasures before it.” The bible is indeed compared to a *lamp*, but a lamp affords neither pleasure nor profit to him who has not eyes to discern and follow its light, so the eyes of the understanding must be opened before we are capable of beholding with comfort and advantage this light shining in our benighted world. “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; they are foolishness to him,” as the doctrine of sounds appears foolishness to him who is deaf, or as the doctrine of colours appears foolishness to him who is blind, “ neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,” discovered by the almighty operations of the Lord the Spirit. This is a truth which ought never to be forgotten when we open the volume of revelation, that it will be profitable either for reproof, or consolation, only as our understandings are illuminated to comprehend it. With what importunity of soul did the holy David supplicate for this divine influence while he searched the scriptures, “ Open thou mine eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law ; a train of wonders the most sublime, and interesting it does indeed contain ; here

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thy love illustriously shines in providing a Saviour for our guilty world, thy sovereignty is displayed in accepting from the Surety that satisfaction which thou mightest have demanded from the sinner, thy long suffering in bearing with us amidst the most criminal misimprovement of privileges, but all these wonders without illumination from on high must remain uninteresting to me as the harmony of sounds to him who is deaf, or as the most delicious meats to him whose palate is vitiated and incapable of relishing them. “If any man lack wisdom,” if he would possess that knowledge of divine things which is *pure* and *peaceable*, which is the effect of grace here, and the earnest of glory hereafter, “let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth none, and it shall be granted him.”

4. The oracles of God ought to be read by all who are capable of reading them. *Search the scriptures*, is the positive command, and binds to that duty persons of every age and situation who have access to the sacred volume, and have the capacity of perusing it.—The sinner ought diligently to read the scriptures as an ordinance appointed of Jehovah for his instruction and conversion. “The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul; the testimonies of the Lord are sure making wise the simple; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,” and to souls innumerable this volume carefully read has proved the *wisdom* and the *power* of God

for these important ends. The law of God when applied by the Spirit of God sets before the sinner in awful review not merely his present, but also his former conduct ; not only his actions, and words, but the most secret thoughts, and purposes of his heart ; it presents these to the eye of his conscience with every circumstance of aggravation ; nay, it brings home immediately to his view not only crimes which the world never knew, but duties neglected, warnings misimproved, and crimes committed which for months or years had been forgotten by himself. It then admonishes him that “ cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ; that the soul that sinneth it shall die : ” It thus rouses the sinner to a consciousness of his guilt, to an apprehension of his danger, and obliges him with the trembling jailor to exclaim, “ what shall I do to be saved ? ” A very interesting instance of the efficacy of the word, when applied by the power of God, for alarming the most secure, and subduing the most obstinate sinners, occurred in the army of Oliver Cromwell. It was the special order of that officer that every soldier under his command should always have a bible in his pocket. Agreeably to this requisition a licentious young soldier carried a copy of the scriptures, which during the action was penetrated by a ball from the enemy. After the army had retired from the field, this profligate youth had the

curiosity to examine how far the ball had entered his bible, and while he was turning over one leaf after another the following passage arrested his attention, " Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment : " And this word accompanied with the power of Almighty God literally *pierced to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit* : It proved the happy instrument of enlightening his understanding, of alarming his conscience, of changing his heart, and finally of saving his soul ; He afterwards resided many years in London manifesting the reality of his conversion by the holiness of his life ; and often remarked to his minister, a celebrated divine of that city,* " that his bible was the mean of saving both his soul and body."

But the use of the scriptures does not cease at our conversion to the Living God ; they ought to be diligently and devoutly read as a mean of our progress in sanctification, and spiritual wisdom : And the believer in Jesus usually finds that every grace flourishes in proportion as his delight in the lively oracles encreases. These are the *sincere*, unadulterated *milk*, by which the children of the spiritual family grow up to the stature of perfect men, and are matured for the fruition of glo-

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ry. Other books may be profitably read ; they are useful for explaining and enforcing the word of God, but they are as far inferior to the *word* itself as the stream is inferior to the fountain from which it flows. “ The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; his judgments are righteous altogether,” and when sealed upon the believing soul by the spirit of holiness are a chief mean of fortifying against temptation, of animating to the discharge of duty, and of imparting support amidst the evils of life. Holy men of God appear to be at a loss for language to express their esteem for his precious word, or their delight in reading and reflecting upon it. One pronounces it “ more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb :” He appeals to the searcher of hearts, “ thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me ; yet thy commandments are my delight : they are my song in the house of my pilgrimage.” Another bears his testimony in language equally honorable and affectionate to the excellence of the sacred oracles, “ we have also a more sure word of prophecy,” a more certain, infallible guide than dreams, or visions, or any other revelation from whatever quarter it may be received ; nay, more certain than that voice which we audibly heard when we were present on the holy mount ; “ whereunto ye do well that

ye take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." The meaning of this passage is both obvious and important ; it instructs us that the lamp of revelation ought to be kept constantly in our hands ; that its light ought to be steadily pursued, until faith is exchanged for immediate vision, hope for full fruition, and we are admitted to see without a vail for ever.

5. We ought to read the scriptures with the resolution of reducing to practice whatever they command. The bible was given not only as a system of doctrine, but also as a rule of duty, and we are bound to search it that our duty may be known and performed. It was not designed merely to inform the understanding by the disclosure of truths formerly unknown, but also to correct the heart, and regulate the life : And as it becomes us to bow our understandings to the authority of Jehovah by believing implicitly whatever he declares, we should also bow our wills by reducing to practice whatever he enjoins in his word. Do the scriptures afford the most clear revelation of God in his essence, and perfections, and government ; do they represent Him as necessarily possessed of every possible excellence, as unerring in his wisdom, unspotted in his purity, irresistible in power, and tender in his mercies, they afford this discovery of the Divine Being that we may be induced to admire and adore, and serve him :

Do they represent the Lord Jesus Christ as ineffably great, and gracious: as possessing originally *the form of God*, yet appearing for our sakes in *the form of a servant*; as loving his people, becoming a propitiation for their sins, and opening a living way for their return to that God whose favor they have forfeited: The scriptures reveal the Saviour in all his grace, and glory that our souls may be captivated with his excellencies; that we may be constrained to repair to Him, to rest upon him, and rejoice in him as our refuge, and portion: Do the scriptures give a discovery of hell with its exquisite, never-ending torments, it is that we may take the alarm, and flee from this wrath. Do they disclose to our view heaven with its blessedness, and glories, it is that we may strive earnestly to enter it: Do they exhibit the divine law as holy, and just, and good, it is that we may cheerfully obey it: Do they set forth a system of ordinances private and public as the instituted means of our instruction and edification, it is that we may be induced thankfully to improve them. If ye know these things," says our Lord, "happy are you if you do them." The moment we are convinced that any ordinance is divinely appointed we ought conscientiously to attend it whatever sacrifice of our ease, or interest, or reputation may be required:—Otherwise every additional attainment in knowledge must aggravate our condemnation and woe. To remain ignorant of the divine

will under the means of information is criminal, but to be acquainted with our duty and live in the neglect of it is still more criminal, because our disobedience is a direct impeachment of that wisdom and authority which enjoined it.

6. The scriptures ought to be read *daily* when opportunities can possibly be enjoyed. No arguments, I trust, are necessary to evince the propriety of attending so frequently to this exercise. It is a reasonable tribute of respect and gratitude to the Living God, their Author ; that we should be often consulting the only volume which he has written. It is also a duty which we owe to our immortal souls that we frequently improve this mean of edification and comfort. Are we *daily* ‘ laboring for the meat which perisheth,’ and why not occupy a portion of each day in laboring for “ that meat which endureth to everlasting life ?” Are we daily promoting the health and comfort of the outward man by eating, and drinking, and clothing, and why not devote a little attention to the interests of that soul which must live for ever ? And what mean is more happily adapted to advance its interests than a careful perusal of the scriptures and affectionate meditations upon them ? It is not without an important design that the apostle testifies so explicitly of the Bereans that “ they searched the scriptures *daily*,” or that the exercises of David are so particularly recorded, and handed down to future ages, “ O how love I thy

law ; it is my meditation all the day. I will delight myself in thy statutes ; I will not forget thy word." Besides, a peculiar promise is made to those who are diligent, and conscientious in their improvement of the holy scriptures. "Blessed is the man that delighteth in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." The moments consecrated to the Living God, and the contemplation of his word shall secure a blessing on all the other pursuits and enjoyments of the day ; for it is added, "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he doeth shall prosper."

These directions for the profitable use of the sacred scriptures I shall now conclude in the very appropriate language of our excellent catechism ; "that the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer ; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts and practise it in our lives."

Permit me to apply this doctrine by exhorting you to adore the Great God for giving us this revelation of his will ; for lighting up this cheering lamp in our guilty, benighted world, and recommending you affectionately to improve it. To leave our bibles neglected from day to day is really to shut our eyes against the light : it is practically to pour contempt on that goodness which afforded the scriptures,

and on that authority which enjoins us to search them. This is a truth which I would most solemnly press upon the consciences of every reader of these pages. Many of you perhaps aim at being moral in your conduct, chaste in your conversation, at honesty in your ordinary dealings by “rendering to all their due, and thus doing to others as you would that others should do unto you :” Your ears are probably shocked at the impiety of the swearer, your eyes are probably disgusted upon witnessing a neighbor debasing himself by foul intoxication, or guilty of the open profanation of the Lord’s day, yet you yourselves live habitually, and, perhaps without remorse, in the omission of commanded duty : You rarely pray in your closets or families, and suffer days to pass away without reading a chapter of the bible. But is it not a direct command of God, “search the scriptures ; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,” and is there no guilt, no danger in the habitual omission of this command ? A parent feels no less offended with his child for neglecting time after time any service which he has positively enjoined, than for doing what he has actually forbidden ; and is the Great God, the moral Governor of the universe, less jealous of his prerogatives than frail, imperfect mortals ?—Recollect, therefore, that he is no less displeased and dishonored at your omission of what he has required, than your commission of what he has forbidden. “The servant that

knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Prophecy came not in old time by the will of men ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;" the inspired writers were only the medium, the message was from Jehovah, and will you turn away from a speaker so august and divine ? Is it to be supposed that he " whose understanding is infinite " would raise up men in different ages, prophets and apostles ; that he would move them *when* to speak, and direct them *what* to say ; that he would preserve their writings unaltered amidst the most fiery opposition of earth and hell, and yet that there is no guilt in leaving these writings unimproved ? But waving the divine authority which binds you to this perusal of the scriptures, may not a regard for your own interest, constrain you to it ? As the sacred volume is *a faithful saying*, being written by inspiration of God, it is *worthy of all acceptance*, being replete with consolation to man. Under a conviction of guilt, is there nothing reviving in that declaration, " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them : I will be merciful to your unrighteousnesses ? " Amidst the numerous evils and discouragements that you experience, is there nothing supporting in that assurance, " all things, shall work together for good to them that love God : The Lord will give grace and glory ; no good

thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly ?” While you find the infirmities of nature gradually encreasing, all earthly enjoyments losing their relish, and the “grass-hopper becoming a burden,” is there no support in that heavenly word, “and even to your old age I am he ; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry, and I will deliver you : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness ?” In the prospect of parting with your dear offspring, and leaving them in a world of corruption, and vexation, and sorrow is there no relief to thine anxious soul in that invitation of thy Father in heaven, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me : Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me ; I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever for the good of them and of their children after them :” When the clay tabernacle begins to totter, and thou art forewarned of a speedy dissolution, is there nothing animating in that declaration of a risen Saviour, “he that believeth on me hath everlasting life : I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me although he were dead, yet shall he live.” These promises frequently read and sealed upon the heart by the Divine Spirit, impart purer joy and more substantial support than

can be derived from any created source.—
“ More to be desired are they than gold, yea,
than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey,
and the honey comb.”

Do you object that you have often read the scriptures, and committed portions of them to memory, but without any real advantage ; you have never felt their efficacy either for convincing of sin, or for animating to the discharge of duty. Be exhorted to read them more frequently, and with still greater attention to their meaning. We are not to expect profit from the bible by running over a chapter of it as we would a page of the almanack, or a paragraph in the newspaper : We should attend to this duty as an ordinance of the Living God with the utmost solemnity and earnestness ; revolving in our minds again and again the doctrines which it reveals and the admonitions which it contains. “ We ought therefore to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard or read, lest at any time we let them slip. We are commanded to have his word *in our hearts* by making it the subject of our frequent and delightful contemplation ; “ to talk of it when we are sitting in the house, and walking by the way ; when we are lying down and rising up.”— Again, read the scriptures with more fervent prayer to that Spirit who alone can reveal them savingly to your souls. The understanding is darkened by nature, and incapable of discerning spiritual objects until it is divinely

illuminated. When you take this heavenly volume into your hands be impressed that however *great*, and *precious* its promises, and however excellent its precepts you must be taught of God before it will be profitable, either for reproof, or correction, or consolation, and then expostulate with the Father of lights, “open thou mine eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law : Give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation—that I may know what is the hope of thy calling, and what the riches of the glory of thine inheritance among the saints.” For the Lord’s sake, and for your own soul’s sake, I intreat you not to conclude that because you cannot make these oracles effectual, it is therefore useless to read or improve them. Such insinuations originate in unbelief, and ought instantly to be resisted ; they are cherished by that arch-enemy who aims at dragging you as miserable captives to the same torments with himself. Because you cannot make your corn to grow, will you not plant ? Because you cannot command the dews to distill, or the genial rains to descend, will you not sow ? Because the mariner cannot oblige the winds to blow *when*, or in *what* direction he pleases, will he refuse to spread his sails ? The children of this world are wiser in their generation than to reason after this manner. They know that without sowing they cannot reap, but by sowing they *may*, and probably will reap. They know that the hand of the diligent ordinarily maketh rich,

and therefore they use the most appropriate means in the most suitable season, and will you not make the experiment, when your peace in life, your support in death, and your welfare through eternity are at stake? Will you not allow yourselves leisure, or will you not submit to the trouble of searching the scriptures, when it is declared, “in them ye think ye have eternal life?” Or through your wilful neglect will you leave their adorable Author to complain, “I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted a strange thing?”

Reader, hast thou found the promises precious; hast thou often felt them to be the joy, and rejoicing of thine heart; adore the Lord the spirit for those operations by which thine eyes were opened to discern their excellence, and thy soul enabled to taste their consolations: To him thou art a debtor for all that delight which thou hast experienced in reading them, and for all that freedom which thou hast found in receiving them as they are *yea*, and *amen* in our Lord Jesus Christ. “Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, for many wise men, and mighty, and noble” have enjoyed the same oracles, and remained strangers to their sanctifying, and saving effect: They have sat under the shining of the same celestial lamp, without discerning a ray of its glory. “But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in your hearts to give

you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In the humble, devout, and daily improvement of this record of thy Father's love, endeavor to make progress in grace, and in the knowledge of thy dear Saviour, and Lord : In proportion as you become acquainted with the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ the more will divine peace abound in your consciences, the more will true holiness sit enthroned in your hearts, and your affections will rise and center upon things above. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of a divine nature." Observe stated opportunities each day for reading portions of the scriptures. particularly the practical, and devotional parts of them with prayer to him whose grace can render them conducive to your spiritual profit : And while you read rejoice in them as the heir rejoices in his title to a large estate, or as the child rejoices in the last will of his Father which bequeathes a rich inheritance, Be not satisfied with hearing them read by others, or, if thou art the head of a family, with reading them to thy household at the seasons of ordinary devotions ; thou hast a soul of thine own to be quickened when dead, to be animated when indolent, to be comforted when disconsolate, therefore embrace opportunities for searching the living oracles apart by thyself. Let no business which relates to the present

world, neither the cares of thy farm, or thy merchandize, or any secular employment divert thee from the stated performance of this duty. The gain of thy soul is infinitely the most interesting gain, and remember it is "to them who, by patient continuing in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, that eternal life" is promised. We ought to consider that day as lost, as a blank in our lives in which nothing has been done for our souls, and eternity by attention to some spiritual exercises. When, on the other hand, we are called to exchange this world for the next, those days will appear the most precious of the week, and those hours the most precious of the day, and those moments the most precious of the hour which were spent in communion with God, and making preparation for our future state. It was the solemn attestation of one* who had attained nearly the summit of human greatness, "I have surveyed the most part of that learning which is common among men, but now I find no rest for my soul except in the holy scriptures." It was the exclamation of another† eminent both in station, and for his talents, "I have lost a world of time the most precious thing in the world, of which had I one year more it should be spent in reading the psalms of David, and the epistles of Paul." Another‡ distinguished both in the church and in the

* *The Hon.* JOHN SELDEN.

† SALMASIA. ‡ *Sir* CHRISTOPHER HUTTON.

world expostulates with his friends in his last hours, "be serious in searching after the will of God in his holy word; if it is desirable to know the laws of the land, and the customs of our country, how much more to know the statutes of heaven, and the laws of eternity; to know the will of the Great Monarch, and Eternal King." He then devoutly exclaimed, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Such is the testimony of men who enjoyed all that support which either the wealth or honors of creation could impart; such was their testimony as they were just leaping from time to eternity, and therefore could have no interest in deceiving. I must now conclude presenting again for your imitation the example of the Bereans "who received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily." This feeble attempt to recommend the oracles of our Lord is left with your consciences until that solemn hour when we must stand together at his bar.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."—
AMEN.

SERMON V.

ISAIAH 56, 4.

For thus saith the Lord unto the Eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths.

THE promises contained in this, and the following verses of the chapter refer immediately to the New-Testament dispensation. The inspired author with prophetic eye looks forward to a distant period of time ; he sees the wall of partition, which had long separated the Jew from the Gentile, completely removed ; he sees the church extending her limits beyond the narrow boundaries of Palestine, and admitting to her privileges not merely the offspring of Abraham, but men of all languages, and climes, and kindreds. The prophet thus mentions in another verse, “ also the sons of the stranger,” the Gentile nations who had been formerly considered “ as strangers, and foreigners,” who were not acknowledged as a people in covenant with God, nor dignified with the peculiar privileges of his children, “ these sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord—and take hold of my covenant : Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” Among the various duties to which promises are made in the different verses of this chapter the sanctification of the sabbath

may be considered as the most prominent and is most frequently mentioned. This is a plain proof that the Sabbath is an ordinance of moral obligation, that it is not peculiar to any age of the church, but shall be perpetuated through all ages, and that the observance of it is essential to the christian character.

My design is to enforce the sanctification of the Lord's day, and as this can probably be done with greater success after you are fully convinced that it is a moral duty, perpetually binding in the church, I shall endeavor to shew,

I. That the sabbath is an ordinance of lasting obligation, and

II. The manner in which it ought to be sanctified.

The moral nature of the sabbath, and its perpetual obligation are evident,

I. From the time when this institution was made, and the arguments with which it was originally enforced. No reason was expressed at the first appointment of a particular day for religious worship, nor can any be imagined by us why it should be binding on Adam, more than on his posterity in all generations. Does not the Lord God stand in the relation of a Creator to us, no less than to him, and are we not therefore equally bound to devote a portion of our time for his immediate service? Had man retained his primitive innocence he would have ceased on every seventh day from the labors of life, and

occupied himself exclusively in the contemplation, and worship of his Creator, and is this retirement from the business of the world less necessary in his fallen, imperfect condition ? Surely if it was requisite for Adam when unadulterated by sin, and possessed fully with the image of his God ; when he admired him in all that he saw, and enjoyed him in all that he tasted ; when every thought was holy, and every affection was devoted to Jehovah as the object of its delight, if it was necessary for Adam under such circumstances to separate a seventh part of his time for the duties of religion, it is much more necessary for us who are naturally carnal, and earthly ; whose hearts are so powerfully prone to this world, and are often going after its vanities, even when the body is enjoying the rest of the Sabbath ?

That this ordinance must be of perpetual obligation also appears obvious,

2 From the argument by which it was originally enforced, even the divine example in the creation of this world. “ And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made ; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” set it apart for holy exercises, and a day in which peculiar blessings should be dispensed, “ because that in it he had rested from all his works which God created, and made.” This is the very same argument by which the observance of the sabbath was urged upon the Israelites from mount

Sinai, and in different periods of their dispensation; and surely this argument is equally forcible in all ages of the world, and to all generations of men. Why was the Lord God pleased to occupy six days in carrying on and completing the creation of this world? He could as easily have finished it in one day as in six, yea in a moment of time, as in a succession of ages: but he protracted it day after day very probably as an example to man, that after laboring *six* days in secular pursuits the *seventh* should be devoted to a holy rest. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work—For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

That the sabbath is of perpetual obligation appears undeniable,

3. From the consideration that it was announced at the same time, and with the same solemnity as the other commandments. When man in consequence of his apostacy had lost a knowledge of the true God, and a revelation of the divine will became necessary the sabbath was instituted with as much precision and enforced with as much authority as any other ordinance. It was announced by Jehovah with an audible voice, and in terrible majesty from mount Sinai, "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy:" It was after-

wards written on tables of stone by the finger of God as a mark of its perpetuity, and was ordained to be kept in the ark of the covenant as constituting a part of the moral law. We might as reasonably suppose that any part of the ten commandments is suspended from obligation as this part : We might as readily suppose that it is lawful to have *other Gods before him* contrary to the first commandment, or to profane his *venerable name* in opposition to the third, as to employ the seventh in our secular pursuits in opposition to the explicit injunction of the fourth commandment. The conscientious observation of that day was often urged by the Jewish prophets as an important part of religion, and the violation of it was a sin against which the heaviest judgments were denounced. “If ye will not hear-ken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden then I will kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched”—But to him who honored the Lord “by not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words on his holy day” it was graciously promised, “Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father.” From all these considerations it may be inferred that the sabbath was not designed for *one* age of the church, but for *all* ages, and that it will be observed

in the exercise of divine worship until the end of the world.

It is unnecessary to detain you by proving at any considerable length that immediately after the resurrection of our Lord the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. There is nothing in the nature of the institution inconsistent with such a change. The spirit of the ordinance is evidently this that as the Lord God was employed six days in the creation of the world, and then rested on the seventh day, so in conformity to his example after the labour of six days in our temporal engagements *one* should be devoted to spiritual exercises; that a seventh portion of our time should be consecrated to the immediate service of Jehovah; but it depends on his sovereignty to determine which day shall be employed in that manner. Nay, so far is a change of the time from being inconsistent with the original design of the institution that it appears altogether suitable. The seventh day was formerly sanctified, and set apart for commemorating the works of creation; for contemplating the perfections of God as they were displayed in the various productions of his hand: The creation of this natural world, with its innumerable inhabitants rational and irrational, being then the most astonishing display of his glory it was proper that the day of rest should be set apart for commemorating that, but when any other transaction of God should a-

rise to our view more interesting, and glorious, affording a still more luminous exhibition of his wisdom, and power, and sovereignty, and grace it appears proper that the Sabbath should be devoted to the commemoration of that transaction, and such without all controversy is the recovery of fallen man through the mediation of the Eternal Son : In this scheme various perfections of God are brought clearly to view which were but obscurely, or not at all displayed in his other works, and all his perfections are exhibited with a more commanding lustre : As redemption is the most important work, and man so deeply concerned in it, is it not proper that a portion of our time should be occupied exclusively in contemplating that work ? If God appearing in the character of Creator appointed the seventh day for holy services, because on it he rested from his work of creation, and was refreshed in beholding the beauty of that world which came fair from his hand, why should he not when appearing in the character of Redeemer appropriate for spiritual exercises the day on which he ceased from his work of redemption ; a day on which he was refreshed by seeing in a finished redemption “ glory in the highest resulting to himself, and good will ” appearing to our revolting, ruined world ? This change was clearly foretold by the Old Testament prophets. “ The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” The stone here mentioned, as an apostle asserts,

is the Son of God betrayed, and crucified by the unnatural Jews. He became, according to this infallible expositor, *the head of the corner* at his exaltation which commenced in his resurrection from the dead. "This is the day," the royal prophet then adds, "this day of Messiah's resurrection from the dead is the day* which the Lord hath made, which he has designed for his worship in all successive ages "we will rejoice, and be glad in it." The same change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, or to the eighth day from the creation is foretold with equal clearness by a succeeding prophet. "And when these days are expired it shall be that upon the eighth day, and so forward the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings, and I will accept you, saith the Lord God." Agreeably to these predictions the first day of the week was uniformly observed for social worship by our Lord after his resurrection, by his apostles, and by their successors in the earlier ages of the church. On that day the risen Saviour frequently shewed himself to his disciples, affording them the most reviving assurances of his love. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled—came Jesus and stood in the midst, and

* This is the view of this passage given by Vitringa, by Edwards, by Howe, and various other commentators.

saith unto them, peace be unto you: And when he had said this he breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. And after eight days again," the Evangelist notices, that is at the next recurrence of the first day, "when the disciples were within—came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you." Now, no doubt can be entertained but our Redeemer appeared to his disciples on other days, perhaps on every day of the week, and conversed with them on the nature of his kingdom, and those persecutions which they should endure in promoting it; but on the first day of the week, probably when convened for the exercises of religion, he met with them as an earnest of his spiritual presence with his children on that day in future generations; he breathed on them, and communicated the Holy Ghost as a pledge of those blessings which may ever be expected by his true worshippers while they observe the same day as sacred to his resurrection. On the first day of the week, being the day of Pentecost which followed immediately after the Jewish Sabbath, the Divine Spirit rested on the apostles in such abundant effusion, and three thousand were converted by the preaching of Peter.—It is evident from sacred history that the churches ordinarily assembled on the first day to attend the ministry of the word, and to celebrate the supper of our Lord after his ascension on high. We thus read that "on the

first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread Paul preached unto them :” And on the same day the churches of Corinth and Galatia were ordered, probably when convened for social worship, to make collection for the poor. This was emphatically called “the Lord’s day,” as sacred to the resurrection of our Lord, and was appropriated for religious worship by the immediate successors of the Apostles. A celebrated Father* in the primitive church who, it is thought was educated under John the divine, and was afterwards ordained Bishop of Antioch, particularly enjoins, “Let every lover of Jesus celebrate for their sabbath the Lord’s day, the Queen and Princes of all days.” Justin Martyr† who lived towards the end of the second century relates that “on Sunday we all usually assemble, because that is the day in which Jesus Christ our Saviour arose from the dead, and appeared to his Apostles, and disciples :” and he mentions in the same apology that on “that day all in city and country convene into the same place, and commentaries of the apostles, and the scriptures of the prophets are read.”

We therefore conclude that as the sabbath is an ordinance of perpetual obligation, it is now changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, and that in the observation of that day we are sanctioned by the example of our

* IGNATIUS *epistolæ ad Magnesios.*

† *Apologia secunda pro Christianis.*

Lord, of his apostles, and of their successors for centuries after the erection of the New-Testament church.

It remains to enumerate—

II. The duties which we ought with diligence to discharge on that day.

1. Devout meditation is one duty incumbent upon us in the morning of the holy sabbath. Had man remained in his original purity his chief employment every seventh day would have been to contemplate the perfections of his God as manifested in the material world : He would have admired that power which created from nothing the immense fabric of the universe ; that wisdom which arranged every species of Being, animate and inanimate, with such consummate order, and that exuberant bounty which provided for the necessities of all ; he would especially have adored the distinguishing goodness of Jehovah to man in forming him after his own image and likeness, in appointing him lord of this lower world, and thus assigned him a rank so honorable among the creatures of his hand, and at each contemplation of nature his soul must have ascended in ardent affections to nature's God : As devout meditation would have been the chief employment of innocent man on the seventh day, it cannot be less appropriate for redeemed sinners on the first day of the week. On the former Adam beheld the finishing stroke given to the outward creation, and in the latter we see the consummation of the work

of our redemption in the resurrection of our Lord, and his rest from all the toils and reproach of his mediatorial undertaking : When the natural sun arises we may reflect that on that morning Jesus, his infinitely illustrious Archetype, arose from the dead : that he came forth from the grave as the Conqueror of sin, and Satan, and death, and hell, and that in the resurrection of the Head there is a certain pledge of the resurrection of all his living members : At each contemplation of the risen Saviour, of which every return of the Sabbath is a lively memorial, the believer has new reason to utter the triumphant challenge, “ death, where is thy sting, grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be unto God that giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord,” and this assurance of final victory in his glorious revival, and ascension. This appears to have been the exercise of John the Evangelist when he declares, “ I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day :” I was in the spirit through the breathings of the Holy Ghost and on the wings of devout contemplation I was enabled to soar above this world, and all its empty shadows : I was transported with delightful reflections on the past, and longing anticipations of that glory which is yet to be revealed.

2. Secret prayer is another exercise highly suitable on the morning of the christian Sabbath. That duty which is incumbent on every day is peculiarly incumbent on the Lord’s day, because on that day Jehovah more espe-

cially waits to be gracious, and delights in dispensing mercy to the humble suppliant. While we view with adoring wonder the mysteries of redeeming love, it should be our prayer that we may be enabled to walk worthy of our privileges, and prospects ; that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would sanctify us in soul and body, and dispose us to employ all the members of both as instruments of righteousness for his glory ; that as “ he spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all ” he would grant us full remission of sin through his perfect sacrifice, and every pledge of divine love through his intercession ; that as we live in a world of temptation he would keep us unspotted from its pollutions ; that as we are exposed to troubles on the right hand, and the left he would give us the sanctified use of them, support us under them, and in his own time afford us an eternal redemption from them ; that as the christian sabbath was intended to be a pattern of that perfect, everlasting *rest* which is prepared for the righteous in the heavenly state he would subdue each worldly appetite, would inspire us with every holy affection, would grant us in large measure the consolations of his spirit, and thus fill us with longing desires after those *full joys* which may be expected in his immediate presence ; that, if we reside within reach of the sanctuary, he would bring us to his house of prayer as an earnest of introducing us hereafter to the “ heavenly Je-

rusalem, the city of the Living God," that, in sitting down with the congregation of his people, we may be looking forward for an admission to the "general assembly, the church of the first born which are written in heaven" to go no more out. With what holy importunity did Moses thus supplicate in approaching the mount, "Lord, shew me thy glory:" David ardently entreats, "O send out thy light, and thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles."

Reading the scriptures, family instruction, family devotion, and familiar conversation on divine subjects which are encumbent every day are more especially proper on the Lord's day. More leisure is then enjoyed, and therefore more time should be occupied in exhorting one another; in repeating the great and precious promises, and in praying with, and for each other. That divine injunction with which we ought to comply every day as both our duty, and privilege may with greater convenience be fulfilled on the sabbath, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." *The church ought thus to be maintained in the house by prayer, by praise, by instruction, by spiritual conversation, and each member of the family by such exercises may be instrumental in promoting the graces, and in fitting for glory the other members.*

But no private exercises either of the closet or the family should be permitted to interfere with

3. The still more important duty of attending the public ordinances of the sanctuary. I am confident that the discharge of no religious duty interfering with, much less preventing the discharge of this will be acceptable with Jehovah. It is in the sanctuary that he has particularly commanded us "not to forget assembling ourselves together," and he has assured us that *there* he delights more than in all the dwellings of Jacob, and therefore to neglect repairing thither when opportunity offers is equally a contempt of his authority, and love; besides, it is by going publicly to the temple of the living God that we bear the most open, honorable testimony of our attachment to his cause. By repairing with becoming solemnity to the courts of his worship; by deliberately taking our seats among his professed followers; by devoutly uniting with them in praise, prayer, and the various exercises of religion we practically declare that we are not "ashamed of his gospel." Indeed, if the ministry of reconciliation should cease, or public ordinances be superseded we cannot conceive a visible church in the world: the religion of Jesus, as to its external, visible form must utterly cease. And perhaps it is not presumptuous to suppose that one reason of the sabbath was that all might have opportunity of engaging together in the worship of

the living God. Those therefore who for trifling considerations withdraw from public ordinances, and the communion of the faithful may be actuated by an honest, but unquestionably it must be a misguided zeal. "The Lord hath chosen Zion, hath desired it for his habitation," and promises "abundantly to bless her provision : " There like a munificent Prince he dispenses his royal favors among his subjects, there he qualifies them gradually for encircling his throne of glory in the heavens, and for the full participation of those privileges which are reserved above for such as "overcome by the word of their testimony." While David regarded the sabbath as the most precious day of the seven he esteemed the hours of public worship as incomparably the most precious hours of that day "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! Blessed are they that dwell in thy house : For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." An instance of profound veneration for the sanctuary of his God was manifested by a late nobleman in England ; one whose name I have often mentioned, and always with exquisite pleasure, because he was eminently great and good ; the talents of the man shed lustre upon the graces of the christian, and the graces of the christian reflected back a still brighter lustre on the talents of the man. When this nobleman was

seemingly unable through the infirmities of age, and encreasing bodily indisposition to attend the celebration of the Lord's supper in the church, the Bishop waited upon him in the morning and proposed to convey the elements to his own room. To which he replied with apparent extacy, "No: my Master has prepared an entertainment for me in his own house, I will go there, and partake." He was carried to the temple of the Lord, publicly partook of the supper, and then carried back to his room. In a few days the earthly house of his tabernacle was dissolved, and no doubt his soul enjoyed an abundant entrance into the celestial sanctuary from which there is no departure, and participated at that table which shall never be uncovered.

The celebration of the ordinance of the Lord's supper is another duty incumbent on the christian sabbath to which we ought to attend whenever opportunity is enjoyed. He who has commanded, "remember the sabbath and keep it holy," has also enjoined upon all his followers, "do this in remembrance of me: As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until he come." And it is evident from the history of the church for centuries after the ascension of our Redeemer that the administration of this ordinance constituted a chief part of public worship. It is therefore related of the first converts "that they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fel-

lowship, and in BREAKING OF BREAD, and prayer :’ It is also recorded that when “ the disciples came together to break bread Paul preached unto them : ’ Breaking of bread, or the celebration of the Redeemer’s supper, in which bread is one element, is here represented as their principal employment when assembled together. And it is related by Justin Martyr, a Father in the antient church, that “ after the writings of the apostles, and prophets were expounded, bread and wine were brought forward and received in the name of the Lord.”

Such are the public exercises of religion which ought to be performed on the Lord’s day, and permit me to remark that each should be performed with due order, and solemnity. All who attend the services of the sanctuary should conscientiously aim at being seated before the service is commenced ; otherwise the beauty of the ordinance is tarnished, and the edification of others is prevented : Besides, how can they who loiter five, or ten minutes after the exercise begins unite their hearts with the minister when as the messenger of the Lord of hosts he calls upon them “ to worship God in reading such a chapter, or singing such a portion of a psalm ? It might also be mentioned that unnecessarily to waste our time until the duties of the temple are commenced looks as if we were afraid of “ being detained before the Lord,” and that these exercises are rather a drudgery than a delight. Again, as we ought to be conscientious in

taking our seat in the sanctuary before the exercises of religion begin, we ought to be also conscientious in keeping our seats until the exercises are concluded. They who discover an impatience to withdraw before the services are ended practically say, "behold! what a weariness is it? When will the ordinances be over?" But they who retire unnecessarily before the congregation is dismissed not only manifest contempt for the institution, but prevent their own edification. No part of the ordinance is more solemn, more interesting than the conclusion, the benediction devoutly pronounced in the name of Jehovah. Who would not wait a few moments in the prospect of participating in the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost?"

The sanctification of the sabbath is not finished when the ordinances of the temple are ended: The evening of the sacred day should be employed in self-examination: All, after retiring to their habitation, should be enquiring how they were enabled to conduct in the church of the Living God; whether their hearts were united, and elevated with their voices in the duty of praise; whether in prayer they experienced some enlargement, wrestling with the redeeming Angel for his blessing on themselves and others; whether they received the message of life from the lips of the preacher with due affection, and solemnity, "desiring as new born babes the sincere milk

of the word, that they might grow thereby ;” and whether in receiving the sacramental bread and wine they enjoyed any affecting, transporting views of Jesus the Mediator as “wounded and bruised for them :” The christian should aim at concluding the Lord’s day with lively meditations upon the heavenly state, by looking with fervent desires for that sabbath which shall be succeeded by no night, and that service of his God which shall be liable to no interruption.

We may apply this subject—

1. In admiring the wisdom and condescension of the Great God in the institution of a sabbath; in appointing one day in seven for the purer, and more important exercises of religion; that he has rendered it our duty on that day, as it is our privilege, to retire from the pursuits of this passing world, and attend to the great concerns of the world to come. The rest of the sabbath, in whatever light we consider it, must be regarded as a most wise and merciful arrangement of Jehovah. It gives relief to the bodies of men by suspending them from the labors of life, and thus conduces to our health, and temporal comfort : This occasional interruption in our worldly pursuits is also a mean of disengaging us from earth, to which all are unduly attached : Man by uniting in the exercises of social worship is brought into habits of greater intimacy with man ; they are led to sympathise more tenderly in the distresses of each other, and thus

all the nobler feelings of the heart are cherished. But there is another light in which this ordinance appears incomparably more important. It is a principal mean of our fellowship with the Father of spirits, and thus preparing us for a happy transition from this world to the next. Are we not bound therefore by every consideration of duty, and gratitude to “call the the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honorable, and to honour him not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words on his holy day?”

2. We learn from this doctrine that to commit sanctifying the sabbath as the Lord God requires argues both ingratitude and impiety. In appointing a particular day for his exclusive service he has afforded a proof of his sovereignty over us, of his absolute, unquestionable right to a portion of our time, but in requiring only one day in seven he has made an appeal to our generosity. As our Creator, and Benefactor, he might have exacted the *fifth*, or *fourth*, or *third* part of our time, but in his great liberality he has appointed *six* days for the use of man, and demanded only the *seventh* for himself. Surely then to waste that day in idleness, to prostitute it in amusements, in carnal conversation, or worldly employments is both impious, and ungrateful : It manifests not merely a want of reverence for a Being infinitely great, but a want of love to a Being infinitely bounteous and merciful.

Respect for his authority, gratitude for his goodness, and a concern for our own interests all unite in exciting us to *remember the sabbath and keep it holy*. It is mentioned by the inspired author of the history of the creation "that the Lord blessed the seventh day," he designed it as a day in the sanctification of which blessings the most precious should be communicated to his children; a day in the conscientious observance of which his blessing should descend on their bodies and souls, on their temporal, and everlasting interests; And their experience has often borne testimony both to the faithfulness and bounty of a promising God. In their discharge of the duties of that sacred day they have often been favored with refreshing intimations of his love, and his blessing has been known to crown their pursuits through the ensuing week. "I have found by long experience," says that illustrious personage whom I noticed in a former part of this discourse, "I have found by long and sound experience that the due observance of that day, and its duties has been of singular comfort, and advantage to me; it hath ever had joined to it a blessing on the rest of my time, and the week thus begun hath been prosperous to me; and on the other hand when I have been negligent of the duties of that day the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful, and unhappy to my secular employments."*

* *Lord Chief Justice HALE's Contemplations.*

Let the christian behold in each return of the Sabbath an earnest of that perfect, uninterrupted, eternal rest which awaits him in his Father's house. The sabbath now enjoyed on earth must indeed be considered a precious ordinance ; it is an interesting memorial of our Redeemer's resurrection : it is designed to raise our affections towards him, and promote our fellowship with him, but the celestial sabbath may be considered as unspeakably more precious. *Here* we may cease from the labors and toils of this life, but our bodies are still encompassed with frailties, exposed to numerous afflictions, and are soon fatigued with the duties of religion either private, or public, but *there* the inhabitants shall be strangers to all infirmities, and afflictions ; they shall be possessed of undecaying vigor, and capable of unceasing exertion in the worship of their God : *Here* our best services whether in the closet, or family, or sanctuary, are attended with manifold imperfections ; we cannot pray with that fervor, we cannot praise with that elevation, we cannot meditate with that composure, we cannot preach with that earnestness, we cannot hear with that affection, we cannot receive the symbols of the body and blood of our dear Lord with that contrition or gratitude after which we would aspire, but *there* all these causes of complaint, and humiliation will be forever removed ; no cloud will cast its shade over the understanding, no chill will be felt in the heart, but

every thought will wing its flight towards the throne. and every soul in return will be "filled with all the fulness of God." Here our seasons of most intimate communion with our Father are embittered with some disagreeable, or mortifying reflections, with humiliation for the past, or anxiety about the future, but *there* the rest of the soul in Jehovah will be undisturbed by any thing within or without, and its felicity in the perfect vision of his glory will be uninterrupted. Ye children of the kingdom, is the sabbath on earth thus a representation of a better *rest*; or *keeping of a sabbath* in heaven; is the former designed as preparatory to the latter, be not slothful in the discharge of its duties: Aspire after a degree of that ardor which expands the bosoms of those who have gone before you "to that rest which remains for the people of God;" aim, as far as may be possible, in this state of imperfection, at spending each sabbath as you expect to spend it in heaven: As a mean of preparing you for being *in the spirit on the Lord's day*, be looking forward to it on the evening of Saturday; be careful to arrange every worldly business which might disturb, or distract on the morning of that day, and endeavor to stir up your souls for its duties by prayer and meditation. This was the example of our pious fore-fathers in Europe, and America, and the devout imitation of their example might tend to your edification, and comfort. See that, in repairing to the

house of God on that day, you be accompanied with your families: Every parent, or master, when seated in the sanctuary, should be ready to adopt the appeal of the Roman centurian, "now, therefore, are we all here present before God to hear all things which are commanded thee of God:" Or the resolution of a worthy servant* of Jesus who is now high in heaven, "my whole family is to be at court to-morrow; the king of heaven hath sent positive orders, and he will not excuse either man-servant or maid-servant." He who instituted the sabbath has given charge respecting *thy son and daughter, and man-servant and maid-servant*. Next to your own salvation be solicitous for the salvation of your families, and use this, and every other mean that is calculated to promote it. With some readers of these pages the night is probably far spent, and the morning of glory may soon be expected to dawn, a morning to be obscured by no cloud, nor succeeded by any night, be admonished therefore "to put off the works of darkness, and to put on the armor of light"

Until this day break, and these shadows flee away, turn, our beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.

* *The Rev. JAMES HERVEY.*

SERMON VI.



JEREMIAH X, 25.

*Pour out thy fury upon the—families that call
not on thy name.*

“SAY ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings; but woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” This admonition was uttered by the authority of that God who is equally true to his promises and threatnings, and will see to the accomplishment of both either sooner or later. To a superficial observer there generally appears “but one event to all,” yet the true followers of Jesus have consolations to which the children of this world are altogether strangers, and they know from experience that “in keeping his commandments there is great reward.” His most favorite friends are called occasionally to take up their cross, yet through divine strength secretly imparted they are enabled to carry it along with ease, and find in the end that it conduces both to their advantage, and comfort. All their outward afflictions and disappointments are converted into salutary corrections, and rendered subservient to their holiness here, and their happiness forever. They may be, and often are placed in circumstances of temporal poverty, yet *their little is better, more truly satisfying*

than the riches of many wicked. Their dispositions through the sanctifying influences of the spirit are brought down to a level with their lot, and “they learn both how to be abased and how to abound.” The most bitter ingredient in any cup is sweetened from the consideration that it is infused by the hand of a skilful, loving Father, and is really intended for their profit. But the situation of the unrighteous is a dreadful reverse. The curse of an uncovenanted God rests on their persons, their pursuits, and infuses wormwood and gall into all their enjoyments. “Their riches are corrupted:” their seeming happiness is but splendid misery, and all their apparent glory no more than varnished disgrace. “The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked,” or agreeably to the imprecation of the prophet, “he will pour his fury upon the—families that call not on his name.”

Calling upon the name of the Lord is an expression which frequently occurs in the sacred writings, and comprehends the various parts of religious worship. When mankind after the revelation of the promise in paradise first assembled for public and social homage they are represented as “beginning to call upon the name of the Lord:” And the apostle in addressing the Corinthian church salutes with believers in that city “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ.” The expression as it occurs in our text may be

considered in the same comprehensive light, and as therefore containing a severe admonition to those who habitually neglect the duty of family religion.

Some, as a mean of quieting any fears which might be excited by this denunciation, have remarked that the word translated *family* more properly signifies a kingdom, or nation, but this criticism although correct lessens neither the guilt nor danger of those who live without family devotion. If irreligion in a nation constitutes a heathenish nation and incurs the displeasure of God, irreligion in a family must no less constitute a heathenish family, and expose to the rod of his wrath. "For if heathens," as a judicious writer has noticed, "be described by this that they call not on God, then it must be a heathenish kingdom that has not public worship, and also a heathenish person that lives without secret worship, and also a heathenish family that does not maintain family worship."

This subject may be considered by exhibiting,

I. The duty and advantages of maintaining family religion, and

II. The judgments imprecated on those by whom it is habitually neglected—

1. Gratitude to that Being who forms us into a family capacity, and sustains in that capacity, reasonably obliges us to the performance of this duty. If individuals are obligated to love and serve their Creator, fami-

families being little societies are obligated by considerations equally powerful to render him social homage. Surely if that God who formed our persons deserves the tribute of our personal adoration, and praise, having formed us into families, and preserved in that relation he is not less entitled to the tribute of our family adoration, and praise. They who are joint sharers of the divine goodness supporting them in life, supplying their daily wants, and crowning them with many expressions of his love are called to unite in adoring the common Author of their benefits. Is it not reasonable that they who are accessory to the guilt of each other by failing in the discharge of relative duties, or in irritating the corruptions of each other should unite in asking at the mercy-seat the forgiveness of their transgressions? Should not that master whom Jehovah has accommodated with servants, or that parent whom he has honored with children discover a concern for their souls by praying with them and for them, and by reading in their presence the holy scriptures as an ordinance divinely appointed for their instruction and salvation? Some forms of religion were usually observed by families even among the unenlightened heathen. Impressed with a sense of their dependance on the Divine Being, and gratitude to Him as the Author of their enjoyments they had their *Lares* and *Penates*, household images which they

occasionally worshipped by sacrifice, and prayer.

But this duty which is suggested by gratitude for mercies enjoyed—

2. Receives additional weight from the positive, and repeated commands of the Living God. The exercises of prayer, and praise, and reading the scriptures are particularly enumerated, and recommended to our observation. “The house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi,” the professed disciples of Jesus, whether in private or public stations, are exhorted “to bless, or praise the Lord.” This injunction is evidently addressed to them not in an individual, but in a family or social capacity. “The house of Israel, the house of Aaron, the house of Levi,” which are here mentioned, cannot imply merely the individuals who constitute these different households, but all these individuals collectively considered, and really engaging in acts of social homage; neither can we conceive how the command is fulfilled unless the various members of the family unite in the exercise of thanksgiving and praise. We are enjoined also to “let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs: To teach the statutes of Jehovah diligently unto our children, and to talk of them when we are sitting in the house, and walking by the way; when we are lying down, and rising up.” Now, can we ima-

gine that these commands are performed unless families appropriate seasons for stated devotions ; unless they embrace opportunities for reading, or repeating the sacred oracles, and also join in singing a portion of a hymn or a psalm ? It is also the divine injunction that “ we pray without ceasing,” that is, that we have stated seasons for this exercise, and that such seasons be not unnecessarily neglected ; “ that we pray every where lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting.” Holy men of God, therefore, in all ages appear to have considered the observance of religion in their families as not only their duty, but also their delight, and privilege. Abraham is represented as “ teaching his children, and household to keep the ways of the Lord,” and we behold this patriarch in travelling from country to country erecting “ his altar, and calling upon the name of Jehovah.” It is also recorded of Job that “ he sent, and sanctified his children, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all :” *This*, it is added, *did Job continually*. How often, or at what particular periods of the day families should unite for devotional services is not explicitly mentioned in scripture : This the Lord God has left in some measure discretionary, as an appeal to our gratitude for the profusion of his mercies, or perhaps to accommodate himself to the varying circumstances of his children : Some of the saints, therefore, whose lives are

recorded in sacred history, have been employed more frequently, and others more rarely in this exercise. That the duty of family religion ought to be observed, at least morning and evening, is so obvious that arguments to prove it appear unnecessary. Among the Jews the *lamb for sacrifice* was regularly offered up “in the morning and evening.” These are periods peculiarly calculated to impress the contemplative mind, and inspire it with elevated conceptions of the majesty of God, and of his constant, superintending providence.*— Each appearance of the morning sun, and each approach of the evening shades furnishes a new, and interesting proof of the divine power and faithfulness. “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” These periods are pointed out by our own circumstances as peculiarly seasonable for offering the tribute of gratitude to our

* *The author of “Paradise Lost,” with his usual elegance, represents Adam and Eve as transported with joy at the first approach of evening, and raising their hymn of praise to their Great Creator—*

“Thus at their shady lodge both stood;
Both turned, and under open sky adored
The God that made both sky, air, earth and
heaven,
Which they beheld, the moon’s resplendant orb,
And starry pole: Thou also madest the night,
Maker omnipotent, and thou the day:
But thou hast promised from us two a race
To fill the earth, who shall with us extoll
Thy goodness infinite, both when we wake,
And when we seek, as now, thy gift of sleep.”

kind Benefactor. Are the members of a family preserved through the day amidst surrounding dangers, and prospered in their respective employments it is perfectly reasonable, when they meet in the evening, to unite their hearts in adoring him who protected by his power, and by his blessing enabled them to profit : Again, has no plague been permitted to visit their abodes in the night ; have they been kept undisturbed either by external violence, or internal accident during the unguarded hours of sleep the hymn of thanksgiving should be repeated to the Author of their salvation. It is God alone who preserves “ from the terror by night, and from the arrow that flieth by day ; from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.” Was there no divine declaration to authorise the observance, gratitude to a Benefactor so generous must suggest that “ it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto the Most High : To shew forth his loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.”

3. A concern for the moral improvement of the rising generation, and consequently a regard for the interests of civil society should constrain us to the conscientious discharge of this duty. This is a sentiment which will probably be questioned by some. They who make no pretensions to godliness either in its power or form, affect to represent religion as

no more than a solemn farce ; they assert that all the professed tendency of instruction from the word of God for improving the morals of mankind is without foundation, and that the children of those called pious parents are usually as rude and profligate as any other. But this assertion pursued to its full length would argue against the utility of all instruction, and reduce civilized society to a level with the savage. Surely there cannot be purer morality than is taught in the oracles of the living God. They admonish the individual “to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ;” to discharge every duty which he owes to himself, his generation, and his God ; they enjoin upon the citizen subordination to the magistrate, the child to cherish due affection for its parents, and obey them in every lawful command, and the servant to promote with fidelity the interests of his master : They admonish, on the other hand, the magistrate not to be a “terror to good works, but to the evil ; fathers not to provoke their children to wrath” by an intollerant behaviour, and “masters to forbear threatening knowing that they also have a master in heaven.” As no system of morality is purer in its nature, than that which the scriptures contain, none can offer to the human mind weightier considerations either of rewards to the virtuous, or of punishment to the impure. To deny therefore the tendency of religious instruction for promoting good

order in society is to deny all connection between moral causes and their effects. But they who profess to manifest this contempt of a christian education do not believe as they profess, or at least they do not act agreeably to their professions. Suppose that they were called to introduce a new member into their families, a servant, an apprentice, or a clerk in whose veracity they could confide, where would they expect most probably to find a person of suitable qualifications? Would they enquire first in the house of the dishonest, the profane, or intemperate as nurseries of industry and virtue? Would they not more readily go to those families where religious instruction was early infused, and where these instructions were enforced by a correspondent example? It must be acknowledged, indeed, that some who were early instructed in the principles of religion, and “brought up in the admonition of the Lord” have afterwards thrown off restraint, and become notoriously profligate. But such instances only evince the extreme depravity of the human heart, and the insufficiency of all means in themselves to restrain it. It is also acknowledged that some have become distinguished ornaments both of the church and society who in early life enjoyed neither the advantages of religious instruction or example. But such instances only display the absolute sovereignty of God, and that he can accomplish the purposes of his grace either with, or without external means

as he pleases. But in ordinary cases where will you find a child affectionate and dutiful to its parents, the scholar respectful and obedient to his teacher, the servant faithful in promoting the interests of his master, the peaceful neighbor, and the virtuous and industrious citizen? They are ordinarily such as enjoyed *the church in their Father's house*; who were "brought up from infancy in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." To question this truth is to question a maxim delivered by the wisest of men, and an inspired preacher of righteousness, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

4. A concern more especially for the spiritual and everlasting interests of our offspring should constrain to the conscientious observance of family religion. Without any doubt hundreds and thousands who are now high in heaven, who are shining as the sun in their Father's kingdom ascribe their salvation, under God the Holy Ghost, to the early attention of their parents, and the instructions which were imparted through their zeal. It is not uncommon to hear persons who are savingly called at the age of twenty or thirty years acknowledging the opportunities enjoyed in early life as the principal mean: Although they may have removed far from the view of their christian friends, and, forgetting their admonitions, continued long in the high road to destruction, yet by some personal affliction, or

awful occurrence in providence, they are afterwards brought to reflection : The prayers, the tears, the entreaties of their parents come fresh to their recollection, and prove the happy mean of their repentance and reformation. It was the opinion of an eminent divine,* who lived in a former age, that the work of conversion is promoted chiefly by means of parental instruction, and that the design of a public ministry is rather to mature the seeds formerly implanted in the family. He supported his opinion from that inspired declaration, “ he gave some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ” Whether this sentiment is strictly correct I shall not undertake to determine, yet unquestionably much has been done for the souls of men and for the church of the living God, by the influence of precept and example in private families. In the late and excellent Mr. Newton, we find an interesting example of the truth of this remark. “ My mother,” he mentions in his narrative,† “ was an experienced christian, and almost her whole employment was the care of my religious instruction : When I was not more than three years of age she stored my memory with many valuable pieces, portions of scripture, catechisms, and hymns. How far the best instructions may fall short of the heart will appear from my history, yet

* Mr. RICHARD BAXTER.

† Letter 2.

for the encouragement of parents to go on in doing their part faithfully to form their children's minds, I propose myself an instance. Though I sinned away all the advantages of these early impressions, yet they were long a restraint to me ; They returned again and again, and when the Lord at length opened my eyes I found great benefit from a recollection of them: My dear mother often commended me with prayers and tears to God, and I doubt not but I reap the fruits of these prayers to this hour." Another instance equally interesting of the happy effects of private instruction is furnished by the late learned and holy Mr. Brown of Haddington, " I reckon it," he remarked among his last interviews with his friends, " I reckon it one of my greatest privileges, and a mean of my saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ that I was born in a family where much attention was shown to my christian education, and particularly where the worship of God was maintained morning and evening." Indeed family religion, when performed in a devout, reverend manner, is peculiarly adapted for impressing the youthful mind, and leading it to the contemplation of its Creator and Preserver. When the parents unite to sing the praises of God, or read some portions of his word, or to pour out their heart in earnest supplication for his blessing the attention of the young is often arrested, and they are led to enquire, " what mean you by this service ?" When the parent or

master is employed in cordially deploring their transgressions as a family, their failures towards God, and each other; their abuse of mercies, and misimprovement of opportunities the young are frequently seized with a conviction of guilt, and driven by a holy necessity to Jesus as their only propitiation and hope.

I shall only add as another argument to enforce the discharge of this duty a concern for the prosperity of Zion in succeeding generations. Families may be considered as nurseries for the church, and when children attain to manhood, venture forward on the theatre of the world, and form connections for themselves they usually imitate such examples as were shown them in early life. If they grow up without pious instruction, or witnessing the worship of God statedly performed they too generally remain careless, and in their turn present to their offspring the same example of irreligion. Thus it is impossible to conceive the evil consequences which, in the course of a few generations, may arise from the neglect of religion in a single habitation. Like a river of death the farther it rolls along the deeper it sinks, and the wider it extends its ravages. Thousands, or tens of thousands may hereafter come forth, and charge their eternal ruin to the indolence, or impiety of a single forefather. And on the other hand, "we know not what a church may arise from one Godly family, what a harvest may spring

up from a single seed." Jehovah is indeed an infinite Sovereign, and can easily execute his purposes without the use of means; therefore "the son of the stranger ought not" in the language of despair to conclude "the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people:" Yet in the kingdom of grace no less than of providence he usually carries on his designs by secondary causes, and thus chooses from the families of the righteous those whom he consecrates pillars in his temple.—I will "be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee" is the current testimony of scripture; "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." It is not to reward the services of the fathers that he makes choice of their posterity, but because he has ordained through the instrumentality of outward means to sanctify, and prepare for glory the objects of his everlasting love.

From this view of our obligation "to call on the name of the Lord," and the advantages arising from the conscientious discharge of this duty, I proceed with pain to consider,

II. The judgments threatened against those who habitually neglect it. "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name."

I mentioned that it was with pain I proceed-

ed to a consideration of the miseries implied in this imprecation of the prophet because to a feeling, generous mind it is much more gratifying to allure, than to alarm ; to take a fellow sinner by the hand and encourage him in the paths of righteousness by exhibiting the reward of glory which is promised in the end, than to denounce the wrath of the Almighty against those who persevere in their iniquities. On this part of the subject I shall therefore detain you but a few moments.

The *fury* imprecated by the prophet may imply temporal judgments ; those miseries which are inflicted upon the ungodly in the present world. “ The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked ;” it rests on their bodies, their souls, their estates, or their reputation as divine sovereignty may direct. If they are kept in circumstances of outward poverty, this poverty is their reproach and their misery, or if their outward condition be prosperous, their very *prosperity destroys them*. “ If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, then all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field : Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store : Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep : Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and

cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out ! The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand unto, until thou be destroyed and until thou perish quickly, because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.” Although these judgments were denounced against the literal Israelites they are frequently executed upon those in all ages who live habitually in the neglect of Jehovah, and his ordinances. They may apparently prosper for a season in the prosecution of their secular callings, yet his curse afterwards overtakes them, blasts all their enterprises, and leaves them to disappointment and misery. How often does that wealth which the ungodly accumulate at one period of their lives vanish at another period, or prove their snare ? How frequently is that reputation which they acquire, when first they embark on the ocean of public life, suddenly withered and they afterwards sink into abject reproach ? These vicissitudes in the condition of the unrighteous often occur by means unexpected, and in a manner altogether unaccountable unless from the consideration that the divine curse secretly rests on their persons and pursuits. “ I have seen the wicked in great power,” says David, “ and spreading himself like a green bay-tree : yet he passed away and, lo, he was not, yea, I sought him but he could not be found ; ” all his pomp and power suddenly vanish, or as he expresses it in another verse, “ into smoke they consume away.”

But all the miseries inflicted upon the wicked in the present world are only the “beginning of their sorrows ;” having lived without God they are often permitted to die without repentance or hope, and are the subjects of torments inconceivably more exquisite in the world to come. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations,” and families “that forget God ;” that pour contempt on his authority, and manifest ingratitude for his goodness by not calling upon his name. This is the consummation of the curses denounced against them, and is fearful beyond the possibility of language to describe. “They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” And no doubt those who lived together in carnal security on earth ; whose careless example or vain conversation tended to rock each other more fast asleep in sin will become mutual tormentors in hell ; the view of each will be the source of more aggravated misery to the other. How will the recollection of opportunities once enjoyed, but now lost forever ; of occasions in which they might have exhorted one another, but neglected to perform this kindly office ; of instances in which they perhaps excited the corruptions, or confirmed the prejudices of each other against Jesus and his salvation, how must the recollection of these things swell the tide of that wrath which will overtake and overwhelm them in the regions of damnation ?

Very awful reflection, that persons formerly most intimate and dear will become proportionably the objects of mutual abhorrence and execration ? The child once the darling of its parents ; their joy in prosperity, their support in adversity will then become their unutterable curse by groaning out its anguish and ascribing all to their cruel neglect. The husband and the wife who had long lived in harmony and love ; who by the most tender expressions of mutual respect and affection, and attention to the advancement of their common interests had been the helpers of each other's joys, and partners of each other's woes ; whose endearing, accommodating tempers had heightened all the pleasures, and softened all the calamities of life, but had neglected to promote the immortal interests of each other, these will hereafter prove in the extreme mutual tormentors : Instead of rejoicing as formerly in the society of one another, each will startle back, and aim at plunging deeper into the flames from the view of the other. The rich man in hell is therefore represented as expostulating with Abraham to have his brethren forewarned of *his torments*, and thus prevented from coming to the *same place* : Their presence would bring to his recollection scenes through which they had passed together upon earth, their instrumentality in tempting each other, their fellowship in sensual gratifications, and thus the view of each would render more poignant the anguish of the other.

Now, brethren dearly beloved, you have heard the duty of family religion feebly illustrated and enforced by various considerations: It has been shewn, I trust, to the full satisfaction of all in this assembly to be both a reasonable and scriptural service; a service which, when performed in a devout, conscientious manner, may tend to your own edification, to the spiritual interests of your children, and to the prosperity of the church in ages to come: You have also been admonished of the judgments which are threatened against those who live in the wilful neglect of this duty, that the Lord God “will pour out his fury upon the families that call not upon his name.” If a single reader of these pages is chargeable with the omission of this duty, I cannot act a part more truly benevolent than by exhorting him to commence it. This entreaty is dictated by the purest friendship for their own peace, and the welfare of their posterity after them. Can you live without God, and prosper? Is it not his blessing upon your pursuits which maketh rich, and upon your enjoyments which renders them truly satisfying, and are you not commanded to ask his blessing that you may receive it? Do you believe that your children have souls to be saved or damned, and *will* you, *can* you be so untender to their nobler part as to neglect an ordinance which might prove a mean of their salvation? Will you refuse to read for them those scriptures by which millions “have

been begotten again to a lively hope," and which, when applied by the Spirit of power, are yet effectual *for converting the soul, for making wise the simple, for rejoicing the heart, and enlightening the eyes?* Or will you not offer a prayer for the remission of those sins which, if unpardoned, like a mountain of lead must sink them down to hell through eternity? If you continue in your present neglect of this duty, and your children finally perish, may they not plead in the hour of judgment the warning which I am now giving as a circumstance to aggravate your torment? May not your dear offspring tell the judge in that awful hour that although his servants had friendship enough to admonish you of your duty, you who were the instruments of their existence had not friendship to perform it? Can you recline with composure upon your beds in the evening when you reflect that *the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; that they are cursed in their lying down, and in their rising up?* Can you go abroad to your farms, or merchandise in the morning with a rational prospect of success when he declares, "cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out, the Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand unto, until thou be destroyed?"

If solicitude for the souls of your offspring does not move you to employ this mean of their instruction, do you feel no emotions of

gratitude to a benignant Creator, and Preserver ; to that munificent Being on whose earth you are walking, in whose air you breathe, by whose infinite mercy you are spared amidst daily provocations, and from whose overflowing bounty all your enjoyments are derived ? Methinks I hear an insulted Benefactor addressing you in the following manner, " O my people, what have I done unto you ? Wherein have I wearied you, testify against me : Are all the blessings which you enjoy, health of body, the exercise of reason, peace in your habitations, prosperity in your pursuits, the society of friends, are these and countless other blessings which you enjoy merely streams from me the fountain, and are they not worthy a small tribute of thanksgiving ? Are not the pardon of sin, adoption into my family, the sanctifying and consoling influences of my spirit, the joys and the glories of my kingdom which are offered through the mediation of my Son and your Saviour, are not these worthy of being *sought, sought daily* by supplication and prayer ? Surely if any thing can move the obdurate heart, and melt it into submission with the divine will it must be such expressions as these. Here the Great God throws off the majesty of the Sovereign, and stoops to reason, and expostulate with man. If therefore you have any reverence for the authority of God, any gratitude for his goodness, any concern for your own peace, or for the true interests of your

children after you, enter without delay upon the duty recommended. I say, call upon the Lord in your families *without delay*, because *now is the accepted time* ; TO DAY having heard his voice, and being warned of your duty *harden* not your hearts to neglect it. If you lie down this night without the sacrifice of prayer the *fury* imprecated by the holy prophet may *be poured out* upon you and yours before morning. Is there nothing fearful in seeing the sword of divine wrath unsheathed over your dwelling, or do you suppose that the living God is *slack* in the execution of his threatnings ? In order to spare you will he trample upon his oath, and suffer the glories of his throne to be sullied ? Is there a husband present who has hitherto neglected the ordinance of family religion let him this evening consult with the partner of his life ; let them cordially concur in erecting their altar and offer up their spiritual sacrifice to the God of their mercies. Let them reflect that perhaps the immortal destiny of their children is involved in their present decision, and then let each unite with the other in adopting the resolution, “ as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” Is there a widow present who either from indifference, or diffidence has lived without family prayer, let her this evening consulting her own comfort, and the prosperity of her habitation, awake from her security and “ seek the Lord God while he may be found.” Jehovah is indeed revealed

“as a Judge to the widow,” as ready to support and sympathise in her adverse, disconsolate situation, but his protection and consolations are to be expected only in the means of his own appointment. We limit not his sovereignty, yet his blessing is promised only to *those who seek it*. We *must ask*, we must *pray without ceasing* if we expect the smiles of his providence, or the treasures of his grace. Is there in this assembly a young man, or young woman who has grown up without the privileges of family devotion, let such this evening become *monitors* to their parents; let them respectfully remind them that the divine *fury* will be poured upon the families that do not seek after God, let them affectionately expostulate with them to arise from their sloth and avert these curses by calling upon his name. What knowest thou, O youth, but thou mayest prove the instrument of salvation to thy father’s house?

Excuse the importunity with which I have now pressed you to the immediate and conscientious performance of family religion. In pleading with you for the discharge of this duty I am pleading for the honour of my master, for the peace of your own souls, for the best interests of your beloved offspring, and for the prosperity of Zion when your destinies will be determined, and your bodies are mouldering in the dust. If all these arguments will not succeed in prevailing with you to *serve the Lord with your houses*, the consideration that I have

presented them to your view will secure me from being pronounced accessory to your damnation.

Let those whose houses have been consecrated by prayer and praise, be exhorted to persevere in these exercises. Many things will probably occur to try your faith, and patience. The clouds of adversity may often hang over your head, when the sun of prosperity is shining upon the paths of the ungodly : Your children may remain ignorant amidst all your diligence in their instruction : They may appear thoughtless and unmoved notwithstanding all your earnestness admonishing and exhorting them : Your prayers which are frequently and fervently offered up in their behalf may be seemingly unanswered : These appearances are indeed discouraging, but need by no means leave to despair of success in the end. “ For the vision is yet for an appointed time—though it tarry long wait for it; because it will surely come; it will not tarry.” A sovereign God often refuses to give an immediate answer to the prayers of his children, not because he is inattentive to their interests, but for the greater trial of their faith, and perseverance, and hope. Learn, therefore, to wait thy Father’s time in the discharge of every commanded duty, and wait in the humble confidence of being graciously heard. “ Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them, I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” The natural seed does not

spring up, and come to perfection on the day, or week, or even month in which it is deposited in the earth, neither does a tree ordinarily present its blossoms or fruits in the very year in which it is planted in the earth. A suitable period of time is necessary for the former to present its blade or ear, and the latter to yield its ripened fruits, and during that time the husbandman patiently waits. Why, then, should you be discouraged although the incorruptible seed remains month after month, or even year after year before it rises and ripens into a harvest? The prayers of the pious are often heard in behalf of their offspring, and their instructions rendered effectual for their conversion after parents themselves have been gathered to their fathers. I will take the liberty of relating two interesting facts for the confirmation of this remark. St. Augustine was the son of a singularly holy mother named Monica, but notwithstanding all her attention to his religious education he remained profligate even to a proverb: While this licentious youth on a certain occasion was walking along the street, one spectator remarked to another "what a mystery in providence it was that the child of such advantages should be so abandoned in his conduct," to which the other replied, "that he did not yet despair of him; that he thought it improbable or impossible that the child of so many instructions and prayers should finally perish." These hopes were happily realised in his fu-

ture conversion : He was not only reclaimed from this licentiousness of conduct, but afterwards shone as a distinguished luminary in the primitive church. The other instance of success crowning the exertions of parents after many discouraging appearances occurs in the history of Col. James Gardiner, which is familiar to many in this assembly. His mother, who was eminent for her piety, devoted her attention almost exclusively to his spiritual education ; she particularly aimed at diverting his attention from the military life to which he discovered an early and ardent attachment, but her efforts in this respect were unsuccessful. He obtained a commission in the army, and for many years was as distinguished for the profligacy of his conduct, as for the eminence of his rank : But in this instance the old Dutch proverb was literally realized, “ that the prayers of the righteous will not rot in the clouds ” The petitions which had been devoutly offered up in his behalf descended in showers of blessings upon his head ; the influence of the holy principles early infused into his mind happily revived, he became an eminent example of holiness on earth, and probably he is now shining in heaven as a star of superior lustre. The relation of these facts, I hope, will not be pronounced altogether foreign to the subject as they tend to shew the connection between the means and the end ; they may animate parents to persevere even “ against hope ” in

the instruction of their offspring, and in fervent supplication both *for* them, and *with* them.

May the Lord God give you “one heart, and one way to fear him forever, for the good of you and of your children after you : May your houses henceforth become little sanctuaries consecrated by prayer and praise, and your hearts living temples for the residence of the Holy One of Israel. By constant communications from the ever-living Jesus, may you be ripening for that world where you shall worship not with the small circle of your own families, but with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ; where you shall serve your God not *occasionally*, not at distant intervals as in the present state, but day and night forever and ever.—
AMEN.

SERMON VII.

JOSHUA XXIV, 15.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

I HAVE frequently endeavored, according to the ability which the Lord hath given, to enforce the duty of family religion ; of regularly worshiping God morning and evening ; of instructing your household, whe-

ther children or servants, in the principles of religion; and thus giving diligence “to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Yet I feel no inclination to apologise for dwelling so frequently on this duty, and again recommending it to your particular attention. Influenced in some measure by the same spirit, I would, on this occasion, venture humbly to appropriate the same language with the apostle, “to speak or write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” The uniform, upright discharge of these private duties may be pronounced of the utmost importance to yourselves, your families, and to the church of the living God both in the present and future generations. If we are strangers to the exercises of religion in our closets and with our household we can expect little delight or enlargement in the sanctuary; little comfort in speaking, or edification in hearing the message of life and salvation. It is no breach of charity to maintain that he who was never constrained to *serve the Lord* after some form in *private*, was never constrained from proper motives to *serve him in public*.

Being led, I humbly trust, by the spirit of God to enforce the ordinance of family religion, I have chosen this resolution of Joshua as the subject from various considerations.—He was a man eminent in rank, the prince and leader of a nation *numerous as the stars of heaven*. By this we are instructed that the

service of Jehovah is no detracting from earthly greatness ; it really reflects splendor and glory on the highest stations among men. Again, Joshua was placed in a situation not only eminent, but difficult and embarrassing ; he was entrusted with the management of nearly a million of people ; and consequently perplexed with innumerable cares of a public, national concern ; hearing their complaints, redressing their grievances, stilling their tumults and marching before them as a military head to encounter their adversaries ; yet notwithstanding this pressure of public employment he solemnly resolves to *serve the Lord*. This circumstance evidently shews that where the person is properly impressed with his duty to God neither the hurry of worldly occupations nor the multitude of worldly concerns will discourage or divert him from discharging that duty. Where there is a real inclination in the heart to perform the divine will, opportunities are rarely wanting. The living fountain may as readily cease to issue forth its refreshing waters, or the flourishing branch to bud and blossom in its season, as the lively christian to express his gratitude and love to the Father of mercies. Abraham in travelling from country to country erected his altar and *called upon the Lord his God*. Job who had men-servants, and maid-servants, and oxen, and sheep without number, *offered up sacrifices for his sons continually* : David exalted to the throne of Israel and Joshua at the head of

their armies found leisure to *serve the Lord with their families* : When, therefore, this ordinance is neglected, its neglect must proceed not from the want of time, but the want of inclination. The example of Joshua for enforcing family devotion is instructive from another consideration equally important. He was a magistrate and therefore obliged to perform different duties of a civil nature : He was, in a certain sense, a minister, and called publicly to officiate in spiritual exercises ; yet he acknowledges his obligation to worship alone and with his family. This consideration may teach us that the faithful discharge of those duties which are incumbent upon us as magistrates or ministers will by no means justify our neglect of those duties which are binding upon us as men. In watching over the souls of others, our own souls must not be neglected ; in attempting as civil rulers to promote good order in society, or as spiritual rulers to advance the edification of the church we must not overlook the edification of ourselves and our families.

The present season of the year is peculiarly adapted for forming and entering upon resolutions of this nature. We have now completed one period of our lives and are introduced to another ; we are almost necessarily reminded of the passing nature of time, reflecting that another year is gone, *never, never* to return ; we are naturally admonished to prepare for death and judgment to which we

are constantly advancing, considering that the period is hastening when a separation will be made between us and our family connections, and we must answer to an impartial God for the discharge of each relative duty. A *New-Year's day* is therefore a proper occasion for those who have utterly neglected private religion to begin this most *reasonable service* : It is a suitable time for those who have occasionally attended to this ordinance to resolve greater diligence and fidelity ; for all, through a humble confidence on divine strength, to appropriate the resolution contained in our text, " As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

As a mean of encouraging and assisting you in this duty, permit me

1st. To make some general observations, and

2d. To point out those various exercises in which we should aim at *serving the Lord*.

1st. It may be remarked that this and every other resolution should be formed with a deep conviction of our own insufficiency and with an entire reliance on promised grace for our support. A principal reason why we so frequently come short of obvious duty, why we so mournfully fail in fulfilling our resolutions to the dishonor of God and our own mortification is that we depend so much on *strength* in ourselves, and so little on *strength* in the promise. The natural air is not more necessary for supporting the natural body,

for strengthening it in performing the common offices of life, than the influence of divine grace, the breathings of Jehovah the Spirit, to enliven and invigorate the soul in the discharge of every incumbent duty. *Abide in me, and I in you*, is the call of our divinely gracious Lord, of him who knows perfectly the insufficiency of man and the purity and spirituality of his own law, “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing.” A righteous God frequently permits his people to fall when there is the least appearance or apprehension, merely to check a presumptuous confidence and lead to a more uniform and entire reliance upon himself for necessary support.

2. The resolution expressed in the text, should be embraced by both parties; by the wife no less than her husband. She ought not barely to concur, not barely to consent, but actually use her influence that family religion be faithfully maintained; that they and their “house might serve the Lord.” The woman unites her exertions with the man in making provision for their bodies; she rises early, sits up late, fulfils the duties of her station in securing the necessaries of the present life; all this is becoming, but all this is not sufficient on her part. She ought to aim at becoming an help meet not merely in promoting their

temporal, but their spiritual interests : she ought to unite her endeavors with her husband not only in providing things needful for the body, but in advancing the edification of the immortal soul. This observation however familiar, there is reason to apprehend, is too generally neglected. In the absence of the husband the woman becomes the head of the family in arranging their outward affairs ; she feels bound to oversee their property that it be not squandered ; in directing the children and servants that they attend diligently to their respective employments ; but does she officiate as *head* in religious concerns ? Is she diligent in teaching, admonishing, and exhorting them ; is she faithful in urging them to secret devotion ; is she conscientious in offering up, morning and evening, the sacrifice of prayer before them ? More is incumbent on the woman in this respect, more may be effected by her in promoting the spiritual order of the family than is perhaps generally apprehended. She has opportunity of consulting with her husband on the most seasonable time for performing spiritual exercises ; she may remind him of duties when he appears disposed to omit them, or gently admonish him when they are altogether neglected. It is not without some important design that the Holy Ghost so explicitly represents Zacharias and Elizabeth “ as both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” The a-

postle sends the salutation of Aquila and Priscilla with *the church in their house*, plainly intimating that they mutually concurred and co-operated in maintaining the various exercises of religion. Thus, those whom the God of providence connects in the marriage relation and ordains over a particular household should become *workers together*, not only with God but with each other, in promoting the spiritual order and edification of that household ; living together as fellow heirs of the same grace, as fellow expectants of the same glory ; encouraging and exhorting each other in attending the means of salvation.

3. The heads of families should use their influence that every member of their household walk regularly and uniformly in the ordinances of God. The authority of prudent parents and masters is exerted to keep each member in his station ; they sharply reprove any instance of disrespect which one may express towards another ; and they notice whether each member performs such services as are appointed him ; much more should they examine whether each individual discharges his duty to Jehovah his Creator and Redeemer. This attention is evidently implied in the resolution of Joshua, “ as for me and my house,” all who reside under my roof, “ we will serve the Lord :” He not only expresses his resolution to aim at performing his duty as an individual, but to use his influence by admonition and example over all that were

subject to his authority. The command which relates to the sanctification of the sabbath, and consequently to all the other ordinances of God, extends "to son and daughter, to man-servant and maid-servant that is within our gate." How instructive in this respect, and how honorable is the testimony borne by the living God to Abraham the father of the faithful, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

Here I cannot help remarking, that parents and masters should be peculiarly cautious in the introduction of servants into their families; none, if possible, should be brought in as ordinary members but such as apparently have the fear of God, and are willing to unite in offering that worship which he requires. One impure, scandalous person defaces the beauty and mars the edification of a whole society ; one disorderly, refractory soldier tarnishes the glory and enfeebles the strength of a regiment; one rotten sheep, if I may employ the very plain comparison, spreads disease and death through the flock ; thus one irregular, irreligious member may destroy the spiritual order and beauty of a house. Such persons are a temptation even to the head of a family. Can he offer his daily devotions to God with such composure and confidence ; can he enjoy so

much freedom in confessing their family offences ; in rendering thanks for their family blessings, or in asking the supply of their family wants, while he knows that such a person is secretly mocking at the exercise as the effect either of priestcraft or tradition ? It is impossible. The thought necessarily throws a chill over his spirits, and prevents that enlargement and comfort in his devotions which might otherwise be enjoyed. But persons of profligate principles and practices are peculiarly ensnaring to the young. *Evil communication corrupteth good manners.* The deadly contagion rapidly and imperceptably spreads. So desperate is the wickedness of the human heart, such, especially, is the vanity and folly of youth, so easily are they drawn aside from the paths of religion and virtue, that the example of one licentious member may defeat the endeavors both of parents and masters. How exemplary, therefore, was the resolution of the royal David ? “ I will walk within my house with a perfect heart : Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me ; he that walketh in a perfect way he shall serve me ; he that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house ; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.”

4th. It may be observed that perseverance in the performance of each religious duty is indispensibly requisite. Persons when first formed into a family capacity, like the young christian, are usually zealous in the service of

Jehovah ; their hearts are sensibly moved by his goodness in erecting the solitary into a household, and they form exalted resolutions as to their spiritual conduct, but they afterwards decline, become untender in their christian walk, more irregular in their behaviour towards God until the form of religion no less than its power is utterly lost. Others there are who gradually become involved in the pursuits of the world, and owing to its incessant hurry find little leisure for the service of the Lord : “ The cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires of other things choak ” each serious impression, each holy resolution, until those blossoms which once opened fair and promised abundant fruit wither and fall entirely off. Others, again, yield up to a spirit of despondency ; they see no evidence of their prayers being answered, of their advices or instructions being effectual and they become discouraged ; they are disposed to ask, “ what is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him ? Verily we have cleansed our hearts in vain and washed our hands in innocence.” Owing to these and other considerations many families which begin in the *spirit end in the flesh* ; all their first resolutions of serving the Lord are “ as the morning cloud and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor and the smoke out of the chimney ! ” Such apostacy in families

as well as in individuals is highly dishonoring to God, and forfeits that reward of grace which his faithful followers may expect. "To them only who by a patient continuing in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life" is promised. Instructive and awful was the admonition uttered by our Saviour to the church of Sardis, "be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die: Remember how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast and repent." How frequently are we exhorted not only to a holy fervor, but an unshaken stedfastness, and perseverance in our christian profession. "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life: We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints: Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Having made these general observations,
We proceed,

2d. To point out those various duties in which we should aim "at serving the Lord."

1. Each individual should serve him by the regular and conscientious observance of secret devotion. This duty lies at the foundation of all other duties, and without some spi-

rit and earnestness in it, little life or enlargement need be expected in any other ordinance of christianity. Prayer in secret, apart by ourselves, is recommended both by the authority and example of our gracious Lord. "Thou, when thou prayest," it is worthy of notice that the Redeemer does not positively enjoin the exercise, he considers it as already known, as suggested by the light of nature; reason dictates that a Father should be honored and a Master feared; that mercies received by us as individuals through the day should thankfully be acknowledged by us in the evening, and that mercies received thro' the night ought gratefully to be acknowledged in the morning, "thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." This duty enjoined upon others, our Lord Jesus frequently enforced by his own example. One evangelist relates that, "when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come he was there alone." Another evangelist mentions, "and in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place and prayed."

2. We should serve the Lord by the uniform discharge of family worship in its various parts. This is evidently implied in the resolution of Joshua, *as for me and my house :*

In secret prayer we worship God as individuals, but in family prayer we unite in a social capacity, as a house or family *to serve the Lord*. Having pointed out the propriety and importance of this exercise on a former occasion, it is not my design to enlarge on it at present. Suffice it to remark that it is perfectly reasonable that those who are daily receiving mercies should unite in acknowledging those mercies ; that those who are chargeable with daily transgressions should join in confessing these transgressions and imploring forgiveness through the Redeemer's sacrifice ; that those who have common wants to be supplied should unite in asking the supply of these wants. The duty of family devotion is obviously pointed out by the daily sacrifices offered up among the Jews : " And this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar ; two lambs of the first year day by day continually ; the one lamb thou shalt offer at even. This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generation." This exercise is recommended to our observance by the example of the righteous in different periods of the world and different dispensations of the church ; by the example of Abraham, of Job, of David, of Aquila, and many others. We learn, therefore, from the dictates of reason, from the positive appointment of the sacrifice morning and evening, from the conduct of the faithful in different countries and ages, " that it is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to

sing praises to thy name, O Most High, to shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning and thy faithfulness every night."

3d. We should serve the Lord by duly and devoutly attending the ordinances of his house. As it is our duty to serve Jehovah in secret and with our families, we are required more publicly to profess our attachment to his cause, and our subjection to his authority, by repairing to the courts of his worship; there we should appear with the ransomed of the Lord and unite our hearts and voices, offering the tribute of praise for redeeming love; addressing the throne of grace by earnest supplication and hearing from his ambassadors the message of peace and salvation. We are therefore admonished, "not to forget the assembling of ourselves together; to enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise." As the command of God renders our attention to the ordinances of his house an incumbent duty, his children have uniformly considered it as their most exalted privilege. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts," is the ardent exclamation of one: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee: For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." The sanctuary below he appears to consider as an emblem of the sanctuary

above ; his entering the courts of the Lord's house as an earnest of being admitted hereafter into the palace of the King to go no more out ; while he unites in celebrating the praises of God, his soul is apparently transported to that hour when, mingling with ransomed immortals of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, he shall shout in eternal ardor, "salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb : " But parents and masters are not to rest satisfied with their personal attendance at the house of prayer ; they ought upon all occasions, if possible, to be accompanied with their families. Compassion to the souls of those who are under our inspection, requires that they be brought to Zion's mount, where the Lord promises to "command the blessing, even life for evermore." There is something truly amiable, truly dignified, when the head of a family, accompanied with his household, comes forth on the Sabbath morning and takes his seat in the sanctuary of God ; when, after serving Jehovah at home, he presents himself in the temple, saying, "here am I and the children and the servants whom the Lord hath given me ; we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." By such behaviour he testifies that he considers the service of God as his delight, his duty and glory ; that he resolves to recommend it not only by his own example, but by the example of that household of which the Holy Ghost *hath made him overseer.*

4th. We ought to serve the Lord by occasionally separating a portion of our time for the exercises of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. The duties already mentioned are properly stated, and should be discharged *uniformly*, as opportunity offers; the ordinance of fasting is rather occasional, and is dictated by singular, extraordinary occurrences in providence.—This exercise has frequently been observed by the righteous with visible and eminent success; evidences of the Lord's wrath have been removed and the light of his countenance restored. While Esther the queen, and Daniel the prophet, humbled themselves before him, in that ordinance, their prayers were speedily answered, and threatened calamities were averted. The season for fasting and humiliation, as I already mentioned, is pointed out by peculiar and extraordinary appearances of divine providence. Does the hand of the Almighty lie heavy upon our habitation in some severe affliction; have we been visited by any remarkable adversity; do the movements of providence appear peculiarly dark, so that we cannot find our path; or is there some singular blessing which we desire to obtain; these are proper seasons for families to approach the Lord in the solemnities of fasting and humiliation; to enquire by special prayer what is the ground of his controversy, imploring him to discover to us our *secret faults* which are the cause of his indignation, and “in deserved wrath to re-

member mercy. Therefore, also, now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

It is equally proper, as circumstances require, to separate days for the exercises of thanksgiving and praise. If our condition is peculiarly prosperous; if our families enjoy health when disease and death wave their banner around; if providence has visibly interposed and protected in the hour of peril, or if we are eminently visited of the Lord with his covenant consolations, it becomes us, as a family, to unite in presenting the sacrifice of adoration and thanksgiving. Such was the exercise of Moses after his escape from the Egyptians, and of David, the king, when delivered from the rage of a persecuting Saul. "Therefore," he resolves, "will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name."

1. We learn from this doctrine, that when the fear and love of Jehovah reign in the heart, they constrain to cheerful obedience in the life and conversation. In vain do we talk about our religious feelings or frames: about our love to God or zeal for his glory, unless we aim at keeping his commandments. There may be "a form of Godliness without the

power," but the power cannot possibly exist without the form. A christian, without the worship of his God in one mode or another, is like a sun without light, a cloud without rain, a fountain without water, or a living body without motion or breath. When, "with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, with the tongue confession will be made unto salvation." Does a subject reverence and obey his sovereign; does a son honor his father, or a servant his master, much more will the child of adoption adore and obey his Father in heaven. This submission to his authority, this attention to his ordinances is solemnly enjoined by our redeeming Lord on all his professed followers. "If ye love me keep my commandments." This he pronounces the criterion by which we may discriminate the true from the false professor of his name; "If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed." Whenever the incorruptible seed is savingly sown in the heart it naturally and necessarily springs up and presents the fruits of holiness in the life. Were Zacharias and Elizabeth "both righteous before God," this was manifested by walking "in all his commandments and ordinances:" Was Cornelius "a devout man," this was expressed by "fearing God with all his house," by giving "much alms to the people, and praying to God always." Amidst the various employments of the day, the christian considers his duty to his heavenly Father

as the most reasonable and important : amidst all his enjoyments, he regards the divine fellowship in ordinances as the most refined and exalted ; amidst the anxieties and perplexities of life, this is his consolation that “ in every thing by prayer and supplication he can make his requests known unto God.”

2. We learn from this doctrine that when Parents and Masters are conscientious in serving the Lord, they will recommend his service to all under their inspection ; if their own souls are deeply impressed with their obligations to God, they will aim at impressing the souls of their children and servants. It is a mistaken opinion that the rising generation should be left altogether to their own choice in matters of religion. True it is, the conscience ought not to be controlled ; the rational mind can be influenced only by rational arguments ; but it is equally true, that if parents consider the service of Jehovah their duty, they should admonish their children to serve him ; if they experience *the ways* of spiritual wisdom “ to be ways of pleasantness and her paths peace,” affection to their offspring obliges them to recommend *these ways*. How earnestly, therefore, did the holy David expostulate with Solomon his son ; “ know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind ; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.” Parents are not indifferent with their children as to the affairs of

the present life ; they recommend industry and temperance as conducing equally to their temporal interest and happiness ; they represent virtue and integrity as the ornament of their nature ; as the path to respectability and usefulness in society ; if mere arguments are not sufficient, they employ the correcting rod as a mean of reclaiming them from habits of wantonness and vice. Will they interfere by instruction, by advice, by correction in things temporal, and leave them to their own choice in matters infinitely more important ? Will they teach and admonish and expostulate in order to regulate their conduct as men, and abandon them to the vanity and folly of their own minds in the weightier interests of their souls and eternity ? Besides, parental instruction and exhortation, which are founded in reason, are particularly enjoined in divine revelation : “ Train up a child in the way he should go : Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And these words which I command thee shall be in thine heart ; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in the house and when thou walkest by the way ; when thou liest down and when thou risest up. ”

I cannot conclude this discourse without again recommending to your imitation this resolution of Joshua. My conscience bears me witness that I am pained at the thought of cea-

sing to expostulate until I have prevailed with you to comply. Shall a duty in which the glory of God, the peace of your own souls, the salvation of your household, I may add, the salvation of thousands yet to descend from your loins, shall a duty of this importance remain neglected? Need I repeat that it is a service perfectly *reasonable*; that it is a tribute justly due to Him who created you at first, and who daily protects and supports you; who, in his unsearchable wisdom, has devised a plan for your salvation, and who, in his abundant mercy, offers you all the blessings of grace and glory? Is HE a Being infinitely glorious in himself, and not worthy of your esteem and adoration? Is HE the Author of innumerable benefits to you, and not entitled to your affection and praise?

Is there a parent or master present that has lived in the habitual neglect of family religion, I would on this *New-Year's morning* entreat them with all affection to begin the exercise. "Halt no longer between two opinions, but choose you this day whom you will serve: If the Lord be God," if HE is the author of your existence and the only portion of your immortal spirits, *follow him*, choose him as your God and the God of your children.

Is there a parent or master, who has attended this duty *formally or remissly*, I would on this New Year's morning entreat them, with all affection, to aim at the more upright, uniform discharge of it. Let not the Living God

be put off with “ the torn or the lame, or the sick for an offering,” but consecrate to him the *male of your flock*, the flower of your time.

Should this feeble attempt to enforce an important duty be instrumental in introducing the worship of Jehovah into one house where it was formerly neglected, or of bringing one family to the more conscientious observance of it, how would my soul rejoice! how cheerfully could I hail *the church in that house with a happy New-Year*; how cordially could I bless the Lord for establishing the word of his servant and making it, however weak and worthless, effectual to his own glory and the salvation of men: I should consider it a mutual pledge of shortly meeting and mingling with Patriarchs and Apostles and reformers, and all that honored throng *who served the Lord* on earth, and behold him eternally in heaven.

Now, to the FATHER and the SON and the HOLY GHOST, THREE electing, redeeming, sanctifying PERSONS in ONE JEHOVAH, let all the ransomed from among men unite with unsinners angels in offering equal thanksgiving and praise, now and everlastingly. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

PROVERBS XXII. 9.

Train up a child in the way he should go.

THE Hebrew word which is here translated *train up* has a variety of significations, and is therefore translated differently in different places. Sometimes it signifies to *dedicate* or *consecrate* from common to sacred uses, as the Jews dedicated by prayer and thanksgiving their private houses, and as Solomon solemnly consecrated the temple to the Living God. Sometimes it signifies to *train*, or *discipline* as the soldier is taught the science of war, and reduced to habits of order and obedience to his superiors. Abraham is therefore represented as arming his *trained* servants, those whom he had instructed and disciplined in the art of war. There is another translation given to this word which is perfectly agreeable to the original, and adds a peculiar emphasis to the expression. “Train up a child at the mouth, or entrance, or beginning of his way.” This phrase in the boldness of eastern style expresses that early concern which parents should manifest for the spiritual interests of their offspring : They ought to see that their first step be taken “in the narrow way which leads to everlasting life ;” that they should be early directed to the choice of religion as their honor, and interest,

and happiness. The sooner that religious instruction is poured into their opening powers it is usually the more successful, because the first impressions are the most deep, and lasting.

In order to assist parents in the discharge of a duty equally pleasing and important; a duty which they owe to God who has honored them with an offspring, to the church which these children under their admonition may hereafter adorn, and to their children themselves I will attempt

I. To illustrate the import of the injunction, and

II. Point out the obligation under which parents are to perform the duty recommended.

1. Parents ought to train up their offspring by an early surrender of them to Jehovah in the ordinance of baptism. The attention of the pious Jews was early directed to the dedication of their children in the rite of circumcision. Soon after the birth of Samuel we hear Hannah devoutly resolving, "I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever; As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." Zachariah and Elizabeth the parents of John, and Mary the mother of our Lord on the eighth day presented their children to the Living God in that ordinance. And although under the christian dispensation there is no day particularly specified on which our offspring should be offered up in baptism, yet unquestionably the first opportunity should be embraced. Bap-

tism is as positively enjoined upon us, as circumcision was upon the Jews ; the promise is no less explicit to us and to our children *now*, than it was to them and their children *formerly*, and as the light is clearer under the present than under the former dispensation the neglect of our duty in this respect is more offensive to God and more dangerous to the souls of our children. There is no weight in the objection frequently urged “ that the baptism of infants is not expressly commanded in the New-Testament scriptures.” It is enough to mention that circumsision, the initiating seal of the covenant, was early improved for their seed by the believing Jews, and it therefore follows by obvious, undeniable inference that baptism, the initiating seal of the same covenant, should be early improved for their seed by believing Gentiles. There is no positive command for sanctifying, as the christian sabbath, the first day of the week, yet all christians unite in the observation of that day, because it was uniformly kept holy by our Saviour and his apostles, and is not the baptism of infants enforced by the same high authority ? Were not “ Lydia and her household, the Jailor and his household ” baptized by those very apostles who received their commission from our Lord immediately before his ascension ? Would to God that the mournful neglect of this duty on the part of parents arose merely from scruples of conscience about the propriety of the institution :

There is reason to apprehend that it arises rather from a spirit of deepstupidity and slumber which has rested upon the churches : There are many parents who discover almost no concern for their own souls, therefore it is not to be expected that they can either feel or manifest much concern about the souls of their offspring.

2. We ought to train up our children by early teaching them the great principles of religion. Gradually as the powers of the mind begin to unfold, and the child appears capable of reflection it should be taught in the most plain, impressive manner the leading doctrines of salvation. The human mind is essentially active, and must be employed. It is not more natural for the body to breathe than for the soul to reflect, and unless diligence is exercised to give to the thoughts of children a proper direction they are in danger of becoming wanton, vicious, and a prey to every temptation. Parents should therefore aim at impressing upon their minds some conceptions of the Living God ; endeavoring to inform them that he is a Being infinitely great, that he is always present with them, and therefore acquainted with their thoughts, and words, and actions ; they should also teach them the near relation in which the Great God stands to them as their Creator by whom their bodies and minds were formed, and from whom were derived all those powers of both by which man is so much exalted above the beasts

of the field : Children should also be early made acquainted with their fallen condition by nature that they are “conceived in sin,” born under the curse, and therefore “children of wrath :” In attempting to make them acquainted with their disease by transgression, parents ought also to exhibit the infinite remedy which grace has provided ; that the Father “sent his own Son to be the Saviour of the world ;” that the Eternal Son in order to become a suitable Saviour took to himself our nature, sustained that curse to which we were exposed, and hath actually “made peace by the blood of his cross ;” that he is now “able to save to the uttermost” any of the human family who apply that redemption which is in his blood, and that he particularly invites “little children” to come to him for salvation. Youth ought thus to be taught in the most obvious, familiar manner the first principles of our holy religion, and probably this instruction cannot be given with a greater probability of success than by question and answer. This mode of imparting divine truth to the ignorant was early introduced into the church, and perhaps has been a principal mean of propagating the true doctrine from age to age. The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to “hold fast that form of sound words which he had heard,” and he thanks God in behalf of the Romans that “they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which they had received,” and he also

speaks of being, “nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine.” It is therefore evident that the attention of parents ought very early to be directed to the spiritual instruction of their offspring. It is mentioned as the privilege of Timothy, and also to the honour of “his mother and grand-mother” that from *a child he knew the holy scriptures*, and Solomon also relates to the honor of his Father, and as a pattern for the imitation of parents in succeeding ages, “he taught me also, and said unto me, wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding: Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.”

3. This duty ought to be discharged by the administration of suitable, and seasonable correction. The *rod* is as really an ordinance of God as prayer, or instruction, or any other institution of religion, and when applied in a prudent, rational manner is perhaps not less conducive to the true interests of youth. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” Again, “withhold not correction from the child—thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell:” This same inspired teacher mentions in another chapter, “the rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” It is worthy of observation that in this, and other

places correction and instruction are recommended together, and if we would employ the rod with success it should upon all occasions be connected with becoming admonition. The fault committed by the child should be deliberately presented to its view with its various aggravations ; the offender should be solemnly warned that every “ sin is a transgression of the divine law,” and exposes the transgressor to the wrath of God both in this world and in the next ; the child ought also to be admonished that sin if persisted in will bring it to reproach among men, while it exposes to the wrath of an infinite God. The mind should thus be prepared by suitable instruction and warning before the rod is applied. A very useful commentator remarks upon this passage, “ if reproof answers the end without the rod, it is well ; but the rod should never be used without reproof :” And a late, celebrated writer* mentions that “ some pious parents have made it an invariable rule, as soon as their children could read, never to correct them, until they had read over all the passages of scripture which command it, and generally accompanied it with prayer to God for his blessing.”

I already mentioned that correction was an ordinance divinely appointed for reclaiming the young offender ; it ought therefore like all other divine institutions to be employed in obedience to the command of God, and with a

* WITHERSPOON'S *Letters on Education*.

humble dependence on his blessing for its efficacy: But perhaps there is scarcely any part of their conduct in which parents so generally and mournfully err as in the correction of their children: The rod is rarely taken up by them except when they are under the influence of angry passions; they then chastise their children rather as merely animal than rational beings who are to be reclaimed by rational methods; the child under such treatment is induced to believe that the chastisement was administered rather to gratify a vindictive spirit than to promote its temporal or spiritual interests, and the consequences are often deplorable in the extreme. The dispositions of the young are soured, their affections become alienated from their parents, and instead of being recovered to the paths of virtue, and religion they are often driven to greater enormities in vice and impiety. I have no doubt but many promising children are lost; completely sacrificed to themselves, to their connections, to the church, to society, and perhaps for eternity by the rash, untender, injudicious conduct of parents in their government: But on the other hand, the rod when seasonably applied; when accompanied with suitable advice convincing the child that it is inflicted from a sense of duty, and with a concern for its real interests; more especially when it is accompanied with prayer to Him who can crown it with efficacy, the rod thus administered is a happy mean for humbling

the pride of the heart, for subduing the stubborn will, for producing filial affection, and training up the young for usefulness on earth, and happiness in heaven. Very probably many when advanced in life, and who are rendered eminent ornaments of the church can trace back their recovery from the paths of vice, perhaps their first serious impressions to the rod applied by the hand of a prudent parent.

4. This duty of *training* up children is to be discharged by adding suitable example to instruction and correction. This is a principle in which mankind are so universally agreed that it might be considered as unnecessary to enlarge upon it. The old adage "that example teaches better than precept" is peculiarly true in relation to children who are naturally prone to imitate, and particularly to imitate their parents with whom they are generally conversing, and for whom they usually entertain a more than ordinary respect. Indeed, all parental instruction unless enforced by becoming example will expose not only the truths taught, but parents themselves to the scorn of their offspring. How must the person, and the admonitions of a father sink in the estimation of his children if they are obliged occasionally to take care of him under the influence of intoxication, or if they know that he violates the marriage covenant by acts of uncleanness? In vain does he caution them against swearing if he himself is profane ; or

exhort them to love their neighbors if he evinces his own enmity against them by injuring their property, or defaming their character when opportunity offers : In vain does he admonish them to “remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy” if he wantonly wastes that day in idleness, or loose, carnal conversation : Can he rationally expect by all his instructions to infuse into their minds habits of reverence for the ordinances of religion if he neglects the worship of the sanctuary, or shortens or omits the devotions of the family for some trifling inconvenience ? Can he successfully impress their souls with the belief that “godliness is great gain ;” that the “ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and that all the things which we can desire, are not to be compared to it,” when the duties of christianity appear rather a drudgery than a delight to himself ; when he seemingly seeks excuses for neglecting them, and when the cares of this world appear to occupy his thoughts as if there was neither heaven nor hell ? Be not deceived, beloved parents, if ye would *train* up your children in the way they should go you must not merely *instruct*, but your *actions* must correspond with your *instructions*. Would you lead them to hate “the very appearance of evil” you must convince them that it is odious to yourselves not only by talking against it, but by avoiding it : If you would persuade them that religion is “the one thing needful ;” that it is “more to be de-

sired than gold, and worthy of all acceptation" you must convince them by your own pleasure in speaking of it, and in attending its duties that it is the chief source of rejoicing to yourselves: If you would impress them with a veneration for Jehovah as a Being infinitely great, you must convince them by your own conduct that "your flesh trembles for fear of him," or inspire them with love to Him as infinitely good they must discern from your own conduct that your own love to him is supreme: Would you persuade them to obey the second great command of the law which is to "love thy neighbor as thyself" you must convince them by shewing all respect to the character of thy neighbor when absent, and to his feelings when present that you are interested in his welfare. He therefore who expects to "bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" must enforce his instruction by suitable example: He should aim upon all occasions at conversing and acting before them as he desires to form them for conversation, and action. It was a maxim among the Romans that "nothing impure should be seen or heard within the walls where children are lodged."

From these few remarks on the manner in which our offspring should be *trained up* we proceed,

II. To consider our obligations to attend with fidelity to this duty.

1. Our obligation arises from the authority

of God who has particularly enjoined it. While it is his pleasure to separate a people for himself in our guilty world, this purpose he usually accomplishes by family instruction as the principal mean. Through the prudence and diligence of parents the plant ordinarily receives its first cultivation which is designed to adorn the vineyard on earth, and is destined to flourish hereafter in the paradise above. No doubt much may be done, and has been done, by a skilful, conscientious ministry for promoting the spiritual interests of youth, but probably more may be done by the prudence and fidelity of parents, and upon the latter the Head of the church has more immediately enjoined this service. “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Parents possess advantages for directing their offspring to the choice of religion and virtue which are not enjoyed by others. Being constantly present with them they become acquainted with their different dispositions, with those lusts which are most likely to predominate in future life, and have thus an opportunity of early eradicating or restraining those lusts; they may be often instructing and advising them, reproving their little follies and vanities, or cherishing any serious impressions which are produced in their minds. The Lord God may therefore be considered as addressing each parent or head of a family in the following manner, “I

have set thee a watchman over this household ; I have committed to thy care these young immortals that they may be trained up for my service, and at your hand will I require their blood if you are unfaithful to the trust ; but in the zealous, and persevering discharge of thy duty I leave thee this encouragement that, when they are old, they shall not depart from the paths which in obedience to my command thou mayest recommend :” Jehovah, who has positively enjoined this duty, promises a liberal reward even to parents themselves in performing it. “ I know Abraham,” saith God, “ that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice, and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

2. The obligation of parents to discharge this duty arises from a concern for the spiritual and everlasting interests of their children. As the instruments of their existence they are reasonably bound by every possible method to promote their real welfare : and very probably that affection which parents have for their offspring, and that solicitude which they feel for their future condition was designed by the Author of our nature to render the duty of instructing them more easily discharged : Through the powerful influence of parental fondness, to watch over their children, to instruct, to expostulate with them, and to cor-

rect them for their misbehaviour which would otherwise be merely a duty, and might often be considered a drudgery becomes a delight. While the divine authority binds them to this service, affection to their offspring, and a concern for their prosperity hereafter prompts them cheerfully to perform it. There is another circumstance which renders this duty more easily, and conveniently discharged on the part of parents, that is, the long period during which their children remain dependant upon them. In this respect man may be considered an exception from almost every other part of the creation. The offspring of the fowl continue only a few weeks in a state of minority, until they attain to the perfection of their nature, and become capable of managing for themselves : The offspring of the various orders of animals in general remain dependent on their dam only a few months, until they throw off their subordination, and begin to look abroad for their own provision : But in the family of man children continue dependent upon their parents nearly one third of their duration in this world ; they ordinarily arrive at the age of sixteen, or eighteen, or even twenty years before they become matured either in body or mind, and are capable of managing for themselves : During this long period parents are invested with authority over them, and considered their teachers and guardians : They have thus a full opportunity, by precept, by example, by correction,

by admonition to inform their understandings, to improve their hearts, and *train them up* to habits of order both in the church and in society.

3. Parents are obligated to the faithful discharge of this duty from a regard to their own future comfort. How animating amidst the various afflictions of life would be the prospect of leaving an offspring to adorn the church, and bless the world when they themselves must be removed from it ; to reflect that the void which is made by their departure will probably be filled by the succession of their children in their place ? How pleasing must it be beyond expression for a loving parent to look forward in imagination, and behold a son, or daughter seated hereafter on the right hand of the Judge among the nations of the saved, to hear them publicly acknowledged as having occupied with fidelity the talents entrusted with them, and then invited to that kingdom which was prepared for the righteous from everlasting. Surely heaven to parents would be enhanced, all its joys and glories rendered inconceivably more precious by this prospect of participation. If Paul pronounced the believing Thessalonians his *joy* and *crown*, merely because they were converted by his ministry, although otherwise strangers to him, what interest must the fond father or mother feel in the salvation of their offspring of whose existence they had been instruments, and who became endeared to

them by long intercourse, and the most intimate fellowship; whose interests were thus so nearly blended, and rendered almost the same with their own. Surely this prospect, we should suppose, might have the influence of a thousand arguments exciting and animating parents to a becoming zeal in the spiritual *nurture* of their offspring: It might give fervor to their daily supplications *for* them; it might add earnestness to their instructions and expostulations *with* them, and lead them to look with a holy anxiety for the precious fruits in their conversion; it might render them in a great measure indifferent about every thing concerning their children, excepting their souls, and their everlasting welfare; it should animate them in imitation of the great apostle to *travail as in birth, to endure all things for their sakes* that they might be brought to obtain salvation in Jesus Christ with eternal glory.

From this doctrine as thus illustrated we may infer—

1. The very important, and responsible station which parents occupy in relation to their children. They are constituted by the Great God as their spiritual *overseers*, and the immortal destinies of their seed are in a certain sense committed to their trust, a trust which must be regarded as equally interesting, and arduous, and honorable. It may be considered as a distinguishing glory conferred upon any that they should have an offspring.

Children are therefore pronounced *an heritage of Jehovah*, and the *fruit of the womb* is represented as *his reward*: But it is a much more distinguishing honour conferred upon parents that they should be ordained the spiritual guardians of their offspring, and employed as instruments to rear them up for glory to God, and usefulness to their generation. Paul devoutly “thanks the Lord Jesus Christ that he counted him faithful putting him into the ministry,” and called him to “preach to fellow-sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ:” But this honor in some degree have all parents being intrusted with the spiritual education of their children, and appointed to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” They may be considered as occupying the station of “ambassadors for Christ, praying those” who are committed to their charge “to be reconciled unto God:” And should they succeed in this embassy, and their expostulations be effectual for restoring a son or daughter from the wretchedness of their fallen state it will be a monument to their honor more imperishable than either marble or brass: Each child or servant brought to salvation through their instrumentality will be a jewel in the crown not only of Jesus the Mediator, but in their own crown; it will secure to them through the exceeding riches of divine grace a residence among those who having “turned sinners to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever:” And are there

not promises without number in behalf of their children which may encourage parents to a holy diligence in "reproving, and rebuking, and exhorting them." The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God—that thou mayest live : I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever for the good of them, and of their children after them.'

2. Is such, beloved parents, is such the honor of your station, is such your encouragement to persevere in discharging its duties, shake off that sloth which you may have formerly indulged, crucify that worldly temper which may have chilled your ardor in promoting the spiritual interests of your offspring : Hereafter let their usefulness in time, and their glory through eternity be your only anxiety respecting them. Look occasionally upon each individual under your care, whether male or female, whether bond or free, as destined for an immortal duration ; reflect that they must soon die, and be judged, and pass to an unchanging abode ; look forward through the ever revolving ages of eternity, and present them to your imagination as unutterably blessed in the enjoyment of Jehovah, or damned in hell "with the devil and his angels," and then say, does not all, your solicitude about securing for them the riches or honors of this world instantly give way to a solicitude about the infinitely more important realities of the world to come ? Do not all the wealth and glories

of the present state compared with the concerns of a future state, appear insignificant in your estimation as a single grain of dust contrasted with a mountain, or a drop of water compared to an ocean? And remember that their future destination, under God, depends much on yourselves. "Train up a child in the way he should go," is the declaration of Him whose word is more stable than the everlasting hills, "and when he is old he will not depart from it :"* But without diligence on your part you have no promise for them either of grace here, or glory hereafter.

Permit me again to recall to your attention a consideration already noticed, which may animate you to diligence in the discharge of this duty, that is, your own peace and consolation hereafter. What a pleasure would it afford you, when forewarned by the infirmities of age of your approaching dissolution, to reflect that you leave behind you a seed for the service of the Lord *your* God ; some who will appear as witnesses for him when your lips are silent in death ; who will occupy a seat in the sanctuary when your bodies are gathered to their fathers, and who will assist

* " *I knew a pious, and judicious minister who affirmed that we did not give credit to God's word, if we did not believe the certainty of the promise, as well as the obligation to the duty ; he was of opinion that every parent when he seemed to fail should conclude that he himself had been undutiful, and not that God had been unfaithful.*".....Witherspoon on the education of children.

in relieving the poor, and in promoting the interests of society when "your labors of love" must have ceased for ever ? Although naturally dead yet, with such a prospect, you might expect virtually to *live* in your posterity, *live* to the glory of God, and to the real advantage both of the church and the world. It was to David, when admonished of his departure from the service of the earthly sanctuary, a source of the most refined, substantial joy that Solomon his son was "to reign in his stead ;" that he should erect a temple for the worship of Israel's God, and thus prove instrumental in perpetuating his name in the world ; and Aaron, the High Priest, appeared cheerful in stripping off his pontifical garments, and resigning his office in the church when he knew that he should be succeeded by Eleazer his son.

I have only to remark that, if you expect to succeed in training up your offspring for the Living God ; to see them your *joy* now, and your *crown* hereafter, you must live as you exhort them to live ; you must aim at giving emphasis to every admonition by a correspondent example. How contemptible does that minister necessarily become in the estimation of every discerning hearer who exhorts others to "crucify the flesh, and follow after holiness," while he himself is the willing slave of corruption, and children are more shrewd to discern whether there is a consistence between your exhortations and your general de-

portment than you imagine : Nay, such often is their aversion to God and his service, that they would willingly find a pretext in your irregularities for rejecting your admonitions. Convince them, therefore, by a conscientious discharge of every duty in the closet, and family, and sanctuary, that “ the kingdom of God is not in word but in power : ” Endeavor also, by honesty in all your dealings, by tenderness to the reputation of others, by gentleness of spirit, by a readiness to forgive those who offend or injure you, by submission to your Father’s will under the evils of life, to convince them of the excellence of christian principles by the excellence of their fruits in your own lives ; that “ the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated ; without partiality and without hypocrisy.”

3. I cannot dismiss this subject without inviting the attention of my beloved youth. Many of you whom I now address are the offspring of the righteous, and have been favored with all those advantages which either pious instruction, or example could afford. You were early dedicated to Jehovah your Creator and Redeemer in the ordinance of baptism, and your own consciences are witnesses with what earnestness your parents have pressed you to consider “ the things which belong to your peace.” Must you not exculpate them by acknowledging that, sabbath after sabbath, they have set before you

“ life and death, the blessing and the curse” urging you, sometimes with tears, to choose the former as your only interest, and glory? I may venture to add that a holy God is witness of their importunity, “ making mention of you in their prayers night and day,” that your souls might be saved at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, my young friends, has not a Holy God often witnessed the anxiety, and agony experienced by your parents on account of your seeming unconcern and impenitence? Very probably they have occasionally poured out their souls before him in such plaintive language as this, “ O Lord, the Great and terrible God, we presented these our children to thee in baptism; we cheerfully and solemnly surrendered them as an offering to the Father, Son, and Spirit with fervent desires that they might be thine only and everlastingly; according to the wisdom given us we have aimed at training them up for thee, and thy service; we have taught them from thy word that “ all have sinned;” that “ the wages of sin is death,” and that if they neglect the great salvation they *shall not, they cannot escape*: But O Lord, they have not believed *our report*, or rather *thy report* by our lips concerning these things: Notwithstanding all our diligence in teaching them, and all our importunity in admonishing and exhorting them they appear to remain hardened under the deceitfulness of sin; thoughtless of God who cre-

ated them, of Jesus who bled to redeem them, of death to which they are hourly hastening, of heaven which is prepared as an eternal mansion for the pure, and of hell which is the final, gloomy abode of the impenitent :” I sincerely believe, my precious young hearers, that the Living God, and surrounding angels have often heard your father, or mother, or perhaps both of them pouring forth their melancholy complaints, refusing to be comforted through a fearful apprehension that you would not be saved. If you have any reflection remaining, these things demand your immediate, deliberate, and most solemn reflection : Your privileges are, indeed, great as you are the offspring of the righteous. Promises are made to you, and may be plead by you which are not made to all, neither can be plead by all. “ I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee : The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.” These are promises the accomplishment of which you are authorised to plead from the very circumstance that you have descended from the loins of the just, promises which may encourage you to wrestle with Jehovah for his blessing while your parents are living, and after they are dead. But be it known to you that if your opportunities are not improved your guilt will have a colouring, and your torment a poignancy from which the guilt and the torment of others will be almost infinitely re-

mote. All the earnestness of your parents instructing and exhorting you ; all their fervor in praying with you and in your behalf ; all that agony which often rends their hearts by day when occupied in their common employments, or by night when sleep departs from their eyes through solicitude for your souls, these are all known to God the impartial Judge, and the fearful record will be read in your hearing before the collected millions of angels and men : I feel constrained also to inform you that since you have been warned of “ your wicked ways ” and besought to return and live, *besought* with all that earnestness which parental affection could inspire, if you obstinately refuse, “ you must die in your iniquity, but *they* have delivered their own souls ; ” Your blood must rest upon your own heads, and there will be none to interpose and shield you, none to offer up a prayer for you, none to drop a tear over your misery in heaven, or earth, or hell. The arm of an omnipotent, indignant God, raised higher and higher, by all the threatenings which you have spurned, and all the forbearance which you have abused will grind you to powder when there is none to deliver.

Be admonished, my dear young hearers and readers, to arise from your security, and strive to enter in before the door of mercy is shut against you forever. Mourn over your misimprovement of privileges to that God whose authority you have despised, and whose spirit you have grieved : Make confession to

your holy parents for all those meltings of soul, those gloomy days and sleepless nights which your impiety has occasioned to them : Aim hereafter at healing the wounds which your former follies have inflicted by greater humility of conduct, and a more ardent zeal in working out your salvation : ' How affecting beyond what language can describe would be the thought that any of you who are the children of so many prayers, and tears, and entreaties should behold your pious parents on the right hand of the judge in the hour of retribution, while you were doomed to the left, or to behold them in heaven reclining on Abraham's bosom while you were tormented in the flames of hell ? I shall now bid you an *affectionate farewell*, repeating a very solemn, and I think, at present seasonable admonition : It was among the last addresses of David the king to a favorite child, and his successor to the throne of Israel, " thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him, with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ; if thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever."

SERMON IX.

HEBREWS III. 13.

Exhort one another daily.

MAN was endowed by his Creator with extensive powers both for exertion and usefulness, and all these powers like so many talents, entrusted with a particular steward, ought to be devoted to those purposes for which they were originally bestowed. Each individual, however, is not to be considered in an insulated view, unconnected with other men, or formed to promote a separate interest : He should rather be contemplated in a social and relative light ; as a link in a great chain on which the strength, and beauty of the whole chain in some measure depends, or as the member of a great family who owes particular duties, not only to his Creator the common head of it, but to his brethren of mankind. This generosity and disinterestedness of conduct was often recommended by the Apostle to his hearers, and readers. “ Look not every man on his own things, indulge not a little, contracted, illiberal spirit which terminates in self ; which consults the convenience, or interest of an individual to the exclusion, or even neglect of others ; recollect in your intercourse with each other that as men you are the children of one Father, and therefore involved in one common interest, and as christians you are redeemed by the same Saviour, and

heirs of the same inheritance, let each therefore aim at promoting the edification and comfort of all with whom he is connected. The apostle also mentions it as the peculiar excellence of *charity* that she *seeketh not her own*, is not satisfied with advancing the welfare of an individual, but extending her views beyond the narrow circle of self, devises schemes for promoting the good of mankind in general. Such is the disposition which he so warmly recommends in the verse chosen for our present consideration. "Exhort one another daily."

Our last discourse was designed to exhibit the duty of parents to their children; that they should endeavor by instruction, and example, and the prudent exercise of discipline, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is intended at present to overlook the distinction of parent and child, of superior and subordinate, and contemplate the members of a family upon a level; to consider them as forming a little society, each individual of which is bound to exhort the other and "provoke unto love, and good works."

I would not be considered as confining the duty of mutual *exhortation* to those who stand connected in a family capacity: "It is a labor of love" which we ought to perform as neighbors, and more especially as members of the same congregation. In our occasional intercourse through the week, or in our interviews on the sabbath while we repair to, or retire

from the ordinances of religion, we should stir up the gifts of each other by conversation on spiritual subjects ; and by this friendly, familiar discourse much may be done for our own souls, and for the souls of each other. As one living ember brought into contact with another causes it to burn more intensely, or as one star reflects light upon another star, and thus the lustre of both is encreased, so by the means of spiritual conversation christian imparts light and heat to christian, and the sacred flame in each is imperceptibly encreased. We hear the two disciples after their journey to Emmaus, and their interview respecting that redemption which was expected in Israel, remarking to each other, “ did not our hearts burn within us ; ” their faith which was formerly feeble received additional strength, and cleaves with renewed vigor to the promises ; their love which was languid before, now kindled into celestial ardour, and their hopes which had been buried with their entombed Lord now brighten, and become full of immortality. Our time on earth is too short to be wholly exhausted by the concerns of the body, and the present world ; speech is a gift too precious to be occupied altogether in giving or receiving information respecting our temporal concerns. When we meet accidentally by the way, or when we collect to spend the social hour or evening, how might our knowledge be extended, our love to each other, and our zeal for the interests of

our common Master be promoted by seizing some favorable incident for the introduction of serious discourse? Many instructive instances of this nature are recorded in the history of our Lord. In his interview with the woman of Samaria, at the well of Jacob, he directed her attention from the common to the spiritual water, even those influences of the Holy Ghost which he imparts to his followers; he shews her the perishable, unsatisfying nature of the former, but assures her that the latter will refresh and satisfy the soul for ever. “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again—But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life.”—Again, when the multitude were following him “for the loaves and the fishes,” he calls their attention to the *living bread* which he had provided, which he freely offers, and exhorts them to “labor for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.”

But although the duty of mutual exhortation is incumbent on all indiscriminately as opportunity offers, it is more immediately incumbent on those who reside in the same house; they are nearly related, and are therefore peculiarly obligated to advance the spiritual profit of each other; they dwell together, and therefore this duty may be discharged with more ease and advantage.

This subject may be considered more fully by enquiring—

I. In what manner members of the same family should *exhort one another*, and

II. What are the advantages which they may derive from a prudent, affectionate attention to this duty.

1. They may exhort one another by conversing occasionally on spiritual subjects — They who are much exercised to godliness will never want materials on which to discourse both to the comfort and profit of each other. The condition of man by nature ; those miseries to which without repentance he is exposed in a future world ; the method of pardon through the sacrifice of Jesus the substitute ; the necessity of regeneration if we expect admission into the kingdom of God, the evidences by which we may ascertain that we have undergone this change, the marks of a flourishing state in the spiritual life, the sovereignty of Jehovah in passing by angels while he provided a Saviour for fallen man, his sovereignty in leaving a great portion of the human family in the gloom of heathenism while the light of immortality is shining upon others, our infinite obligation to love and serve that Jesus who redeemed us by his own blood, and has opened to us the prospect of such joys beyond the grave, the emptiness of all worldly prosperity without a relation to God as our Father, and the light and momentary nature of their afflictions who are interested in his love, these and many other subjects might be enumerated on which we may converse, and

by which we may edify each other. “ Out of the abundance of the heart” the lively christian will generally find both matter and opportunity for discoursing to the spiritual edification of others around him. “ They that feared the Lord,” among the devout Jews, “ spake often one to another ; and we hear the royal prophet extolling the mercies of Jehovah, and inviting others to a participation of the same blessings. “ O taste and see that the Lord is good ; blessed is the man that trusteth in him : O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him : Come, ye children, hearken unto me ; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” How many favorable occasions for such friendly admonitions occur when families are collected around the evening fire, or when they encircle the table of their common Father to receive the bounties of his providence ? How many precious moments might then be redeemed to our present instruction, and our eternal salvation by repeating the promises, or portions of a psalm, or hymn, or conversing of that bounty which streams forth day after day, and year after year, for the supply of our wants ? And while the members of a family were edifying each other by such exercises, they would fulfil a divine injunction, “ these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and

when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

2. We ought to exhort one another by uniting to read portions of the sacred scriptures. I do not allude to the devotions of the morning and evening in which the scriptures are statedly read in the family: other opportunities may and ought to be embraced when the different members sit down, and read in their turn passages of the living oracles and practical reflections may also be made to mutual advantage. This is a divine institution, no less than secret prayer, or the sanctification of the sabbath, and if those who are connected in a family capacity feel deeply concerned for the spiritual prosperity of each other this ordinance will not be omitted. In vain do any object that leisure cannot be found for the multiplied services of religion: By redeeming the many precious fragments of time which are wasted unnecessarily in sleep, or consumed in conversation by which the characters of others are reproached, and our own passions irritated, opportunities will be easily found for discharging this and all the other duties required at our hand. The man who manages his money with prudence and economy has usually a sufficiency to meet any contingency, and he who is frugal of his time, who endeavors to perform every work at its proper season, will generally find opportunity for attending to every ordinance of religion whether secret or relative. And the Apostle particu-

larly enjoins "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ;" be often reading it ; be often reflecting upon it, and unite in repeating portions of it in a family capacity, "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." It is both agreeable and profitable to mingle the exercise of praise with that of reading the scriptures, endeavoring to stir up our own souls, and the souls of each other by uniting to sing a portion of a psalm, or hymn. The apostle gives the same direction to the church at Ephesus. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Praise is peculiarly adapted to excite a devotional frame : to soothe the spirits when agitated by the troubles of life, and also to purify and elevate the affections, gently inflaming them with love to God, and to each other.

3. The duty recommended in the text may be performed by praying with, and for each other. The word which is translated *exhort* does not signify merely to speak to, or advise another in a formal manner ; it sometimes signifies to intercede as an advocate does for his client, and comprehends the various means by which one christian may be instrumental in strengthening the faith, enlivening the hopes and promoting the edification of another christian ; and certainly social prayer is a mean happily adapted for these purposes. It is the

promise of our Divine Redeemer, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," and the truth of this promise has often been found in the sensible experience of his children. While one is engaged in the devout confession of sin, or earnestly imploring the exercise of mercy the sacred flame is communicated; it pervades from bosom to bosom, until all are set on fire as "with a live coal from the altar; the heart which was formerly cold now kindles with celestial ardor, and the affections which were once carnal and earthly now center upon God as their only, all-satisfying portion. "While the disciples prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost;" and thus while one christian addresses the throne of their common Father in the name, and presence of a number the place is often consecrated into a little sanctuary: All are constrained to acknowledge with the disciples on mount Tabor, "it is good to be here;" or with the sweet singer of Israel, "blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." This union in the exercise of prayer which is profitable for christians at their occasional visits is peculiarly amiable and profitable among members of the same family. An excellent divine* of a former age, in addition to his stated devotions in the family, frequently prayed with his wife

* *The Rev. P. HENRY's life, p. 66.*

alone, and recommended this practice to others by remarking, "this ordinance sanctifies the relation, and secures a blessing upon it; makes the comforts of it the more sweet and the cares and crosses of it the more easy, and is an excellent mean of preserving, and encreasing love in the relation." This same holy man directed his children to "spend one hour on the afternoon of Saturday together in prayer and other devotional services."

Such are the exercises in which one member of a family may, and ought to *exhort* another. The apostle enjoins that this duty be performed *daily*, and although the expression need not be understood in a literal sense, yet it evidently implies that we ought frequently to be employed in "provoking each other to love and to good works." Religion is not to be considered as a "by-work," as a service to which we may attend when there is nothing else to be done. A peculiar blessing is promised to those who *watch daily* at the gates of wisdom, and the righteous in former ages are represented as "speaking often one to another." We ought to consider the time which we spend in serving our God, and promoting our own edification and that of others as the most precious moments of the day; we ought to consider the services of religion as the most dignified of our *daily* exercises, and the most delightful of our *daily* enjoyments.

In order to animate us to a becoming zeal

in exhorting one another," it may not be improper to enquire.

II. What are the advantages which may result from the prudent and diligent discharge of this duty.

1. Thereby one member of a family often becomes instrumental in the salvation of another, and one neighbor in the salvation of another neighbor. Many instances might be mentioned in which a portion of scripture devoutly read, or an admonition seasonably given has proved effectual for alarming the conscience, and finally saving the soul. Solomon therefore remarks that "the words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies:" they often have the effect of *goads* for rousing the slothful to the discharge of duty, and when seasonably administered, like *nails* are deep and lasting in their impression. "All the Lord's people may thus become prophets," teaching the ignorant, alarming the thoughtless, reclaiming the backslider, and imparting words of consolation to the dejected in spirit. I have read of a private christian in England who was distinguished for his zeal in promoting the conversion of sinners, and these "labors of love were not in vain in the Lord." His children, and servants, and many in the neighborhood where he resided were given to him as "a crown of rejoicing." Having heard of an acquaintance who indulged himself in licentious practices he wrote to him, and

politely invited him to his house ; he called, and they read, and prayed, and conversed together, and this interview was considered as the mean of his salvation. This and many other similar facts evince the importance of obeying the injunction, “in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they shall both be alike good.” It is in the spiritual as in the natural world, a whole field may be blasted, while a single grain thrown into the earth takes root and ripens into fruit.

2. By mutual exhortation one may be instrumental in fortifying another against temptation: The christian in this world may be compared to a pilgrim performing a journey, and is often in danger of wandering from the right way, or being disheartened by the many obstacles which lie in his course. But amidst these discouraging circumstances he is often animated, and supported by the counsels, and example of his fellow christians. By these he is often kept from wandering, or brought back after he has wandered ; by these he is frequently cheered in his melancholy moments, he is encouraged under circumstances the most trying, and is enabled “to hold on his way” with greater resolution, and firmness. No doubt in instances innumerable one believer has been indebted, under God, to the warning of another believer either for resisting some strong temptation, or

being brought to sincere repentance after the fault had been committed. It was the pointed admonition of Nathan the prophet which brought the monarch of Israel to a recollection of his crime, and to genuine, lasting humiliation for the same. By a reproof seasonably administered the sons of Jacob were struck with a consciousness of their iniquity in selling Joseph into Egypt, and by a single, impressive look of our Lord, Peter was made to remember the guilt of publicly denying his Master, and to "weep bitterly" for the offence. These are some of the important advantages which the apostle mentions as resulting from faithful admonitions among christians, and for which he so earnestly recommends it. "Exhort one another daily—lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin: lest having committed a fault he remains insensible of the guilt which he has incurred, or the danger to which he is exposed on account of it: If one has departed from the holy commandment, and renounced his profession of the faith, reprove, rebuke, exhort until you have happily restored him; strive with greater earnestness at recovering him from the error of his way than one traveller would exert himself to snatch another from the verge of a precipice, or one soldier to redeem another from the hands of an infuriated, powerful enemy.

3. By earnestness in *exhorting one another* we may prove instrumental in exciting each

other to the more diligent discharge of incumbent duty. We are all naturally indolent, and prone to procrastinate: Measures which we will readily acknowledge to be important; in which the honor of our Master, the interests of religion, and our own future rejoicing are intimately concerned, we postpone month after month waiting for a "more convenient season." It is scarcely more natural for the carnal, unregenerate man to put off the great work of salvation, asking "a little more sleep, a little more slumber," than for even the children of light thro' the suggestions of the flesh to put off the important duties of their calling. *How slothful* are even those whom we consider the most active *in business*? Although much has been forgiven us by that God whom we had offended, and great things have been done for us at an infinitely great expence, yet how languid is our love, and how reluctant are we to spend a little time, or strength, or worldly substance for the advancement of his glory? Owing to this innate, almost invincible sloth of our nature, we need "line upon line," argument after argument, exciting us to the performance of duty: We require not only all the "doctrines, reproofs, corrections, and instructions of scripture," but the daily counsels and admonitions of each other; and by such exhortations seasonably and affectionately given christian may have great influence in rendering christian more diligent in the performance of "every good work." If

one traveller appears indolent another can excite him ; if he becomes disheartened the other can encourage him ; if he falls his associate can raise him up, or if he becomes fatigued with the length, or difficulties of the road he can assist in supporting and carrying him along : As in a natural so in the spiritual journey, “ two are better than one.” When one believer in the Lord Jesus is tempted to neglect, or postpone a duty, another can admonish to the immediate discharge of it ; or if one becomes discouraged through repeated and “ sore adversities” the other may support by exhibiting the consolations of the gospel, and by directing his view to “ that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is reserved in the heavenly world ;” he can assure him that the present conflict however *fiery* will soon terminate in victory and triumph ; that sorrow will give place to joy, pain to pleasure, and darkness to one unclouded, everlasting day : Thus after the apostle had announced to the believing Thessalonians the resurrection of the body, the ascension of all the redeemed to “ meet their Saviour in the air, and their going to be for ever with the Lord,” he adds, *wherefore comfort or exhort another with these words.*

4. By diligence in *exhorting one another*, a foundation may be laid for mutual rejoicing for ever. Whether those who are intimately acquainted, or nearly related on earth will feel towards each other any peculiar ardour of

affection in heaven, is a question which I attempt not to answer. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We know not to what degree the redeemed will hereafter recollect the incidents of their own lot upon earth, or their conversation and communion with each other. Yet without doubt those who were acquainted in the church militant will recollect this acquaintance when they meet in the church triumphant, and it is highly probable that the recollection of those instructions which they mutually imparted, of those sorrows in which they had mutually sympathised, of that support which they had mutually afforded will tend to endear them to each other, and promote their mutual exultation for ever. "He that soweth, and he that reapeth shall there rejoice together." What joy indiscribable must transport those, upon meeting in their Father's kingdom, who had frequently gone in company to the sanctuary on earth ; who had often mingled sweet counsel, fortifying each other in the hour of temptation, or comforting one another in the season of trial and despondency ? What refined, elevated pleasure must be participated by Zacharias and Elizabeth in the heavenly Jerusalem, who had long lived together "as heirs of the grace of life," and by their mutual admonitions had encouraged each other to "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," or by Aquila and Priscilla, who by their tender expostulations had ani-

mated each other to maintain "the church in their house, and to remain stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord?" What must be the mutual exultation of parents or pastors when they meet, in the general assembly, children or hearers who had been brought first to grace and finally to glory by means of their exhortations and example? With rapture ineffable each must hail the other as "their glory and joy."

This doctrine may be applied,

1. By inferring that there is an intimate connection between man and man, and that each is obligated to aim at promoting the perfection of the whole. In the human body there are various members, assigned to different parts of it, possessed of different excellencies, and designed for different offices, yet nearly related, and required to subserve the convenience and interests of one another. "The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee, nor again, the head to the feet I have no need of thee: and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." As in the human body, so in the family and the congregation the different members who compose it may possess different talents, and occupy different stations, yet each owes particular duties to the other, and is bound to promote their edification. The young christian has not attained to the experience of the aged, or to their influence in the

church, yet he probably exceeds them in tenderness of conscience, in warmth of affection, and in the ardor of his zeal, and thus his example serves as an admonition to them : The aged, on the other hand, by an acquaintance with their own hearts, by a careful observation of men and things acquire a greater degree of experience, become more prudent, and are thus qualified for restraining and regulating the young. Although the wife may not perhaps always equal her husband in strength, or comprehension of understanding, yet she usually excels him in ardor of spiritual affection, in brilliancy of imagination, in fluency of utterance, and thus possesses a happier talent for the instruction of their mutual offspring : and each by exercising their proper gift, and fulfilling the duties of their own station, will promote the edification of the other. Although we do not find Hannah ministering at the altar of incense, or offering sacrifice to the Lord, yet we see her in a more private capacity teaching Samuel her son, and dedicating him “ to Jehovah as long as he lived :” We do not behold Anna the prophetess appearing in the assembly as a public teacher, yet she is uniform in her attendance upon the institutions of the temple, “ serving God with fastings and prayers night and day,” and as opportunity offers speaks of the incarnate Saviour “ to all them that look for redemption in Jerusalem.” Priscilla is not charged with arrogating the character of a public preacher

in the church, yet after the congregation is dismissed, she invites the youthful Apollos to her own house, and by her edifying conversation “instructs him in the way of God more perfectly.” Christians therefore, although differing in age, possessing a diversity of gifts, and placed in different stations, have the opportunity of *exhorting*, and advancing the spiritual interests of each other.

2. Have we not reason to lament that a duty so important in itself, one which might be performed with so much ease, and to so much advantage is so generally neglected? Those who are related in a family capacity feel interested in the temporal prosperity of each other: Each is generally zealous to vindicate the character of the other, and by performing the duty proper to their station to promote the good of the whole. But do they feel the responsibility which is upon them in a spiritual sense, and do they aim by example, by reproof, and by exhortation to advance the immortal interests of each other? Amidst all the *hours* which are daily spent by those who are related as husband and wife in co-operating to provide for their common wants are there even *moments* occupied in repeating the word of life, in reminding each other of duties which are apparently neglected, or in comparing their fears, their joys, and hopes as heirs of the same “incorruptible inheritance?” Amidst the various admonitions which parents are occasionally giving their children respect-

ing the importance of industry, of economy, and of a virtuous deportment are they also entreating them to “remember their Creator in the days of their youth, to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, and to set their affections on things above.” The brother and sister of the same family are frequently conversing about the common occurrences of life, about the fashions which prevail, or the amusements in which they may agreeably spend an hour or evening, but what time do they employ in praying *together*, in reading passages of the living oracles, or in directing the attention of each other to the great realities of the future state? Was the admonition of the apostle carefully regarded how much might be done for God, for our own souls, for the souls of each other in hours which are now lost for both worlds? Wherefore, brethren dearly beloved, “gird up the loins of your minds, and be no longer slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,” and promoting the spiritual profit of each other. Your prayers will “come up before him as incense,” and your devout, mutual exhortations will be grateful “as the evening sacrifice.” “While they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard;” he listens with approbation to their pious discourse, and resolutions; “he gives his angels charge over them; he compasses them about with his favor as with a shield,” and marks them infal-

libly for glory in the latter end. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day that I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.!"

This discourse which was particularly intended for the use of private families I shall now conclude by affectionately proposing the following plan for promoting their mutual edification. Beside the seasons statedly observed in devotion morning and evening set apart one hour in an evening of each week for the exercises of religion. Let all the members of the family cease from their ordinary employments and unite in reading portions of the scriptures, in repeating such promises as they have learned, in singing a part of a psalm or hymn, and let some member occasionally address the mercy-seat in a short prayer. All these are explicit ordinances of God, and by intermingling them they will appear less tedious to the younger branches of the family. Were we thus living together "as heirs of the grace of life," exhorting and encouraging one another as those who have embraced the same promises as their charter for all necessary blessings, the same righteousness as their justifying robe, and the same heaven as their eternal home, how smoothly might we pass along the journey of life? Every cross which we are called to take up would become light, and easily borne, and every comfort be inconceivably enhanced to our enjoyment: every

house would become a little sanctuary, every heart a residence for the Holy Ghost, every tongue like a well-tuned organ to shew forth his praises, and heaven by such a family would be commenced on earth. Will any object, "behold ! what a weariness" it must prove to perform this variety of religious services, or are you afraid that they might interfere with your secular concerns ? How many hours in the week do you spend in eating, and drinking, and sleeping as means of promoting the health and comfort of the body, and can you not reserve a small fragment for promoting the salvation of the soul ? How many hours in the week do you spend laboring either in the house or field "for the meat that perisheth," and will you hesitate about devoting a single hour in "laboring for that meat which endureth to everlasting life," in fulfilling the pleasure of your Creator, and in securing his blessing upon your families : I said *in securing the divine blessing upon your families*, because I believe that we lose even in temporals by not giving a larger dividend of our time to the Living God. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments ; then will I give you rain in due season and the land shall yield her encrease, and ye shall eat bread to the full, and I will be your God." But suppose that the appropriation of an hour to such services, once or

twice in the week, should interrupt in the prosecution of your worldly business, and tend to your temporal loss, even in that loss your gain would be unspeakable. The blessing of Jehovah would rest on what you did enjoy, and be assured that whether you possess less or more it is his *blessing which maketh rich*. “*A little*,” as a very eloquent and excellent author remarks, “a little with the blessing of God upon it is better than a great deal with the encumbrance of the curse : His blessing can multiply a mite into a talent, but his curse will shrink a talent into a mite.” And another asserts from his own experience, “when I was rich I enjoyed God in all, and now when reduced to poverty I enjoy all in God.”

Again, when you are visited by your christian acquaintances can it be pronounced either unsocial, or ungenteel to occupy some part of the time in religious discourse or in reading a few verses of “the living word,” or in pouring out your hearts before your heavenly Father in earnest supplication. A venerable Prelate* in the church of England, when called upon by his spiritual friends, particularly his brethren in the ministry, would usually propose before they parted, “come, let us have a word for our Master,” and then would unite with them in a short prayer, devoutly asking the divine blessing on each other, and on the church at large. It is related of the excellent

* *Bishop BEVERIDGE.*

Mr. Hervey, that previous to his death he ceased to visit particular families where he had been formerly treated with great respect, and being asked the reason of this change in his conduct, he replied, "I hear much worldly and frothy chat there, but not a word of Christ: and I am determined not to visit those companies where there is not room for my Master as well as myself." He then added, "speech is the great prerogative of our rational nature, and is it not a pity that this superior faculty should be debased to unprofitable purposes? Suppose all our stately vessels which pass and repass the ocean were to carry out nothing but tinsel, and import nothing but fancied toys, would such a trade be profitable in its consequences? But speech is the instrument of much nobler commerce, intended to transmit and diffuse the treasures of the mind, and shall this vehicle of intellectual wealth be freighted only with pleasing fopperies?"

Wherefore, brethren, by mutual exhortation, by frequent and fervent prayer, by searching with becoming diligence the living oracles, "add to your faith virtue," and every other grace: Let each manifest a holy zeal in promoting the spiritual edification of others, and thus your lives will be useful, and your death triumphant. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." AMEN.

THE
*IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ORDI-
NANCES,*

IN A FAMILIAR AND AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS,
TO THOSE WHO NEGLECT THEM.

I HAVE frequently reflected with heartfelt emotions of sorrow, on the pitiable condition of the heathen. They are represented in the sacred scriptures, as “having no hope and being without God in the world;” as *perishing* through want of *vision*, being destitute of the light of the gospel. While I adore the sovereignty of Jehovah in permitting a part of the angels irrecoverably to fall, and his justice in reserving them in everlasting chains unto final judgment, I cannot help sympathising in their torment; but your situation, living within the reach of ordinances, and habitually neglecting them, is still more awful and pitiable. It will greatly lessen the future misery of the heathen, that the Saviour was never offered them; and the torment of fallen angels that no Saviour was provided for them; but how inconceivably must it aggravate your doom that salvation was provided, that it was freely offered, but wilfully neglected. This will form the bitterest ingredient in the cup of your damnation.—The sun of righteousness has risen upon your abodes but you close your eyes against his celestial, cheering rays; the river of salvation flows

genial through your borders, but you refuse to approach, and drink, and live forever ; the heavenly manna descends in showers around your habitation, yet you fold your arms in sloth, and wilfully perish with hunger.

These considerations have often led me to reflect with myself what method I should embrace for alarming your security, and, if possible, become the instrument of delivering you “ from the wrath to come.” This object, however important, could not be overtaken from the pulpit, as your attendance there is refused. I have therefore concluded, in this familiar and affectionate manner, to address you from the press. This letter, in my bodily absence, or when my lips are closed in everlasting silence, may serve as a monitor, and through the blessing of the gracious Spirit may become the happy mean of converting you from the error and danger of your ways.

I cannot proceed farther without calling to your attention that awful query of the Holy Ghost—“ How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation ?” This solemn challenge, or rather denunciation, against gospel despisers, fully excuses me in intruding upon you the present address : it will form an ample apology for any warmth and earnestness with which the duty of attending ordinances may be urged, and recommends all that may be said on this subject to your serious consideration. But should you, notwithstanding, think proper to pronounce this freedom an *imperti-*

ment intrusion, I will cheerfully bear the charge, when the honor of my Master and your most precious interests for eternity, are so deeply involved.

Permit me to intreat you to the duty of attending the sanctuary by the authority of God, who requires it; by gratitude to the great Redeemer, in whose name pardon and glory are there proclaimed; by a regard to your immortal souls, the salvation of which these ordinances are appointed to promote; by a concern for the welfare of your children, and others who may probably be influenced by your example.

1. I would urge your attendance upon public ordinances by the authority of God, in whose name they are dispensed. The preaching of the gospel is no contrivance of mortals, but appointed by Him who is the supreme Lord of our time and talents; who possesses an undeniable right to establish any ordinance which his sovereignty may dictate, or his glory require. He gave apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers for the work of the ministry, and has positively commanded them, "cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." Ministers are merely ambassadors for Christ; they are only *stewards of his mysteries*, and therefore in neglecting their ministry, you pour contempt on that

high authority by which they are appointed. But your inattention to ordinances not only betrays contempt to the authority of God, but also a shameful despite of his grace. The ministry of the gospel is a most illustrious display of the divine condescension and goodness. There Jehovah reveals himself “ as the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth ” There, by his servants, he stands and announces the general jubilee of reconciliation, through the obedience and blood of his Co-Equal Son : Seated on this throne of mercy, he proclaims pardon to the guilty, holiness to the polluted, adoption to the alien, consolation to the mourner, redemption to the spiritual captive, and an inheritance of glory to the children of wrath and destruction. He there affectionately expostulates—“ Come now, and let us reason together : As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they would turn from their ways and live. ” “ The ministry of reconciliation is given to us ’—a ministry, which is the wonder of angels, and fills all heaven with acclamations of praise to the riches of divine grace, “ that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. ” Therefore, a neglect of this institution is equally a contempt to the authority and grace of Jehovah ; it is virtually saying, that you neither fear his displeasure, nor value his favor.

2. Let me intreat you to the performance of this duty by gratitude to the loving Saviour, who procured our salvation at the expence of his own blood, and in whose name pardon and glory are freely offered.

Do you not necessarily feel some sense of obligation to the man whose conduct towards you has been marked with singular generosity? Had another rescued you from certain ruin at the hazard of his own life, would you not feel obligated to serve him? Had this interposition in your behalf been *unexpected, undeserved*—had it taken place after ten thousand insults given him, would it not heighten your obligation? All these circumstances in their highest possible degree meet in the kindness of the Lord Jesus, and unite their claim constraining to obey his commandments. He interposed in our behalf, not at the hazard *barely*, but at the certain sacrifice of his life; he died not for friends, but for foes, for apostates from his family and rebels to his crown, because Jesus, being Jehovah, was the person to whom we had forfeited our lives.—“He hath commended his love towards us” beyond all expression, and to the endless astonishment of angels, “in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Now, beloved brethren, is it not ingratitude the most criminal, habitually to neglect these ordinances, where the riches of grace are proclaimed? Ministers are simply ambassadors for Christ; their whole employment is to of-

fer to perishing sinners a free salvation through his name : They are appointed “ to preach not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord ; ” in the glories of his Person, as “ God manifested in the flesh ; ” in the excellencies of his offices ; in his endearing relations as our *head*, our *husband*, our *shepherd*, our *father* ; in the perfection of his righteousness, and in the fullness and freedom of his salvation.

With his garments rolled in the blood of his cross, the divinely compassionate Saviour walks through the galleries of the sanctuary : *Behold me ! Behold me !* he affectionately entreats, presenting himself to the view of every worshipper : Behold me, wounded for your transgressions ; bearing the curse, that you might be redeemed from it ; degraded to the condition of a servant, that you might be exalted to the liberty of sons ; a man of sorrows, that you might be crowned with unutterable joy ; a child of wrath that you might obtain the adoption and inheritance of sons. Lo ! what a succession of wonders rushes upon our view in the sanctuary of divine grace : We are led to Bethlehem, and behold the Saviour in the meanness of his birth ; the everlasting Father becoming a child of yesterday ; the mighty God a feeble, helpless babe ; creation’s Lord putting on the form of a servant ; the heir of all things having only a manger for his bed : We trace him through life, and behold him uniformly devoted to offices of kindness and charity towards man ; healing

all manner of disease, feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, drying up the tears of the mourner, causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk : We are called to follow him to Gethsemane and Calvary, and witness the exquisiteness of his sufferings; there we may see all the lightnings of divine wrath concentrating upon him and drinking up his spirits ; drops of blood rushing through every pore of his body ; and we see him beneath the insupportable pressure of his Father's wrath at last bowing in agony his guiltless head.

For whom were these sufferings undergone? For himself? No ; “ he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separated from sinners.” For angels ? No ; “ he took not on him the nature of angels,” but for perishing sinners of the human family. For what end did he thus suffer ? Was it to ransom from temporal ruin, or to secure some temporal reward ? No ; but to redeem from the wrath of Almighty God, and to procure for us “ fulness of joy, a kingdom that shall not be moved, and crowns of glory that shall never fade away.” And yet can you live from week to week, or from month to month, without expressing your thankfulness, by attending to his salvation proclaimed ? Oh ! shameful ingratitude ! The angels had no immediate concern in this redemption, yet a multitude of their host hastened to Bethlehem, and hailed his appearance in our world ; they followed him to the

wilderness, and ministered unto him during his temptation by Satan ;—they strengthened him in his agony in the garden, and yet shall no tribute of gratitude be offered by you ? Early in the morning of the Sabbath did Angels descend to see him rising from the dead, and shall man, for whose justification he arose, spend that sacred day in indolence or carnal amusement ?

3. Let me intreat you by the most precious interests of your immortal souls, which this ordinance is intended to promote.

Self-preservation is a powerful and universal law of human nature ; it was originally implanted in the bosom of man for important purposes, and impels him cautiously to avoid every danger, and industriously to improve every mean of defence. We all reprobate as deluded the youth who wastes his period of vigor and health, without laying up any provision for affliction or old age ; we both pity and despise the man who indolently spends the season of harvest without an anxious thought about an approaching winter : We regard the person as lost to common sense, who, perishing with hunger, refuses relief when seasonably offered him : But with infinitely greater folly is he chargeable, who either neglects or misimproves this mean of salvation. The preaching of the gospel is our spiritual harvest ; there fruit is gathered and laid up for life eternal. The preaching of the gospel is our spiritual market, there the boundless

stores of the covenant, that bread which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world ; the wine of everlasting consolation ; and robes of righteousness which never fade away are dispensed to all that will receive them ; are given without money and without price. The loving Saviour stands in the sanctuary, and by his servants affectionately invites, " If any man thirst let him come to me and drink."

Now, is it consistent with the common law of self-preservation, with the duty which you owe to your better part, your immortal souls, to condemn an ordinance so important ? Is it rational, is it prudent, anxiously " to labour for the meat that perisheth," and neglect that which " endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give ? The stork in the heavens knows her appointed time, and the little ant *provideth* her meat in the summer ; *she gathereth her food* in harvest, and shall man, a rational being—man, whom his Creator has taught more than the beasts of the field and made wiser than the fowls of the heaven, suffer his " harvest to pass, his summer to end," without making any provision for a long, a long, a long eternity ? What would a fallen angel, what would the rich man in hell give for a single offer of redemption through the blood of the cross. A thousand worlds, were they at their disposal, would cheerfully be tendered in exchange.

Lastly, I would entreat you to the discharge of this duty by a concern for those

children, whom the Lord has given you, and whose souls are committed to your charge.

An affection for their offspring, and an anxiety for their welfare is felt, and manifested by all nations of men, and in every stage of society.—Parents cheerfully resign a part of their own ease to promote the ease of their offspring : They readily forego some comforts of life in order to advance the comfort of their children ; they rise early, invent different schemes, endure a thousand difficulties to render their outward condition easy and respectable ; but this parental affection is not half indulged, if their nobler interests, their spiritual and everlasting concerns are neglected. Are they materially profited—have you rendered them any essential advantage, should your industry secure for them even the world, while they have no scriptural prospect of happiness beyond the grave ? And remember that of all divine institutions, the gospel dispensed in purity and simplicity, has most generally been made effectual for the salvation of souls. This is the rod of Jehovah's strength, with which sinners in every age have been subdued to the obedience of faith. He has left it on record, both for our admonition and encouragement, that he “ delights in the gates of Zion, more than in all the dwellings of Jacob ;” that there he “ will command the blessing, even life forevermore.” Have you any rational hope that inferior means will be blessed to them, if the great duty of reverencing the sanctuary be

neglected? "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Being brought up in the habits of carelessness, your children will in all probability remain so, until, by the terrors of unavoidable damnation, they are startled from their slumbers. This should serve as a thousand arguments, rousing you to attend the means of instruction and salvation. Would not the thought be as worm-wood and gall to your spirits, that such a child which plays innocently around you, which frequently relieves your tedious hours with its tender conversation, should in a few years prove your reproach, and its own curse, by some vicious conduct? How would it rend your very soul to think that for some capital crime it should fall the victim of civil justice in the prison or at the scaffold? But what is this when compared with the more dreadful doom of being an outcast from heaven, an heir of wrath, and punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power? How could you answer for such neglect to those children, of whose being you were the instrument? How could you answer to that God, who gave them at first, and commanded you to "train them up in his nurture and admonition?" In sovereignty the Lord may "pluck them as brands out of the burning," and make them monuments of his grace; but if your duty is neg-

lected, you have neither reason nor scripture to expect it.

I might call you to habituate your offspring to the ordinances of God, from a regard even to their temporal respectability and happiness. —Are any lessons on morality which you can give, which are taught them in the common schools, or from the heathen philosophers so well calculated to form them virtuous men or useful citizens, as those which are derived from the glorious gospel? Dare you compare the ribaldry of a *Paine* with the heavenly principles of a *Solomon* in his proverbs, or a *Paul* and *Peter* in their epistles? Examine, in all its parts, his Age of Reason, which may more justly be called the essence of corruption and buffoonery, and see, whether he affords precepts either so pure in their nature or so weighty in their obligation, to qualify them for filling with propriety the different stations of life—for rendering them obedient children, dutiful parents, amiable citizens, or useful magistrates.

To all these I may add a concern for your neighbors around you, as another argument urging you to reverence the sanctuary. Every man is in some measure “his brother’s keeper,” and ought by precept and example to aim at promoting his welfare. Are *you* not influenced in some degree by the conduct of others? When you observe them cold and indifferent about their spiritual concerns, do you not feel a secret temptation to imitate

their conduct? Others will as probably be influenced by your example; and thus, thro' this treacherous neglect, not only your own souls may be lost, but others led to everlasting ruin, through the influence of your example.

Thus have I addressed you, in this familiar manner, on the importance of attending gospel ordinances. You appear obligated to this duty by considerations no less than the authority of the great God, gratitude to the divine Redeemer, the welfare of your own souls and the souls of your children and others. Are you convinced of their importance, and resolved to yield to these admonitions, or are you starting objections to justify your present neglect?

1. You may possibly object, that your residence is distant from the place of worship; that the necessities of your family require unwearied labor through the week; that you have no comfortable conveyance, and owing to the fatigue of hard labor are unable to walk.

This objection I should scarcely have expected from any who believe the worth of the soul, an approaching judgment, or endless eternity. What? Can you labor six days in providing for your bodies, and not even a part of the seventh in promoting the salvation of the soul? Can you encounter the toil of thirty, or forty, or fifty miles in going to market, to procure things temporal, and shrink from two or three, or four, to the sanctuary, for provi-

ding things eternal? Will you thus eagerly "labor for the meat that perisheth," and utterly neglect that "which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give?"

But not to mention your spiritual interest, which might be promoted, does not gratitude to your great Benefactor call for this small acknowledgment of his authority?—Who supports you in life, while multitudes are daily consigned to the silence of the grave? Who imparts to you health of body, while others around you languish in affliction, or who crowns with success the labors of the week? Do you not live, and breathe, and move in God, and is not every enjoyment a stream from his bounty? Thus highly favored of him through the week, is the employment unreasonable, is the task intollerable to repair on the sabbath to the sanctuary for celebrating the memory of his goodness? Or,

2. You may object that your condition is indigent; with much difficulty you can provide the necessaries of life, and are unable to dress yourselves or your children in a manner decent for appearing in public.

To this I might reply, that the "Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh to the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh to the heart." It is not a splendid outside, a body richly adorned, which receives the divine approbation, but the soul sanctified by his grace, resting on his righteousness, thirsting for his communion. Besides, it is to such

that the promise is more immediately directed. "To the poor the gospel is preached." "Not many wise men, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." To shew his utter contempt of all human glory, it was with the externally obscure and indigent, that the great God our Saviour usually associated on earth; and to such his salvation is yet more generally bestowed. If you, therefore, cannot recommend your children by outward pomp and grandeur, be the more industrious to have them adorned with the brighter and more unfading beauties of holiness: If you cannot promise them the wealth of this world, be more anxious to secure for them the better inheritance of immortal life. Never be ashamed to serve God with such raiment as his providence affords you.—As the rich man should not glory in his riches, neither should the poor man be ashamed of his poverty. Or,

3. Do you object that occasionally you have attended the preaching of the gospel, but without any sensible advantage; you feel no greater love to God, nor pleasure in discharging the duties of religion; you have obtained no satisfactory assurance of pardon, or salvation, and are therefore discouraged from attending?

To attend the means of grace, without receiving any saving advantages from them, is reason of regret, and humiliation, but will

by no means justify you in the utter neglect. In temporal affairs, if the first attempt be unsuccessful, we repeat and redouble our exertions. Because the prospects of the husbandman have been frequently blasted by untimely frosts, or any other accident, does he pass a sullen resolution to cease from farther attempts : does he fold his arms in sloth, and conclude, if I perish, I perish ? Rather does not a sense of his wants rouse him to greater exertion ? Thus should we also persevere in spiritual concerns. A mere peradventure that the Lord will be gracious is sufficient encouragement for a patient and persevering attention to the means. Although in several instances the ordinance has been ineffectual, who knows but, on the next occasion, it may become the power of God to your salvation. Frequently did the woman of Canaan address the compassionate Jesus in behalf of her daughter ; she prosecuted her appeal with many arguments from her own necessities and his infinite fulness. Long did the venerable Jacob urge his plea with the Redeeming Angel and resolve not to let him go without the blessing ; Thirty-eight years did the diseased man wait at the pool without any apparent advantage ; But although their patience was long tried, and some of them seemingly reproved for their importunity, they were all successful applicants for mercy at last. Be encouraged, therefore, faithfully to persevere in attending this mean of salvation : “ Then shall you

know him, if you follow on to know the Lord." What is the toil of waiting even ten, or twenty, or thirty years, when compared with the prospect of an eternity of joy? On the other hand, are we profited by our present ease and indulgence, if that must issue hereafter in the damnation of hell?

4. Perhaps you introduce, as an apology for your neglect of ordinances, the immoral lives of many who do attend; they frequent, you say, the temple on the Lord's day, assume an air of sanctity, but during the week are as irreligious and profligate as others: they can profane the name of God, defraud their neighbours, haunt the public houses, drinking, rioting and revelling.

To this objection it is sufficient to reply, that their lessons of profligacy were not taught them in the sanctuary; this corruption of manners is the offspring, not of the ordinance, but of their not duly improving the ordinance. Is it generous, is it just, to charge upon christianity those faults which only exist among her insincere, unhallowed professors? Have any effrontery enough to impeach the gospel with the impure language of one man, when it requires holiness in all manner of conversation; with the intrigue and dishonesty of a second, when it commands to do to others as we would that others should do to us; or with the drunkenness of a third, when it explicitly enjoins upon her advocates, "let your moderation be known to all men; avoid

even the appearance of evil, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ?” With equal propriety might we ascribe the darkness of night to the splendors of the sun, or the noxious smell of the rotten carcase to the influence of that heat by which it is exhaled. Such immorality among professors, instead of prejudicing against the gospel, affords a new lesson of humiliation to ourselves ; it proves the extreme depravity of the human heart which the best means of themselves cannot subdue, and should render us more importunate in imploring the grace of the Spirit upon the ordinances which we attend.

5. You further reply, that the majority of mankind correspond with you in opinion and conduct ; that many live like yourselves in the entire neglect of ordinances, who nevertheless appear as happy in their minds, and as prosperous in their worldly pursuits, as those who are diligent in their attention.

This consideration may satisfy *you* in the contempt of the gospel, but to me it appears an awful proof of its truth and importance. Are we not taught “ that few shall be saved ;” that “ strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth to life, and there be few that find it ?” I must confess, that I never reflect on the security of mankind in general about their spiritual and immortal interests, but a secret horror impresses me from that passage, “ broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat.” I feel

more powerfully constrained to "make my own calling and election sure." Would it not be a miserable consolation to you when convicted at the tribunal of the great Judge, that others were doomed to the same perdition with yourself; or in hell, that others were tormented in the same unquenchable flames? Be not, therefore, influenced by the example of the multitude, but "strive that ye may enter in at the strait gate: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," by improving with diligence each mean of divine appointment.

6. It may also be objected. that you are furnished with a variety of books; that you have among you the holy scriptures, and other pious practical writings, and think that in the perusal of these, you can spend the day more to your comfort and edification than in hearing an ordinary preacher.

Was the preaching of the gospel founded on human authority, or supported merely by human command, this objection might have considerable weight: but is not this, no less than baptism, the holy supper, and every other gospel institution, appointed by the Lord Christ, as the great King and Head of his Church, and therefore ought conscientiously to be observed by the children of Zion out of reverence to their King? To condemn or neglect the ordinance, is to trample on that authority by which it was instituted. "Go," was the sovereign command, first to apostles,

and through them to faithful ministers their successors—"Go, preach the gospel to every creature. He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Besides, the glory of God claims our chief, our pre-eminent regard; this ought uniformly to be preferred to our own convenience, or any other consideration, and unquestionably his glory is promoted more by public and social than by secret devotion, however duly performed. Do we not lift a more pointed, more elevated testimony to the truth of the gospel, and proclaim more generously our glorying in the Saviour's cross, by publicly repairing to his house, solemnly seating ourselves in his presence, raising our voices in his praise, pouring out our hearts before him in social supplication, reverently attending to his message as uttered by his ambassadors, or encircling his table to receive the symbols of his body and blood, than in private devotion, however duly or conscientiously performed? That the possession of these pious, practical authors is a distinguishing privilege, and that we ought carefully to improve them, is readily acknowledged; but one duty ought never to be discharged to the exclusion of another: otherwise God will be dishonored and our spiritual edification prevented. The great God has ordained a variety of means, both private and public, for our salvation, and it is equally our interest and duty to improve them in

the order he has appointed. Will he who has imparted to his servants a great diversity of gifts, who has positively enjoined them, "teach all nations, preach the gospel, hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me;" and his people, "take heed how ye hear; forget not the assembling of yourselves together;" will he visit you with the consolations of his spirit, living in the violation of commands so explicit? Every ordinance, as to its efficacy, depends on the blessing of the Holy Ghost, and this blessing is to be expected only in his appointed way.—The same virtue existed in *Pharpar* and *Abana*, rivers of *Damascus*, as in the waters of *Jordan*; yet the leper might have washed in them seventy times seven without removing his disease. The gospel preached in its native purity and simplicity, is the mean which God has eminently countenanced for the conversion, and salvation of sinners. "He delighteth in the gates of *Zion* more than all the dwellings of *Jacob*."

Lastly It may be objected, that a variety of denominations exist: Each arrogate truth as their peculiar prerogative; they are frequently contending with each other; you know not, therefore with which to unite, and perhaps imagine that there is little sincerity with any of them.

It is a fact equally obvious and humiliating that with the same bible in our hands, there appears such a diversity of opinion with re-

spect to matters of religion, but this consideration only proves the darkness of human reason; that here we see only in part, and often erroneously; and instead of relaxing our diligence, or encouraging an utter contempt of religion it should prompt to a more patient and impartial inquiry after truth. The mistake of one professor, in forming his religious creed, will not justify you in making no profession. Because some hold the truth in *unrighteousness*, is it reasonable in you not to hold it at all? Are we not rather commanded "to prove all things; to try the spirits whether they be of God;" to bring their doctrines to the scriptures, the infallible standard, and either receive or reject as they may direct.

Now, dearly beloved, I have addressed you with much plainness on the importance of attending public ordinances: I have heard with patience your different objections, and I trust have fully shewn them to be such as can neither satisfy your consciences here, nor hereafter support you at the more dreadful tribunal of your Judge. What resolution are you now forming? Will you dare to continue in the habitual neglect of this institution of the living God; and can you escape in this neglect? Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands, and lay eternally under the wrath of Almighty God? Can you, who are but fading flesh, can you dwell with devouring flames; can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Are you so easily discouraged at the prospect of toil and difficulty, as to refuse traveling

two, or three, or four miles, to hear the gospel of reconciliation ; and yet will you run the hazard of never-ending pain ? Would it not overwhelm your spirits to be excluded the society of men ; to be doomed to some lonely desert ; or for a capital crime to be consigned to the horrors of a dungeon there to languish for life ; and yet can you endure the thought of being everlastingly separated from the communion of God, of blessed angels and men ; to be doomed to the blackness of darkness forever, where evil angels will eternally triumph over you as the simple prey of their temptations, and evil men, your present companions in sin, will aggravate your torment, by deriding you as the instruments of their damnation ? “ Hear this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces when there is none to deliver.”

Again : Is it a small thing to recompence with such ingratitude the great God, our Saviour : him whose love was so distinguishing that, passing by the angels, he assumed the nature of man : whose love was so astonishing as to procure our redemption from wrath, by the effusion of his own blood ? Behold ! O sinner, and tell ; was ever love to be mentioned with the Saviour's love ? Although he was rich, possessed of all divine excellence and glory, yet for thy sake and mine he became poor, appeared without comeliness or form, was despised of men, and a reproach of the people ? Was ever love, O fellow sinner, to

be compared with the love of the Son of God, who, though blessed, ineffably blessed from eternity, in his Father's bosom for our sake became a curse, was obedient unto the death of the cross; and yet shall we despise the redemption he has procured? Does he condescend to wait from sabbath to sabbath; does he ordain ambassadors to propose in his name overtures of peace, and shall his message be deliberately contemned? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? The Queen of the South will rise up in Judgment against you, because she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but behold a greater than Solomon is here, addressing you through the medium of his servants, yet his voice is rejected with disdain. The unsinning angels will appear for your condemnation, because although they had no personal concern in Messiah's redemption, they hastened to the place of his birth, and with transports of joy hailed his appearance in the world while you, whose nature he assumed, whose guilt he sustained and for whose salvation he suffered, can live from week to week without expressing your gratitude by repairing to his house. The very heathen of the wilderness shall be brought forward as awful witnesses against you hereafter: Aided by nothing but the obscure light of reason, what costly schemes have they embraced for appeasing the wrath of their gods; thousands of rams have bled upon their altars; rivers of oil have

flowed forth as libations ; the first born, the fruit of their body, has frequently been offered a sacrifice for the sin of their souls : But when pardon has been procured you ; when this pardon is announced in the everlasting gospel to all that will receive it, yet you deliberately reject it. Your very anxiety about your temporal interests, and your industry in pursuing them, must hereafter appear as a witness against your indifference and sloth about your eternal concerns. How eagerly do you labor for the meat that perisheth : You submit to every hardship ; you endure alike the scorching sun of summer, and the chilling blasts of winter ; at the expence of your ease, and the hazard of your health, you can spend the night in repairing to, or returning from the market ; all to secure a subsistence for this short, uncertain life ; but alas ! how cold, how indolent, in providing for the soul, which never dies. Will your hearts endure, will your arms be strong, gospel despisers, when the compassionate Saviour, provoked by this presumptuous neglect, shall appear terribly to judgment ? Where will you flee for help, when Jesus, the *Divine*, the *only Mediator*, who now waits to be gracious, shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel ; on thee, thou inhabitant of Salem, living in the neglect of his ordinances ? What wilt thou reply, when that awful charge is thundered in thine ears, I called by such a

minister and ye refused ; I stretched out my hands in the sanctuary with the olive branch of peace, but you would not regard ; I now laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh ? O brethren, be entreated to “acquaint now yourselves with God, and be at peace ; to seek righteousness, to seek meekness that you may be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.”

I now conclude, beseeching you, as a brother, whose bosom moves with concern for your everlasting welfare ; as a fellow-sinner, who was involved by nature in the same wretchedness, and who declares, as in the presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, that he esteems salvation by free grace, through the blood of Jesus, as more to be desired than a thousand worlds ; as a minister of the gospel, who ought, and unfeignedly desires, to travail as in birth for your saving conversion to God : who is authorised and enjoined to go about the streets and lanes pressing you to come in ; under all these characters let me beseech you to consider your ways. Under a sense of having lost former precious opportunities, be the more industrious in improving your privileges hereafter. The message in this familiar address is carried home to your houses ; already it is transcribed as it were in the volume of God, and, I tremble to add, if misimproved shall appear to your condemnation, in that awful hour when “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

“If you have any care of your eternal estate ; if you have the least compassion towards your immortal soul ; if you have any rational consideration dwelling in your mind : if all be not defaced through the power of lust and love of sin, you cannot but regard yourself as unspeakably concerned in this proposal : but now, if instead hereof you give yourself up to the power of unbelief, the will of Satan, the love of your lusts, and this present world, so as to take no notice of this message from God, nor once seriously to enquire after the nature and importance of the terms proposed, can you, shall you be delivered ? Will your latter end be peace ? The Lord knows it will be otherwise with you, and that to eternity.”

That a merciful God, whose you are by nature, whose patience you have long abused by the neglect of his ordinances, and at whose bar you must shortly receive your irreversible doom, may persuade you to regard “ in this your day, the things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes ;” that HE may “ bring you to the holy mountain” of his church, and “ make you joyful in his house of prayer” as a pledge of introducing you hereafter, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly of the first born,” is the prayer of your unfeigned friend, and devoted, although unworthy, servant in the gospel of Jesus.

A. PROUDFIT.

Salem, September 17, 1800.

SERMON XI.

LUKE VIII. 18.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.

PERHAPS in no part of our country are the inhabitants more distinguished for their uniform attendance upon the ordinances of grace than in the town where we reside : There are few places of public worship more crowded from sabbath to sabbath than the sanctuary in which we are now assembled.— This external respect for religion is amiable, and ought to be encouraged. “ Bodily exercise,” although it “ profiteth little,” yet it is more profitable than no exercise because a visible church is thus maintained in the world, and they who appear in the temple enjoy the means of salvation, and have the promise of mercy from Jehovah. “ For there the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life forevermore.” There may be the *hearing ear* without the *understanding heart*, yet without the former the latter is not to be expected. “ Faith cometh by hearing,” it is ordinarily produced by the word of truth as the instrument, and therefore in the deliberate neglect of this word it is presumption to ask the blessing, as a man, when diseased, would be presumptuous in expecting a cure while he neglects the medicine offered him, or the man wasted with hunger would expect his strength to be renewed while he refuses

the nourishing bread. Yet this outward attention to the administration of the word is insufficient without the proper improvement of it : Many enter the sanctuary on earth, who, we have reason to fear, will never be admitted within the walls of the temple above, nor invited to “ sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; Many will say to the Saviour in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say unto them I know you not whence you are ; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.” My design in this discourse is to keep you from resting on the form of religion ; it is to shew you how the ordinance may be improved for your spiritual and everlasting advantage,

We are therefore naturally called,

I. To enquire into the nature of the exercise recommended ; and

II. When we ought more especially “ to take heed ”

The exercise recommended,

I. Implies a firm belief that the doctrines which we hear are the truth of the Living God, and a profound reverence for them as such. Was this persuasion more generally entertained, the word preached would have a more deep and lasting effect on the hearer. Many go to church as a matter of course :

their external deportment is respectful, and apparently solemn ; they afterwards express their approbation of the discourse, and of him who delivers it : But do they really consider it as the truth of Jehovah ? Are they fully impressed with the conviction that every promise, and every threatening will be accomplished either sooner or later. The apostle speaking of the Hebrews declares, “ the word preached did not profit them ;” it was not accompanied with any saving efficacy upon their hearts, “ not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” We cannot therefore *hear the word* in a becoming, profitable manner without a full persuasion of its truth ; without duly realising that all the threatnings will be executed upon the impenitent, and that all the promises being “ yea and amen” will be fulfilled to the righteous either in grace or in glory. “ He that cometh unto God must believe that he is :” that he is a Being infinitely perfect, and will display these perfections “ in rewarding such as diligently seek him,” or in pouring his fury on the enemies of his government. This reverence for the word ; this firm persuasion of its truth the apostle highly recommends in the Thessalonian hearers. “ For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man but as the word of God which worketh also effectually in you who believe it.”

2. This exercise implies an application of the truths delivered as interesting to ourselves in particular. It is not enough that we give the hearing ear, or that we yield to it the assent of the understanding as a message from God, but we should apply it as his message to ourselves particularly. The want of this application is another great reason why the gospel preached is unprofitable to so many who hear it. While the preacher is announcing in his Master's name that "without faith it is impossible to please God, that except we repent we must all likewise perish; that if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ he must be anathema, maranatha" accursed from his gracious presence, the hearers should recollect that all these denunciations are levelled against them while they continue destitute of *faith*, or *repentance*, or *love*: each ought immediately and impartially to examine, "am I really a partaker of this precious faith; do I possess the marks of that repentance which issues in life everlasting? Has the love of God been shed abroad through my heart by the Holy Ghost and is it evidenced by a respect for all his commandments? While the preacher in the name of his Master declares, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and shall not enter into condemnation; they who are begotten again to this lively hope are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; as many as are led by the spirit of God they are the Sons of God,

and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; all things shall work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose,' the children of the kingdom may apply these truths for their immediate consolation, and triumph. In the confidence of a living faith they may be secretly exulting, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ; all the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to that glory which shall be revealed in us; we will now take up and carry along every cross with all submission in the prospect of that crown of glory which awaits us in reversion." We ought thus to *take heed how we hear* by making a diligent, impartial application of the truths delivered, either for conviction or consolation. This is called in scripture, "receiving the ingrafted word which is able to save our souls;" we must receive, incorporate the word with our hearts, as the man must receive the bread who expects his body to be nourished, or as we must receive the wine and milk to be refreshed or exhilarated by them.

3. This exercise implies a resolution to aim at reducing to practice the truths, which we do hear. All our knowledge of divine mysteries whether acquired at home, or in the sanctuary is profitable only as it tends to purify the heart and regulate the conduct. The ministry of reconciliation is not designed merely to make us *wiser* but *better*; not to

fill the head with correct notions, or speculations, but to impress the heart with pure principles, and motives; not merely to render us capable of declaiming against the odiousness of sin, and painting the beauties of virtue, but rather to make us actually abhor the one and esteem and practise the other.

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts; not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may know what is that good, and holy, and acceptable and perfect will of the Lord.” The apostle James therefore exhorts “be ye doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves: Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, not being a forgetful hearer, but doer of the word, that man shall be blessed in his deed.” Such also is the doctrine taught by our Lord in the parable of the sower. “He that received seed into good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit: it *beareth fruit*: The word of truth is a living principle and when deposited in a kindly soil springs up presenting the blade and ear, and ripening corn, “some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty.”

Is the duty of taking heed *how we hear* so important in itself, is it so essentially requisite to our comfort, and profit, when ought we especially to be exercised in taking heed how we hear?

This was our second proposition and remains now to be considered.

1. We ought to be exercised in *taking heed* before we repair to the place of public worship. If we enter the house of God without previously preparing our hearts by devout contemplation, and prayer, the word preached will probably be to us as seed dropping on the highway where the soil is hard and unkindly ; where it lies uncovered and exposed, liable to be trodden under foot by every traveller, or to be snatched up by every bird that passeth along, or where, should it even be permitted to remain, it has no opportunity of taking root, or springing up and bearing fruit : If we enter the sanctuary with our hearts filled and perplexed with the cares of the world the preached word will probably be to us like the seed falling among thorns where it is hampered, and has no room to grow up and expand and present a liberal harvest, or if it is permitted to grow the *blade* must remain sickly, and the fruit withered and unprofitable. We ought therefore to aim at preparing our souls for the reception of the word by prayer, by meditation, and other appropriate means. Many promises are recorded to encourage us in attending the temple of the Living God. “ The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob : He will abundantly bless her provision and satisfy her poor with bread : ” These promises on the morning of the christian sabbath we should

convert into prayers expostulating with Zion's King that he "would do as he has said:" Numerous instances are related of his presence in his courts, accompanying with energy the administration of the word. "He opened the heart of Lydia," inclining, and enabling her "to attend to the things which were spoken by the apostles;" his grace co-operated with the ministry of a Paul, a Peter, a Silas, and others, for the conversion of thousands who heard them: Therefore as we are preparing ourselves for going to the temple of our Father, and as we are sitting in his temple we may supplicate that his presence might be with us, as it was with Moses on the mount, or with his disciples in the upper room convened for his worship; that he would *breathe* on our hearts as he did on theirs, commanding us "to receive the Holy Ghost." We ought to reflect on the deep, infinite interest which we have in the message to be delivered; that if it is not the "savour of life unto life, it must prove the savour of death unto death;" if it is not effectual for our conversion, and salvation it must issue in our more aggravated guilt, and condemnation. By reflections of this nature we should rouse up our souls to a holy diligence in improving the message of life. How importunate was David one moment with his own soul, "to awaken it," and another moment with his God for his fellowship in the temple of his grace? "Awake up psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early;

O send out thy light and thy truth that they may be guides unto me." Equally fervent were the supplications of Moses as he approached the house of his God. "Lord, shew me thy glory ; if thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence ; what will avail the service of the outer court, or the voice of a mortal addressing the ear, or the fellowship of the visible worshippers if I am not admitted within the vail, if I have no communion with the Father in his love, with the Son in his grace, or the holy Spirit in his consolations." The soul of the hearer thus interested and solemnised by reading, by contemplation upon the promises, by prayer to a holy God for his Spirit to enlighten and sanctify is like the soil mellowed by the hands of the husbandman ; it is prepared for the reception of the good seed, and under the fostering showers of heaven may be expected to "bring forth thirty, or sixty, or an hundred fold."

2. We ought especially to *take heed* when we are seated in the sanctuary. We should aim at dismissing every idle, much rather, every worldly, wanton thought, and cherishing a solemnity of spirit answerable to the majesty of that God whose presence we have approached. "He will be sanctified by all them that draw near him, and by all the people he will be glorified." We ought to consider that the great God walks in the "midst of the golden candlesticks ;" that he

notices whether they are carefully trimmed and burning ; whether the graces of the worshipers are lively and vigorous ; whether they are receiving with faith, and love, and gratitude the message of peace and salvation as announced by his servants ; whether their hearts are ascending on the wings of devout contemplation to Jehovah as their exceeding joy and all satisfying portion.

The moment that we enter the threshold of the temple we should consider the awful solemnity of our situation ; realising that the sanctuary on earth is an emblem of the sanctuary above, where nothing unclean shall ever be admitted ; where there “ shall not enter any thing that defileth, neither that which doeth iniquity ;” that we are surrounded with an innumerable company of angels who are anxious spectators of our conduct ; who rejoice to witness our repentance, our joys, our hopes, and who weep, if angels can weep, at beholding the last mark of inattention, or irreverence. Above all in entering the walls of the house of God we should consider that we are in the presence of that Being who “searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men, and will render to every one according to their works :” who marks every expression of the countenance, every attitude of the body, and explores with infinite jealousy the darkest recesses of the mind. It is this lively, spiritual frame which renders ordinances both delightful and profitable : Un-

der the influence of such a disposition the hearer will be constrained to acknowledge, “surely it is good for me that I draw near unto God ; a day in thy courts is better than a thousand in the tents of wickedness : How dreadful is this place ; it is no other than the house of God ; it is the gate of heaven : My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.”—

The gospel of peace proclaimed in its simplicity by the ambassadors of Jesus becomes refreshing to him as the showers of rain to the parched earth, or as the cooling stream to the man who is languishing with thirst.

Shall I repeat it again that the moment we enter within the walls of the sanctuary every thought of the heart should “be holiness to the Lord ;” every feature of the face, every gesture of the body as an index should express the solemnity and devotion of the spirit : But, ah, how different frequently is the conduct of worshippers in the visible church ? Some allow themselves in unnecessarily withdrawing, and returning in the time of divine service ; whereby their own hearing is interrupted, the speaker necessarily embarrassed, the outward order of ordinances broken, and the edification of those around them prevented, and this restlessness of behaviour is an awful proof of an unsanctified heart, that like Doeg “we are detained before the Lord,” and do not feel at home in the sanctuary. How mortifying to see others indulging themselves in sleep, yielding to the influence of a drowsy,

indolent frame ? No doubt the most vigilant worshipper through the frailty of nature may be sometimes overtaken, but can we suppose that they who habitually sleep in the house of God are under the influence of a gracious frame ? Can they feel those grateful, elevated emotions which transported the bosom of the Patriarch when he exclaims, “ how dreadful is this place,” or of David when he devoutly acknowledges, “ blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee : I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Is it probable that a man who is hungry will fall asleep over a table replenished with nourishing food, or that he who is ready to famish with thirst will drop asleep by the cooling, refreshing fountain, or can he who truly hungers, and thirsts after righteousness fall asleep in the sanctuary where Jesus the living bread is offered, and rivers of consolation are flowing ? Others again are easily diverted amidst the solemnities of public worship ; their fancies are amused by every trifling incident. Any thing awkward in the dress, or deportment of those around them will attract their attention, and steal away their thoughts from the dread realities of death, and judgment, and eternity. We ought thus to “ take heed how we hear,” by keeping our hearts with all diligence while we attend this ordinance of the Living God ; we ought to aim at shaking off a slothful, drowsy disposi-

tion on the one hand, and at watching against every appearance of irreverence and levity on the other. “ Sanctify the Lord God of hosts in your hearts ; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”

3. We ought to “ take heed” after we have retired from the sanctuary by reflecting upon, and improving the truths which we have heard. That hearer is greatly mistaken who imagines that his duty is discharged, when the sermon is finished, and the congregation dismissed. The husbandman does not consider his labor as ended when the seed is thrown upon the earth ; he is careful to cover it over with the kindly soil, and thus secure it from the scorching influence of the sun ; he fences it around, and thus protects it from the beasts of the field which might devour it ; he examines occasionally whether the seed is taking root, and if it perishes in the earth he is anxious to discover the cause ; he frequently notices its progress after it starts above the earth, and longs for its perfection in autumn. Thus eager ought the hearer of the word to be, nay, much more eager, because interests inconceivably greater are depending : If the word of truth has no efficacy upon his heart ; if it is not instrumental in producing the fruits of humility and holiness, he not only loses his own soul, but the very means of salvation which he enjoyed will issue in the aggravation both of his guilt, and torment. It becomes us therefore as we depart from the

place of public worship to be revolving in our minds the truths which we have heard ; to realize our deep, everlasting concern in them, to commit them by frequent, fervent prayer to that spirit of all grace, who can bring them to our remembrance when necessary, and make them effectual to our salvation : “ The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul ; the testimonies of the Lord are sure making wise the simple, the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.” It becomes us occasionally to enquire whether it has this enlightening, purifying, and elevating influence on our hearts ; whether under the institutions of the sanctuary from sabbath to sabbath, we are becoming more humble, more holy, and heavenly in our thoughts and conversation ; whether by the holy fire from the altar our hearts are gradually more enflamed with love to God, and good will to all men. I have either read or heard of a pious woman who, being questioned what she recollected of the sermon, replied she could not repeat much of it, but was confident that she loved the Saviour more than when she went. Thus a heart sensibly melted by the influence of redeeming love ; *moulded* into the image of Jesus and longing for his communion is a most blessed effect of the gospel preached ; this is a thousand times more important than all clearness of the head in knowing his doctrine, or all fluency of the tongue in talking about it. This was the happy effect of Paul’s preaching

on the inhabitants of Thessalonica. "Ye know what manner of entrance we had unto you and how ye turned from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." It therefore becomes all carefully to *take heed* after they have returned from the house of God ; to be laying up his truth in their hearts, frequently pondering upon it, and practising it in their lives. We are thus admonished to " give the more earnest heed to the things which are spoken lest at any time we should let them slip ;" and it is worthy of remark that among the three classes mentioned in the parable to whom the word preached was ineffectual, it was lost by their want of attention after it was heard. " One received it by the way side," permitted it to lie exposed on the surface, and " the fowls of the air came and carried it away ;" they were not careful to treasure it up in their memories, and to be often revolving it as the " joy and rejoicing of their hearts : Another received it among thorns, and these afterwards springing up choked it ; the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires of other things" occupied that place in the heart to which divine truth was entitled, and prevented it from producing any saving effect : " A third received the seed in stony places ;" and although it appeared promising for a season, yet afterwards the sun arose with its scorching influence and " the blade which had ap-

peared for a little withered away :” persecution arose because of the word, and these hearers not being firmly established in the faith, “ not deeply rooted and grounded in love,” apostatized from their holy profession.

From this doctrine thus explained we may infer

1. That to improve the dispensation of the word in a suitable, profitable manner is not merely an important, but an arduous attainment. It requires little exertion to “ make clean the outside,” to dress the body in a manner decent and respectable ; to go the distance of a few miles to the place of public worship ; to conduct with outward propriety and appear decent in the estimation of our fellow worshippers, but deeply to interest the heart, and prepare it by meditation and prayer for the reception of divine truth ; to keep it ardently awake, and solemnized, and impressed with the importance of the exercise ; to sit in the sanctuary with all the simplicity of little children, and receive every truth not as the word of man but of the Living God ; to comprehend it in our understandings, to treasure it carefully in our memories, to conduct agreeably to its dictates in all our intercourse both with God, and the world ; to be constrained by its influence to discharge with strict conscientiousness every duty which we owe to our Creator, our Redeemer, ourselves, and our brethren of mankind, to make this improvement of the word which we hear is

no ordinary, nor easy attainment. And it is certainly a very alarming consideration that among four classes of hearers enumerated in the parable of the sower, there was only one class which heard it to the glory of God, and their own eternal advantage. Some are represented as "hearing the word of the kingdom but not understanding it ;" they do not duly realise its value ; they are not careful to digest it in their own minds, and "the wicked one cometh, and taketh away that which was sown in their hearts : " Others upon hearing the word "receive it with a momentary joy ;" they feel some flashes of affection, they form some resolutions of turning to the Living God, but these impressions not being founded on solid conviction are of short duration "for when tribulation or persecution arise because of the word they are offended : " they love the praise of man more than the glory of God, or prefer their present ease, and interest to their everlasting salvation. A third class hears the word, attends on the service of the church, "but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires of other things destroy its efficacy, and they remain unfruitful ; they are so occupied with the business of the world, and agitated with the concerns of the world that they rarely have leisure for reflecting on these truths ; neither do they rejoice in them as the charter of their future hopes : Only one class receives it with due affection, and improve it

as “ the wisdom of God, and the power of God for salvation.” Ought not this consideration to rouse the attention of every hearer of the gospel ? Although the parables are not to be interpreted in a sense strictly literal, yet there is generally a very near analogy between the representation which they make, and the moral to be drawn from them. Is it not therefore an affecting thought that of the multitude who attend the administration of the word such a small proportion are savingly profited ? One is perhaps in the sanctuary on the sabbath, and is a slave to sensual gratifications through the week, fulfilling upon every opportunity “ the desires of the flesh, and of the mind ;” living in carnal pleasure and thus morally dead although naturally alive. Another who is taught in the temple that we cannot serve God and mammon ; that if any man love this world the love of the Father is not in him,” and yet from his conduct and conversation we are obliged to conclude that God is scarcely in all his thoughts ; that the present world occupies the throne both in his esteem, and affections : Another hears in the sanctuary that a “ man is not profited should he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul,” he is urged to “ seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof ; to strive that he may enter in at the strait gate, yet how few of his moments are employed through the week in “ searching the scriptures which make wise unto salvation ;” in

supplication to God for the assurances of his love, for satisfactory evidences of his pardon, and adoption, and a title to eternal glory ; for the encrease of “ that faith which worketh by love, which purifies the heart, and overcomes the world ; ” or in self-examination, impartially trying whether he possesses the marks of “ that washing of regeneration, that renewing of the Holy Ghost, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

Beloved brethren, many of you have sat long under the dispensation of the gospel ; the celestial light has shone clearly around you, and the voice of mercy has addressed you again, and again. Jehovah in his infinite forbearance has borne with you *ten or twenty, or thirty, or forty* years : During this long tract of time you have breathed as it were in an atmosphere of religion by enjoying the privileges of the sabbath and sanctuary, but how have you heard ? What change has the *word preached* produced on your hearts, and lives ? Are you more conscientious in the discharge of every duty which is incumbent upon you in all the relations of life ? By the influence of the word are you rendered more fervent in prayer, more charitable to the poor, more forgiving to those who injure you, more temperate in all things, more watchful over your own hearts, and words and actions, endeavoring that all be regulated by the infallible standard of divine truth ? Are you inclined by it to live more habitually under im-

pressions of the fleeting, unsatisfying nature of every thing earthly ; more frequently to realise the hour of death when you must part forever with this world and its pleasures and profits, to reflect more habitually on a “ judgment to come” when you must render a minute, impartial account of your conduct, and be adjudged unalterably either to heaven or to hell ? How often by the ministry of the word has the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, been expostulating, “ behold I stand at the door and knock,” but have you cordially admitted him ; are you supremely rejoicing in him as your only salvation and glory ?

Are there some of you who cannot answer these enquiries in the affirmative ? Are you conscious that “ the word preached has not materially profited ;” that it has not imparted any saving light to your understandings, nor holiness nor comfort to your hearts ? Are you sensible of the danger of neglecting the *great salvation*, and would you from this time attend with greater diligence to the things which belong to your peace ? Then affectionately would I cherish those resolutions, and offer you the following directions.

1. Embrace with ardent solicitude every opportunity of hearing the word preached : Let not the suggestions of carnal ease, or any other consideration tempt you to neglect this ordinance appointed by Jehovah for your instruction, and salvation. “ Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

The word delivered in simplicity and purity, has proved to souls without number the dawn of heaven, the commencement of never ending glory. "Born," says the apostle Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Although the "wind bloweth where it listeth, yet it is in the use of means that its enlivening influences may be confidently expected, and are usually felt. While Ezekiel *prophesied*, the breath of the Lord came upon the dry bones in the valley of vision, the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost was imparted, and "they lived and stood up an exceeding great army."

2. When you are seated in the sanctuary of God let nothing divert your attention from the things which are spoken; consider that you are hearing for your souls, for judgment, for eternity, and that you are unspeakably, infinitely interested in the message. The oracles of the Living God will not, cannot be without an important effect. If this lamp which came down from heaven does not lead you to holiness and heaven, it will serve to lead you deeper and deeper into the regions of never ending torment. Every sermon misimproved will add to the fury of the flames, and the venom of the tormenting worm. A Divine of a foreign country, and former age remarks, "if the word is not effectual for your conversion it will be effectual for your con-

denmation ; if it does not make your hearts better it will render your chains heavier, and your hell hotter : Dreadful is their condition who go down to perdition ladened with sermons." Are these things real, with what solemnity should we sit under the ministry of reconciliation ? How should we listen to all that is spoken, as a patient listens to the prescriptions of his physician, or as a criminal would listen to the sentence of pardon announced by the lips of his Prince : Such was the conduct of Cornelius while the word of life was spoken by Peter. " We are all here present before God to hear all things which are commanded thee of God : " And Paul relates of the Bereans, " that they were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so." And while we are hearing we ought to look by prayer to the life-giving Spirit that he would clothe it with almighty energy upon our hearts ; " that the eyes of our understandings being enlightened we might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints."

3. Be careful to improve the message of life after you have heard it. As many sermons are lost by being heard without previous preparation, many are probably lost by being carelessly forgotten afterwards. *The incorruptible seed* left on the surface of the soul

almost necessarily *perishes* ; it neither takes root in the heart, nor springs up in the life ; it is not covered over, if the expression be allowed, by frequent and devout meditation ; it is not committed by prayer to him who can visit it with the fostering sun, and the refreshing showers, and therefore remains without fruit. If under the word preached you have experienced any convictions of sin ; any joy and peace through a knowledge of the Saviour ; any secret desires to walk hereafter more intimately with him, and to live more exclusively for him, see that these impressions be retained, and cherished : They are at least the common operations of the spirit, and it is dangerous in the extreme to resist, or neglect them. If you deliberately give yourselves up to carnal indolence or indifference, he may depart from you never to alarm or entreat with you any more. Be occasionally repeating the truths which you hear to others around you. This will be a mean of impressing them more deeply upon your own minds, and rendering them more permanently profitable to you.—“ While they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard them, and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Thus we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip.

Those also to whose hearts the word has been effectual both for conviction and conver-

sion may receive admonition from this passage. The word preached is designed “for the perfecting of the saints—until we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,” is such its blessed efficacy upon your hearts? Through its enlightening, and enlivening influence do you aim at “adding to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge, and to your knowledge brotherly kindness, and to your brotherly kindness charity, and thus become changed into the divine image from glory to glory? Are there precious occasions when you feel the power and see the glory of your God in the sanctuary, and are elevated in some degree above the cares and tumults of this vain, fluctuating earth? When you hear of the Saviour’s love to our world, and to you in particular, and of that salvation which he accomplished at an infinite expence, do your hearts sensibly expand, and glow with love to him? Are you melted into deep contrition for the imperfection of your past lives, and secretly resolving to love him more ardently, and serve him more perfectly in the time to come? Soaring on the wings of faith, and hope, and joy, are you longing for that world where you shall see him without a veil; where you shall enjoy him without a moment’s interruption, and praise him without a faltering voice, or wandering thought forever? Has the gospel already had this purifying, enlivening influence upon your hearts, adore Jehovah for what you

have experienced of his grace ; pray fervently to him that he would impart still greater efficacy to his most blessed word, “ enabling you to abound more constantly in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.” Alas, how far do even the generation of the righteous fall short of their duty in taking *heed how they hear* ? Are there not many sermons, many cautions against temptation, many admonitions to duty, many arguments for loving God, and pressing on towards perfection, of which they can give little account ? They go from the services of the church to their farms, or their merchandize, and the impressions produced by the *word preached* are transient “ as the morning cloud, and the early dew.” Beloved brethren, shake off this slothful frame as equally your reproach and your loss, and strive at becoming “ fervent in spirit” under the means which you enjoy. We receive not because we ask not ; we rarely feel the energies of divine grace co-operating with the word, rendering it *quick* and *powerful* for instruction and enlargement, because we rarely and languidly ask them : Like Moses were we often supplicating “ Lord, shew me thy glory ; if thy presence go not with me carry me not up hence ; or with David, “ open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,” or with the patriarch Jacob, “ I will not let thee go without the blessing,” how delightful and profitable would the ordinances of religion become to us ? The sanc-

tuary below would appear from sabbath to sabbath a lively emblem of the sanctuary above ; upon every occasion that we attend the tabernacles of divine grace we should be ready to conclude with the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, " It is good to be here : Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee."

Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

SERMON XII.

PROVERBS, XXIII. 13.

Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

FEAR is a passion deeply implanted in the bosom of man ; and through its influence we are naturally impelled to flee from danger whether real or imaginary. Fear, as mentioned by the inspired writers, sometimes signifies that secret dread or horror which rends the heart of the ungodly under a conviction of guilt and apprehension of wrath. " There is no fear in love," says the evange-

list, "but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment:" and as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Felix feared or *trembled*. Sometimes it expresses that cordial subjection which the child of adoption feels to his heavenly Father and may therefore be defined a gracious principle produced by the Holy Ghost, through the influence of which we are inclined to revere the authority of God, and observe all his commandments. "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." Through the constraining influence of this affection David exclaims, "my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy righteous judgments."

But the term *fear* frequently comprehends the whole of practical Godliness; all that esteem, and affection, and adoration which we owe as creatures to our Creator, and as ransomed sinners to our Redeemer. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man: For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The duties enumerated in the preceding discourses were generally of a stated nature, and to each of them we ought regularly to attend in their proper season, imitating the example of that illustrious pair whose history was already considered by "walking in all

the commandments and ordinances of the Lord." But our religion ought not to be merely occasional, or confined to the devotions of the closet, and family, and sanctuary. A filial fear of God, an ardent love to him, impressions of our necessary dependance on his providence, and of our obligations to live to his glory should possess the dominion of our hearts at all times and amidst all circumstances, whether we are actively occupied in the business of the world, or allowing ourselves in what is usually considered its innocent amusements. Our whole lives should thus be a continued act of homage to our Creator and Lord. To cultivate this habitual devotion of spirit is the design of the present discourse, and we shall therefore endeavor to consider—

I. The import of the admonition, *be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

II. The advantages attending this habitual reverence or devotion of spirit, and

III. Enumerate the means most happily calculated for promoting it.

Our intention is first, to explain the nature of the admonition, "be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

1. It implies constant and profound impressions of the divine immensity and presence. Jehovah is a being possessed of all possible excellence and glory ; he is infinite in every perfection of his nature, "in his wisdom, his power, his holiness, his justice, his

goodness and truth." Every name, every title, every attribute which can command our reverence and inspire our devotion is ascribed to him in the sacred oracles. He is entitled "the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible; the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; which no man hath seen nor can see; to whom belong honor and power everlasting." All that is great, all that is glorious throughout creation is only a ray from this sun; is only a drop from this ocean; it is mere darkness compared with the effulgence of that glory which dwells in creation's Lord. "Who in heaven may be compared to Jehovah? And who among the sons of the mighty may be likened to our God?" Yet possessing all this majesty and glory, HE is ever near, ever present; his arm supports, and his eye surveys creation with all its inhabitants; every thought, and word, and action, of all his creatures, at all times, and in all places, are perfectly open to his omniscient view. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord; do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" The soul may be considered as fearing Jehovah when it entertains becoming conceptions of his being and immensity: when it is uni-

formly filled with devout, adoring thoughts of him as the perfection of excellence and glory ; when it mentions his name or approaches him in acts [of devotion with the most profound humiliation and reverence. Such appears to have been the impression of David when he thus devoutly exclaims, " O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me ; thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising ; thou understandest my thoughts afar off ; thou compasses my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. Whither shall I go from thy spirit ? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold ! thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

2. This admonition implies a cordial concern for the approbation of God ; an unfeigned desire to perform what he requires, and to avoid whatever might displease or dishonor him. Actuated by this holy fear, the child of adoption will endeavor in all things to recommend himself to the acceptance of his heavenly Father ; he will " exercise" himself, like the apostle, " to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." The cold, formal professor is influenced principally by the opinions of the world ; he is concerned chiefly about " the outside of the cup and platter ;" if that be unspotted,

if he can so conduct as to secure the esteem and applause of men, his highest wishes are gratified : he aspires after no other or nobler object ; but essentially different and infinitely more exalted is “ the fear of the Lord ” recommended in the text : It directs us to court not the applause of mortals, but the approbation of heaven ; to abhor and avoid sin not as reproachful in the esteem of man, but as grieving and dishonoring to a gracious God. This filial fear nobly impressed the bosom of Joseph and supported him in the hour of temptation, “ how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ? ” Mark the principle by which he was actuated and inclined to resist the solicitation—Was it an apprehension that he might be degraded in the court of Pharaoh ? Was it a fear that his character might suffer reproach, or his name be mentioned with abhorrence by future generations ?—Although these consequences would have probably attended the commission of the crime, yet they were inconsiderable compared with the dishonor done to his great Creator. “ Sin against God ; ” defy that arm which supports me from hour to hour ; trample on that bounty which supplies each returning want ; abuse that forbearance, that long-suffering which spares me amidst ten thousand provocations ; forfeit that favor which is life, and incur that displeasure which is more dreadful than death ! The christian, under the influence of this child-like disposition, is ashamed and afraid

to cherish a thought secretly in his heart, which he would be ashamed or afraid to commit openly in the eyes of the world ; he will be disposed with “ the sweet singer of Israel ” earnestly to supplicate, “ search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting ; cleanse thou me from secret faults ; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have dominion over me : then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

3. This admonition implies a concern to honor God in the various exercises and enjoyments of the day : “ Man’s chief end is to glorify God,” and this we should aim at promoting not only in the employments, but even in the amusements of life ; in all our intercourse with the world no less than in the more immediate duties of religion. Do we allow ourselves moments for amusement or recreation, it should be with this design, that our bodies might be relaxed, our spirits refreshed, and we thus refitted for the service of Jehovah. Do we indulge ourselves in the lawful pleasures of life, in eating and drinking and sleeping : these indulgencies ought to be allowed not merely to satisfy our animal appetites, but that in the moderate use of these enjoyments, our bodies may be strengthened and prepared for serving our God and generation ; do we pursue with diligence our

ordinary occupations ; does the student eagerly prosecute his studies, his reading, and reflections ; this labor should be pursued, not that he may be considered eminent for talents or learning, but that his understanding may be more enlarged, that he may become more enlightened in the mysteries of creation or redemption, and capable of extolling the perfections of God as displayed in the infinite variety of his works : Does the husbandman enter upon his usual employments, and diligently pursue his calling either in the house or the field ; these labors should be followed not only to fulfil the law of industry enjoined upon man at his creation, not only to provide things necessary for himself and family, but that he may be able, as the apostle exhorts, “to give to him that needeth ;” that he may be able to imitate the example of the compassionate Saviour, who pronounced it “more blessed to give than to receive.” The honor of God ought thus to be consulted and advanced by all in every situation and relation of life. By habitually promoting this spiritual temper, by doing all in obedience to the divine authority, and with a view to the divine glory, our common employments become, as it were, religious exercises, and in pursuing the ordinary duties of life we are really advancing our spiritual and immortal interests. We are thus commanded, that “whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God.”

From this attempt to explain the import of the admonition, we are led to consider,

II. The advantages attending this habitual reverence and devotion of spirit.

1. By being "in the fear of God all the day long," we obey his explicit command and answer his design both in our creation and redemption. The living God is not satisfied with a part of our services ; he is not willing to divide our love, and our obedience with the *mammon* of this world. As our God and Redeemer he utterly refuses to admit a rival in the bosom of his people, but claims our supreme, our undivided homage and affection. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself," is his sovereign command ; "let him be your fear ; and let him be your dread : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ; this is the first commandment ; it is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." It is not merely our occasional worship when we formally engage in the duties of religion which is due to God and which he demands, but constant, devout impressions of his goodness and glory ; earnest, ardent outgoings of soul to him as our portion and joy. "The Lord" thus "appeared to Abraham and said unto him, I am the Almighty God ; walk before me and be thou perfect." This profound, uniform veneration of the Eternal ; this ardent, supreme affection to him as their portion and rejoicing was the

attainment after which the righteous formerly aspired as their glory and joy. "Enoch walked with God:" The royal Psalmist proclaims, "I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved: My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day, for I know not the numbers thereof: Whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

2. By being "in the fear of the Lord all the day long," we adorn his gospel, and recommend it to the admiration and esteem of the world. It is cause of humiliation and grief that the Lord Jesus is frequently "wounded in the house of his friends;" that the gospel of his glory suffers such reproach and injury from the lives of its pretended advocates.—Some are all devotion one day and all dissipation another day; they are all reverence in the temple and all riot in the tavern; that same mouth which is opened one hour to *bless God* in the family, is employed another hour either in cursing his name or reproaching "man that was created after the image of God;" those hands which in the morning were lifted up towards heaven in prayer are perhaps stretched out through the day in acts either of violence or fraud; the same person who upon one occasion "partakes of the cup of the Lord" by receiving the mysteries of our holy religion,

partakes, upon another occasion, “the cup of devils by surfeiting and drunkenness.” By such disorderly conduct men not only bring guilt upon their consciences, but they expose Christianity to the derision of its adversaries, and practically injure that cause which they professedly advocate. But by living “in the fear of the Lord ;” by uniformly conducting as in his presence, and discharging with tenderness the duties incumbent upon us in all the relations of life we “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour ;” we edify the generation of the righteous and shut the mouth of impiety and scorn. “For so is the will of God that by well doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” When the professed followers of the Lamb walk worthy of “HIM who hath called them to glory and virtue ;” when, as the Saviour exhorts, *they shine as lights in the world*, throwing around them in all companies the splendor of their graces ; evincing the purity of their principles by the purity of their practices, if they do not altogether gain the adversary, they at least confound him ; if they do not “almost persuade him to be a christian,” they cannot fail to soften his enmity against the cross ; they oblige him to consider those scriptures as more than “a cunningly devised fable,” which bring forth the fruits of love and piety to God, of good will and charity to men.

3. By being in “the fear of the Lord all the day long,” we unspeakably promote our own

peace and consolation. Real religion has “verily a great reward ;” it imparts a peace to the conscience and joy to the heart which *pass all utterance and understanding*. “Who hath woe, who hath sorrow, who hath contentions, who hath babbling, who hath wounds without cause, who hath redness of eyes ;” I may add, who hath torturing of conscience, who hath shame and confusion of face, who hath reproach from the world ; who hath remorse for what is past, who hath dreadful forebodings for what is to come : “He who tarries long at the wine, who goeth to seek mixed wine ;” he who is the slave of irregular, unmortified appetites ; he who is disorderly in his private walk, who is undutiful to God, and unrighteous to man. Who, on the other hand, possesses inward peace amidst every outward difficulty and storm ; who possesses the respect and confidence of the world ; who enjoys the approbation of his conscience and God ; who can reflect with pleasure on what is past, who can anticipate with composure and triumph whatever may or shall come ? The man who aims at walking *in the fear of the Lord* ; who conducts with circumspection and sobriety in all companies and amidst all circumstances ; who, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,” endeavors to “live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world ;” who consults the will of Jehovah as the reason, his word as the rule, and his glory as the end of his life. “The fear of

the Lord is the beginning," the perfection of "wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are peace : By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life."

4. By being in "the fear of the Lord all the day long," we are habitually prepared for the services and joys of the heavenly state. To a person who constantly maintains this spiritual frame, death is a change of place not of employment ; faith merely gives way to vision ; hope to fruition, and he exchanges the service, and the communion of God on earth to obey him more perfectly and enjoy him more fully in heaven ; he leaves his christian brethren and sisters, with whom he had agreeably associated here, to mingle with the redeemed of all countries who have gone before to his Father's kingdom ; with holy "angels that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word" what is a consideration infinitely more transporting, he goes to enjoy the Father in the eternal expressions of his love ; the Son in the riches of his grace ; the Holy Ghost in his abundant, everlasting consolations. Who can utter, what pen can describe, what imagination can conceive the peace, and the transport of such a character in the moment of dissolution ? Is the voice of the bridegroom heard "at the third, or the sixth, or the ninth, or the eleventh hour, he is always ready ; his loins are girded about, his

lights trimmed and burning, and he waiting the approach of his Lord " Does the messenger of death overtake him in an hour unexpected, does he steal in upon him " like a thief in the night," he may, he can, notwithstanding, triumphantly proclaim, " I am now ready to be offered ; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : O death, where is thy sting ; O grave, where is thy victory : Thanks be to God that giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ : " Although, if I may change the similitude, although the Jordan of death may overflow all its banks, although its billows may be raging and foaming, he beholds Jesus, our Joshua, with " the ark of the covenant " marching before him, directing his passage to the Canaan of eternal rest ; he hears him kindly expostulating " fear not ; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods they shall not overflow thee ; I will strengthen, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. " Thus, while " the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, the righteous hath hope in his death. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. "

Are such the advantages attending a life of practical, powerful religion ; a life spent in the fear and fellowship of Jehovah : some are, perhaps, enquiring how shall I attain to such privileges and prospects ? By what means

may I be enabled to walk more intimately with God and live more entirely for him ? To answer this enquiry in a plain, scriptural manner, is our third proposition to which your attention is now invited.

1. Maintain a constant dependance upon the eternal Redeemer, and be deriving daily and hourly from his fulness all necessary strength. This faith or reliance on the Son of God, I mention first, because it may be considered as the essence of living Godliness ; it may be pronounced “ the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending ” of every duty and every privilege. It is his own declaration and the truth of the declaration will be acknowledged by all who are acquainted with the deceitfulness of their own hearts “ without me ye can do nothing ; I am the green fir-tree, from me is thy fruit found : ” all our fruits of righteousness, of peace, of patience, of consolation, of hope, are as much derived from Jesus the everliving tree, as the sap in the branch is derived from the fountain. As we are first reconciled to the Father through the righteousness and mediation of the Son ; so our familiar walk and fellowship with the Father can be maintained only through Jesus as our propitiation and Advocate. “ Thro’ him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” In proportion, therefore, as we are strong in his strength, as we receive grace from this living head, in that very proportion we shall live to the glory of God, to

the advantage of his church, to the ornament of our christian profession, and to our own rejoicing in a dying hour. What was it that rendered them so distinguished in all the fruits of righteousness, so fervent in their love to God, so abundant in their charities to man, so zealous and steadfast in their holy profession; so *patient in tribulation*, so resigned in poverty and reproach, so calm and triumphant in danger and death? All their fervour, all their uniformity arose from this consideration, “they were strong in the Lord and in the power of his might: They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” Beloved brethren, would you obey the injunction contained in the text, would you discharge the duty and experience the consolation of “living in the fear of the Lord all the day long, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;” depend upon him every day, in all duties and in all difficulties, as “your wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Dost thou complain of spiritual death. He “is the resurrection and the life;” art thou in darkness relating either to thy present condition or thy future concerns, HE “leads the blind in ways they know not, and makes darkness light before them;” Does conscience accuse thee of many imperfections that thou art afraid to approach the mercy-seat or to call God thy Father? “There is redemption in his blood, even the forgive-

ness of sins :” Is thy soul distracted with ten thousand cares and anxieties ? “ He comforts all that mourn, and gives the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness :” Art thou afraid of being pressed down by the difficulties, or drawn aside by the allurements of the world ? “ He is able to keep thee from falling and present thee faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy :” In short, out of Jesus and the communion of his spirit and righteousness, all is darkness, and distraction, *vanity* now and *vexation* hereafter ; in Jesus and the fellowship of his offices, all is life, all is light, all is liberty, peace now and triumph and glory in the latter end.

2. Endeavor to begin each day with a lively, spiritual frame. In the morning our natural spirits are usually refreshed, they are most composed, and easily inclined to religious reflection ; they are not then perplexed with the cares of the world nor soured by its vexations and disappointments. *Strive*, therefore, that your first thoughts be devoted to God and your everlasting concerns : The moment, that your eyes awake from natural sleep fix your meditations on some enlivening doctrine of christianity. There is an almost infinite variety of subjects to which your thoughts might be usefully and agreeably directed. The goodness of Jehovah towards man at his creation in forming “ him after his own image,” in teaching him “ more than the beasts of the field” and qualifying him

for nobler enjoyments ; his grace in accomplishing a method for our recovery through his eternal Son, and in restoring us even to a greater degree of glory and happiness than was lost by our apostacy. Does you imagination wander that you cannot feel enlargement in these reflections, repeat silently in your mind some promise or psalm or hymn that you have committed to memory. The promises are always new ; they are an infinite source of consolation and encouragement, and when sealed by the Spirit of grace, they give life to the spiritually dead and light to the spiritually blind. Does conscience charge you with transgression in your former conduct, contemplate some promise of pardoning mercy ; or is your spirit dejected on account of strong corruptions ; have your thoughts during the night been unprofitable, your dreams idle and impure ; meditate on the promise of sanctification, “ sin shall not have dominion over you ; a new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you.” Is your outward condition peculiarly adverse and trying ; are the dispensations of providence dark that you know not how to proceed, improve the promises of support and direction, “ the meek he will guide in judgment ; the meek he will teach his way ; all things shall work together for good to them that love God :” Is your passage thro’ life rough and tempestuous ; does billow of adversity roll after billow that you are afraid

of being overwhelmed in the perilous ocean ; meditate on the unspeakable joys and glories of the heavenly world. “ These light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” All these promises are yea and amen in Jesus Christ, and it is equally our duty and privilege to apply them upon all occasions as our circumstances may require.

Having endeavored in this manner to occupy your first moments, immediately after you arise recommend yourself to God by fervent prayer ; “ present your body” and spirit to him a “ living sacrifice, holy and acceptable which is your reasonable service ;” your eyes to be kept through the day from beholding evil, your tongues from speaking to the dishonor of God or the injury of your neighbor ; your hands from acts of injustice or violence ; acknowledge your absolute insufficiency either to resist temptation, or to guard against accidents, or to secure success in your respective pursuits, “ knowing that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps,” and ask his protecting care in your out-going and in coming : implore that he would either keep you from being tempted, or support in the hour of temptation ; that “ he would establish the work of your hands” and give such prosperity both in temporal and spiritual concerns as his unerring wisdom sees most expedient. To prosecute our ordinary employments without looking to God for suc-

cess, is practical atheism, and to expect his blessing without seeking it is daring presumption. "We must ask if we would receive; we must acknowledge God in all our ways," if we expect to be directed by him. Let prayer, if possible, be performed before you engage in the business of the day. It is a tribute of respect you owe to the living God, to HIM who brought you into being, who upholds your soul in life, and gives you all things richly to enjoy to offer him your earliest affections and services. David therefore resolves, "my voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up: O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee."

It may be profitable, as opportunity offers, to pass over in your imagination the different stages of the day; to consider the duties you may be called to discharge, or the temptations you may be called to resist, and then humbly look to the blessed Advocate, that he would communicate *grace to help in time of need*.—It is of unspeakable importance to know beforehand any particular snare to which you may be exposed; the mind is thereby prepared for the shock, and with a firm reliance on divine strength, may collect all its powers in fortifying against it. The soldier is by no means so liable to be defeated, when he has considered not only the force of his enemy,

but the very time *when*, and the very place *where* the assault will most probably be made.

2. Endeavor to preserve a devout, spiritual frame amidst the various pursuits and enjoyments of the day. A mind deeply exercised to godliness may gather instruction from every incident and employment of life. In receiving the common bread for nourishing our bodies, we may reflect on our spiritual wants, and the necessity of improving that bread which came down from heaven and gives life to the world : While we are preparing or putting on the natural raiment to adorn the outward man, we are reminded of our spiritual nakedness, and the necessity of applying that garment of salvation, that robe of righteousness which is brought near by Jehovah the Redeemer : In pursuing our usual labors, we may consider the great work of salvation to be completed, the corruptions to be mortified, the enemies to be subdued, and the graces to be perfected. In traveling from place to place, our attention may be directed to the journey of life which we are constantly performing, and that every day and hour we are approaching nearer the end of our course. In conversing with our natural friends, we may examine whether we have “ fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ ; ” and whether, like the apostle, “ our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour.” As a mean of promoting this spirituality of heart, you may

be occasionally presenting your silent supplications to God for the enlivening influences of his spirit, or revolving in your thoughts some portion of his sacred word. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Be careful to allow yourself in no amusement that appears unlawful or even doubtful: By indulgencies of this nature the DIVINE SPIRIT is grieved, the voice of conscience is enfeebled and this monitor is discouraged from renewing his remonstrances: Besides, a righteous God frequently chastises one transgression in his people by leaving them to the commission of another more odious and aggravated. Uncleanness in David was corrected by permitting him to add deliberate murder; presumption and false confidence in Peter were chastised by leaving him not only to the open denial of his Master, but to aggravate that denial with cursing and swearing. We are therefore admonished to abstain "from all appearance of evil; to take heed lest at any time the heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon us unawares."

4. Before you retire in the evening call yourself to an impartial account respecting the duties of the day; survey with care the stages through which you have passed and

examine how you was enabled to conduct ; enquire how you behaved towards God the Judge of all, and whether you acted as under his all-seeing, all-searching eye ; how you behaved towards Jesus the Mediator of the covenant, whether you exercised faith upon him in all his offices, looking to him as a Prophet for direction in every undertaking, as a Priest to pardon all your imperfections, as a King to subdue each rising lust, and to support under every difficulty ; examine how you conducted towards man, whether in all your intercourse your conversation was with grace, tending to edification ; see whether you attained to some measure of patience amidst the seeming frowns of providence, and forbearance to any who may have injured you. Be not discouraged, although ten thousand failures appear to your view ; but improve *the lamb that was slain* for the remission of your past transgressions, and trust on the plenitude of his grace for the more perfect discharge of duty hereafter : In the blood of his cross *there is plenteous redemption* ; it is a fountain eternally flowing both for pardon and purification.

In reclining upon your bed aim at cherishing some profitable meditation : How seasonable, how sweet, while we cease from the labors of the day and retire to rest, to contemplate the repose of the grave, where the *weary* christian *will be at rest* ; where he shall cease from all the vexations, and sorrows of life, and shall enjoy undisturbed repose ; or,

to reflect on the future resurrection, when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption,” and those that “sleep in Jesus shall awake to everlasting life.” We are thus commanded to “commune with our own hearts on our beds and be silent.”

Such are the advantages of a life spent in the fear of Jehovah and communion with HIM, and such are the means of promoting it.—With these directions I must now commend thee to the blessing of God the Spirit, from whom alone I either expect or ask the increase : Should HE condescend to render them effectual to thy spiritual establishment or consolation, new obligations will be imposed on thee and me to adore the riches of his sovereignty and grace ; then the present will be indeed a happy NEW YEAR ; it will be a precious pledge of that more glorious period when the necessity of ordinances shall be superseded by the immediate presence of the God of ordinances ; when *he that soweth* instruction and *he that reapeth* these instructions shall rejoice together, and GOD *shall be all and in all.* AMEN.

SERMON XIII.

CONCLUSION.

2 PETER I. 10, 11.

If ye do these things ye shall never fall : For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

THESE verses are properly a promise annexed to particular duties recommended in the preceding verses. The apostle had been exhorting these christians to “abound in the work of the Lord ; to add to their faith virtue, and to their virtue knowledge, and to their knowledge brotherly kindness, and to their brotherly kindness charity :” He had been urging them to give *diligence, all diligence to do these things*, to improve with a becoming earnestness the various means which are appointed for the attainment of these ends. A variety of these means, secret prayer, meditation upon the scriptures, attendance on the duties of the sanctuary, mutual exhortation and the sanctification of the sabbath have been explained and enforced in the preceding discourses. It is designed in this concluding discourse to illustrate the happy issue of a life thus spent in communion with God, and devotion to his service.

If ye do these things ; if ye keep my commandments from a principle of respect for

mine authority, and gratitude to my love ; if ye walk in mine ordinances as the appointed means of enjoying my fellowship in this world, and preparing you for my immediate, everlasting communion in the world to come, *ye shall never fall* : “ Ye shall not utterly fall, nor finally be disappointed of your hopes ; these graces which I communicated to your hearts by my Spirit, and which you have improved by a diligent use of the means of my appointment, shall be crowned with glory in the end.” That sovereign purpose of Jehovah which from eternity had decreed their recovery ; which was partially executed in calling, and justifying, and sanctifying them shall receive its complete accomplishment in their full and eternal salvation. That Jesus by whose free, omnipotent agency they were brought into the covenant is able, and not only able but gracious “ to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” The spark of grace which is imparted to the soul in its effectual calling *is not, cannot* be extinguished by all the floods of corruption, but is preserved and improved until it shines forth unobscured in heaven, its native element.

If ye do these things ye shall never fall : They shall not be permitted to apostatize from their holy profession, nor commit those abominations by which the christian name might be reproached, or the peace of their own consciences interrupted. Although corruption

resides as a neighbor to grace in the believer's heart, and occasionally leads him captive, so as to plunge him into the pollutions of the world, yet this advantage of the flesh is usually obtained by a loose, careless walk on the part of the christian; either from the neglect of ordinances which are instrumental in sanctifying and confirming, or from a formal attendance upon them. Peter fell grossly in the open denial of his Master, yet this fall may be considered as a chastisement for his presumptuous reliance upon his own strength in opposition to the warnings of his Lord. The promise secures "that the righteous shall hold on his way; that they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; that they who trust in him shall be like mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth forever," and these promises will infallibly be accomplished to such as keep their hearts with all diligence, and are attentive in the use of instituted means. To suppose the contrary would be to question the truth of Jehovah, and to deny the tendency of his own means to accomplish the purposes for which they are appointed. We might as readily suppose that a healthful branch could remain barren from year to year although connected with a flourishing tree, or that the stream could become dry although supplied from a living fountain, as to suppose that the believer could fall into spiritual decay, or be given up to the gratifications of the flesh while he attends

with diligence the means of grace, and in them aspires after fellowship with his Living Head. As it is the character of a righteous man that "he delights in the law of the Lord," it is his security "that he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth its fruit in its season:" And our Master promised to his disciples, "if ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love:" Again, "he that abideth not in me," he who does not continue in my commandments, and receives not influences from my covenant fullness, "is cast forth as a branch, and withered, but he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit."

It is natural to infer from this passage that the sovereignty of God in determining the progress of his children to perfection does not militate in the least against secondary means, nor will excuse them in neglecting the ordinances which are appointed for their perfection. There is no doubt but "the election will obtain," yet the objects of this election have neither reason nor scripture to expect obtaining the prize except by running with patience the "race which is set before them," and at the end of which the prize of glory is suspended. They are as really, and infallibly predestinated to the means of salvation as to salvation itself: And their habitual, wilful neglect of the ordinances of grace either evin-

ces that they were not elected to eternal life, or that the decree of their election has not yet received its accomplishment. They are particularly, and unalterably "chosen to salvation," but they are chosen to this salvation "through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth," and therefore they who do not believe, and obey the truth ; who do not evidence their sanctification by a hatred of sin, and desires after holiness shew that if they were chosen to salvation, the divine decree as it relates to them remains yet to be executed. The Lord God, although absolute in his purposes, yet deals with man as a rational being ; he addresses his fears by the threatenings of the law, and his hopes by the promises, and consolations of the Gospel ; he offers him the prize of glory, but he prescribes a "race to be run" in order to obtain that prize, not indeed as the procuring cause, but as an evidence of our respect for his authority, and as a mean of preparing us for enjoying that prize. Thus while this apostle asserts that all who are "begotten again to this lively hope are kept by the power of God unto salvation," yet he urges the indispensable necessity of diligence in pressing on towards "the mark for the prize of the high calling ;" and declares that he who does not use this diligence "is blind, and cannot see afar off ;" he is ignorant of his duty, and glory, and privilege.

Again, it may naturally be inferred from

this passage that activity in the Redeemer's service is amply rewarded even in the present world. All that temporal sacrifice which the christian makes by devoting a portion of his time, or substance in attending the duties, or promoting the interests of religion is fully made up to him by the assurance of his Father's love, and his fellowship with Jesus in the joys of his salvation. That little fatigue of body which he may feel in attending the ordinances of divine grace either private or public is more than overbalanced by an increase of light, and strength, and consolation. He is frequently enabled to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also he receives the reconciliation." He also experiences a pleasure more refined, more substantial, and satisfying in revolving the promises, in contemplating his Saviour's love, or in looking forward to that glory which is to be revealed than the children of this world enjoy in the very height of their prosperity and mirth : He can assert from his own experience, "great peace have they who love thy law : thy loving kindness is better than life : Thou, Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head."

The tenth verse which I have now explained secures the believer's privileges in time, the next exhibits his triumph in death, and through eternity.

"For so an entrance shall be ministered to

you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Heaven in this and many other instances is called a *kingdom*. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." *There* the King Eternal and Immortal sits enthroned in full orb'd majesty; *there* his holy subjects, restored men and elect, unsinning angels constantly attend him; they behold his glory; they enjoy the fullest assurances of his love, and are employed in performing his pleasure: John speaking of the heavenly world mentions that "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads." These expressions point out those princely honors to which his loyal subjects will be raised, the intimacy of their fellowship with Jehovah the fountain of life and light and joy, and their perfect blessedness in that fellowship. They are represented again as "kings and priests unto God even the Father, as before the throne of God, as serving him day and night, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them." No doubt there will be eternally the most intimate interchange of every expression of mutual confidence, and affection between the Eternal King and the inhabitants of the heavenly city. He, on the one hand, will exhibit himself under the endearing relation of their

God and Father ; he will afford transporting manifestations of his good will towards them, and delight in them ; he will disclose to them all the mysteries of his providence and grace by which they were conducted through this world and brought safe to their mansions in heaven ; he will also give them the elevating assurance that as their felicity is complete it shall be without end ; that as they have a *fulness of joy* their *pleasures* shall continue *forevermore*. The redeemed in return will offer him the most ardent, undivided affection of their hearts, and the most pure, lofty ascriptions of praise with their lips. They will adore him forever for his creating goodness ; that he formed them after his image, and assigned them a rank so honorable among the works of his hands ; they will adore him in strains still more exalted for redeeming love ; that in the immensity of his condescension and grace he restored them from the wretchedness of their fallen state, promoted them to sit upon thrones, and accomplished all this by a scheme so astonishing as the substitution of his own, and only Son. “ They sing a new song before the throne ; ” this song commenced at the translation of Abel from earth to heaven ; it has been gradually swelling at the entrance of each heir of adoption into the kingdom of their Father for nearly six thousand years, and with it the arches of heaven will be resounding through eternity to come, and what is this song, “ worthy is the lamb

that was slain to receive power, and riches and strength, and glory and blessing."

This kingdom is called an *everlasting* kingdom. This epithet is intended to distinguish it from the dominions, and principalities of this world which are perpetually changing; which are overthrown sometimes by internal faction, and sometimes by outward opposition. But this kingdom of Messiah will be endangered by no shock either from within, or from without. "He who sits enthroned in it is the *Lord God omnipotent*; whose smile cheers and gladdens every part of his dominions, and whose mere frown would sink into perdition the first opposer of his reign. Besides, all the inhabitants of heaven are perfectly loyal to Jesus Jehovah as their Sovereign; their hearts glow with love to his person, with gratitude for his grace, and with zeal for his honor; and his implacable enemies will be bound in everlasting chains, and driven from his presence. This complete triumph over all opposition was secured by Messiah upon his cross, and will be consummated at the end of this world. "Death itself the last enemy of him, and his ransomed will then be swallowed up in victory. He shall then sit undisturbed" upon his throne, and he shall be a Priest upon his throne: Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end to order it, and to establish it with justice and with judgment from henceforth even for ever.— How splendid beyond conception is this king-

dom ! The monarch who occupies the throne is the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible : The subjects are a great multitude which no man can number, even ten thousand, thousand saints, and ten thousand, thousand angels ; where no jar shall ever be noticed, nor jealousy ever felt, but harmony uninterrupted shall reign forever ; where every citizen shall be perfectly loyal to his Prince, and friendly to all around him. “ Peace,” to use the elevated language of a prophet, “ peace will forever run down like a river, and righteousness as a flowing stream.”

The apostle peculiarly designates it as the everlasting kingdom of *our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. That portion of the human family who inherit it were the redeemed of his blood, and brought back to their allegiance by the sanctifying influences of his grace ; that innumerable company of angels who retained their first estate were established in holiness, and happiness by him as Mediator : It is proper therefore that as he had the expence and toil of founding this kingdom he should have the honor of dispensing its privileges. This glory was conferred upon the Redeemer at his resurrection, and more fully after his ascension on high. “ The Father loveth the Son and hath committed all things into his hand.” In him as their common center, men and angels are united, and to Him they will be everlastingly subordinate. “ Because he became obedient unto death, even the death of the

cross, God also hath highly exalted him, and before him every knee shall bow of things in heaven, and things on earth: Thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers are made subject unto him" in his mediatorial capacity and "he is head over all things unto the church which is his body." The peculiar manner in which this kingdom of Messiah will be administered in the heavenly state we cannot conceive at present. It will not be by ordinances, by the reading, or preaching of the word, or by visible seals of the covenant, as in this elementary state: The righteous will then have attained the stature of perfect men; they will be fully grown both in knowledge, and sanctification, and therefore will not at all require these external aids. All ordinances will then be done away as the scaffolding is removed when the building is completed, or as the necessity of the tutor and governor is superseded when the heir has attained the perfection of manhood. The lamb in the midst of the throne without the intervention of outward means shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall be all, and in all.

An entrance shall be *ministered* to you. The word translated *ministered* is rarely used in the New-Testament, and is peculiarly emphatic: It literally signifies to convey or conduct along with the hand: It is designed to express not only the certainty of their entrance, but that ceremony, or pomp with

which they shall enter the portals of glory ; as we are ready to lead by the hand into our houses a person whom we highly esteem, and to whom we give the most cordial welcome ; they shall be introduced to that kingdom with every possible expression of honor, as the conqueror is brought to receive the palm of victory which he has won, or as the Prince is introduced to the possession of that throne of which he is legally an heir. “ With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought ; they shall enter into the King’s palace.”

This entrance shall be *ministered* to them by the Everlasting Father, who had appointed them to that kingdom. He who had known them by name, and surname ages before their persons existed, and in his unmerited love had ordained them to this glory ; who had given his Son to expiate their guilt with his sacrifice, and to procure their title by the obedience of his life ; who had repeated to them in his word the promises of his good will, and afforded them again and again the foretastes of future bliss, he will welcome these heirs of salvation to that rest which was prepared for them, and in their admission he will behold his purposes respecting them literally accomplished. Does he pursue the prodigal Son from day to day, and by ordinance after ordinance : does he rejoice at his repentance, and return ; does he fall upon his neck, and embrace him with every mark of affection, with much greater transports of joy will he

hail his translation from this miserable world to those regions where neither sin nor sorrow shall ever enter.

An entrance will be also *ministered* to them by the Infinite Surety who interposed and redeemed them. He who undertook from eternity in their covenant room ; who “ rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth,” looking forward with delight to this world as the theatre on which he should bring glory to his Father, and salvation to us ; who stooped to be clothed with our nature when degraded by transgression ; who stood forth for years to heaven, and earth, and hell a spectacle of reproach and suffering without a comparison, all to procure this kingdom, will cordially welcome them to the full fruition of its immunities ; he knows by experience the dreariness of this wilderness and will rejoice in seeing them emerge from its gloom ; he knows the fiery opposition which they are often called to encounter, and will exult to behold them laden with the honors of victory, and wearing the crown of glory ; he knows the innumerable instances in which their faith was staggered, and their hopes clouded, and will rejoice to behold these graces exchanged for the immediate vision, and fruition of their Father ; he will stand on the threshold of glory and meet them with the invitation, “ come ye blessed ; ye have followed me in the regeneration ; I now appoint unto you a kingdom even as my Father also appointed unto me :” All this is

but the commencement of their felicity. Jesus the Mediator will everlastingly rejoice in them, and over them as redeemed at the expence of his blood, and the travail of his soul.

An entrance will also be *ministered* them by the Ever blessed Spirit, their sanctifier, and comforter, and guide. He who had visited them when they were lying in their blood, in all the odiousness and wretchedness of their natural condition, and said unto them live ; who had washed them from innumerable pollutions ; who had supported them amidst innumerable difficulties ; who had soothed them amidst innumerable sorrows ; who had conducted them for days, and months, and years amidst the discouragements of this world, sanctifying, assisting and consoling them as their circumstances required, he will minister to them an abundant entrance into those joys for which he had prepared them, and the foretastes of which he had often communicated to them in this world : He had formerly consecrated them as the temple of his residence on earth ; he had long dwelt in them as the Spirit of light, of liberty, of hope, and he will cordially introduce them to reside in his temple above ; there he will cheer them with the light of everlasting day, and will communicate all those consolations which their enlarged, and ever-enlarging powers are capable of receiving.

This entrance will also be *ministered* to them by all the angels of God. These hosts of hea-

ven had rejoiced at their repentance, and return to the service of their Creator ; they had beheld them with deep concern laboring under the frailties of nature, and the afflictions which are common to man in this militant state ; they had sympathised with them, so far as one unembodied spirit is capable of sympathising with another ; they had probably witnessed with solicitude their occasional departures from the holy commandments, their indifference in the work of the Lord, and their want of gratitude for his love. With what acclamations of joy will these holy angels hail the passage of just men made perfect from the pollutions, and mortifications, and sorrows of this life to that world of unmingled purity, and uninterrupted joy ? They who opened wide the gates of glory, and ministered to the entrance of Jesus the *Forerunner*, will also stand ready to aid at the entrance of his living members.

It might also be added that the church of the first born in heaven will *minister* to the entrance of these kindred spirits into their Father's kingdom : Although many of these blessed inhabitants had long since received the end of their faith, and participated in the joys of their Lord, yet they have a fresh recollection of the vanities of this world ; they know the sorrows which must be endured ; the temptations that must be resisted ; the toils that are experienced in the labors of life ; the imperfection both of our services

and joys ; this conflict they endured themselves, and still therefore know the heart of a stranger : Thus they long for our perfection, and exult when the period of it arrives : They hail with transports of joy the entrance of kindred spirits into that world where the service of Jehovah will be their perfect liberty ; where every cloud shall be dissipated by the radiance of Jesus as their Sun, and a full tide of bliss from the throne of God, and of the Lamb shall flow forth for their enjoyment. Such is the constitution of man that our happiness is enhanced when participated by those in whose welfare we feel interested ; and no doubt the admission of every saint to the joys of heaven will be a new source of blessedness to all who have entered before. They shall come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, rejoicing with each other, and mingling their acclamations to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his blood.

This entrance shall be ministered to them *abundantly*, or as it may be translated *richly*. It is mentioned of some that “ they shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able : ” They were not willing to come in exclusively by that *door* which is opened in the gospel, that is the mediation of the Eternal Son who alone is “ the way, and the truth, and the life.” They depended partly on their own performances,

and would not stoop to be wholly indebted to divine grace as it *reigns* through the Saviour's cross, and therefore they are not admitted at all : They rested satisfied with an empty form of religion ; with running the rotine of duty, but never secured its power by " repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ ;" and consequently their expectations were disappointed. " Except a man be born again he cannot enter this kingdom of God. Many who are first in their own estimation ; who like the Pharisee console themselves that they are not *extortioners*, that they *pray* often, and *pay tithes* of all which they possess ;" many such will be lowest in the estimation of God, and excluded at last from the immunities of his kingdom.

We read of others who are *scarcely* saved, or saved as by *fire*. As members of the Redeemer, and therefore interested in his unchanging covenant, they cannot possibly perish ; their title to the heavenly kingdom through his atonement, and obedience is unalienable, and their entrance is secured beyond the possibility of failure. " He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and shall not enter into condemnation : " Yet they *minded too much their own things*, their own interests, and enjoyments, and neglected *the things of Jesus Christ* ; their hearts were not duly enflamed with his love, nor zealous for his glory ; they did not spend of that affluence which a bounteous God had given them in diffusing

the knowledge of his name, or ministering to the necessities of his saints ; they were not diligent in promoting their own graces, or exhorting, and encouraging others to seek the Lord, and therefore although they are saved, they are *scarcely* saved ; they do not enjoy that abundant entrance into the kingdom, nor that exceeding weight of glory which might have been secured by greater earnestness, and disinterestedness in his cause. “ They sowed sparingly,” as it is expressed by the apostle, “ and therefore they shall reap sparingly :” They were not active in promoting the honor of God, and therefore he will not be so liberal in bestowing honors upon them.

To others, it is here promised, that “ an entrance shall be given *abundantly* ; they were industrious in occupying the talents with which the Lord God had intrusted them ; they were frequent in supplication for blessings on themselves, and for the prosperity of Zion throughout the world ; they entertained affecting conceptions of the grace of our Lord Jesus, and therefore felt constrained to disinterested exertions for the advancement of his cause ; they followed him through glory, and reproach, maintaining their profession of his name at the hazard of all that was dear in this world, and to such through the exceeding riches of his mercy “ an entrance shall be ministered *abundantly*. Every sacrifice of ease, or interest, which is now made in the cause of Jesus, shall hereafter be recollected, and rewarded

an hundred fold. We thus behold him looking round on his disciples when collected together, and asking them, “who then is that faithful and wise servant whom his Lord will make ruler over all his house?” To such he will offer a seat near to himself upon the throne, and dispense crowns of pre-eminent lustre. By this assurance of a future reward for their services the Divine Redeemer makes his appeal to the hopes, may I not add, to the ambition of his followers: He encourages them to remain “stedfast, immovable,” neither lured by the false smiles, nor shaken by the reproach or persecution of the world, from the consideration “that their labors shall not be in vain in the Lord.” He thus exhorts us to “make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;” to convert to purposes of piety and charity the wealth of this world which is often acquired by *unrighteous* means, and is at best perishable in its nature, “that when these fail” the poor of Jesus whom we have relieved “may receive us into everlasting habitations.” The same animating truth is taught in this chapter from which our text is selected. “Giving all diligence add to your faith virtue; see that you possess a genuine *faith*, a cordial reliance on Jesus Jehovah for righteousness, and sanctification, and support. This is the cardinal grace, and without it you can no more expect holiness here, or happiness hereafter, than you can expect a solid superstructure without lay-

ing the foundation, or a flourishing branch without union to the vine. And to this faith *virtue*, a becoming magnanimity, a holy heroism in the cause of your Master, not terrified either by the number, or power, or rage of your adversaries : And to your virtue *knowledge* ; let a manly courage in the cause of your Lord be connected with prudence in every part of your conduct, and with a growing knowledge of his person, and of that glory which is to be revealed at his second appearing : And to your knowledge *temperance*, shew your moderation to all men in all things ; mortify the “ lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye,” and like holy men in former ages, “ put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit ; which is in the sight of God of great price :” And to your temperance *patience*, exercise a becoming submission under all the discouragements of life ; recollect in the hour of trial that these afflictions are short in their duration, and will issue in an exceeding and eternal weight of glory : And to patience *Godliness*, aspire after more exalted conceptions of his glory and grace, of the tender relation in which he stands to you as your Creator and Redeemer, and of your reasonable obligation to adore and love him : And to *Godliness brotherly kindness*, “ out of love to Him who begat love ardently those who are begotten of him ; love as brethren,” as redeemed by the same blood, as adopted into the same family, and heirs of one incorruptible in-

heritance : And to brotherly kindness *charity* ; consider this last as among the most important, and ornamental graces, and through its influence be always ready to distribute to the necessities, and to cover with a mantle of love the imperfections of each other : “ If ye do these things—an entrance shall be ministered to you *abundantly* ;” your evening sun will go down in glory, and your reward will be great through eternity in the kingdom of your Father.

Such consolation is secured as the final reward of all those who by “ patient continuing in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality :” And who that has realised the value of the soul ; who that has tasted the pleasures of religion ; who that has reflected on the importance of things eternal would not be earnest in pressing after such a hope ? Who would not watch ; who would not pray ; who would not diligently search the scriptures ; who would not conscientiously sanctify the sabbath ; who would not industriously attend every ordinance of divine grace as a mean of preparing for a consummation thus blessed and honorable ? It was this prospect which roused the apostle to such earnestness in “ making sure his own calling and election,” and in promoting the salvation of others.—“ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus : Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the min-

istry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God."—The christian thus prepared may not only be reconciled to the prospect of death, but may reasonably long for the moment of its arrival. If the traveller is impatient until he reaches his own home, or if the bride rejoices in the prospect of having the nuptials solemnized, or if the heir waits with solicitude for the actual enjoyment of the inheritance which is promised him, much rather may the spiritual pilgrim exult at every thought of attaining his celestial home. There "everlasting joy shall be upon his head ; he shall obtain joy, and gladness, and sorrow, and sighing shall flee away. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace."

I humbly hope that you are all impressed with the importance of activity in working out your salvation, and aspiring daily after higher attainments in faith, and hope, and charity, and every grace of the Spirit. The great means of your advancement in sanctification and comfort have been proposed in the foregoing discourses, and with these I now affectionately leave you : In a due attendance upon them and supplication to the Holy Ghost for his sealing, and supporting influences *you shall never fall* : Let those especially, who have long enjoyed the ordinances of religion, and feel in the encreasing infirmities of nature the presages of approaching dissolution, be more

zealous to “abound in the work of the Lord.” The parent expects more service from a son who has nearly reached the perfection of manhood than from one who is yet in childhood or infancy : The husbandman looks for a greater abundance of fruit from a tree which has stood long in the vineyard, and which has been cultivated with particular care than from one which he has lately transplanted into his nursery : Thus the farther we advance in the spiritual life, and the more favorable means of edification that we enjoy, the greater revenue of glory we should aim at bringing to our covenant God, the more fervent we should become in prayer, the more edifying in our conversation, the more devout and heavenly in our thoughts.

Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy : To the only wise God our Saviour who purchased the kingdom, with the Eternal Father who prepared and bequeathes it, and the Co-Equal Spirit who sanctifies and makes meet for enjoying it, be glory in the highest throughout all ages world without end. AMEN.

“ LET God the Father live
Forever on our tongues :
Sinners from his first love derive
The ground of all their songs.

“ Ye saints, employ your breath
In honor to the Son,
Who bought your souls from hell and death,
By off’ring up his own.

“ Give to the Spirit praise
Of an immortal strain,
Whose light, and pow’r, and grace conveys
Salvation down to men.

“ While God the Comforter
Reveals our pardon’d sin,
O may the blood and water bear
The same record within !

“ To the great One in Three,
That seals this grace in heav’n,
The Father, Son, and Spirit, be
Eternal glory giv’n.”

OUR DANGER AND DUTY:

TWO SERMONS,

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY, THE 30th
DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1808.

BEING A DAY APPOINTED BY THE
PRESBYTERY OF WASHINGTON

FOR THE EXERCISES OF

*FASTING, HUMILIATION AND
PRAYER,*

ON ACCOUNT OF THE ALARMING ASPECT
OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE TO
OUR COUNTRY.



THE SECOND EDITION.



*If the trumpet give an uncertain sound who
shall prepare himself to the battle ?.....*
1. COR. XIV. 8.

SERMON XIV.



JEREMIAH V. 29.

*Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation
as this.*

THIS prophet appeared in a very degenerate period of the Jewish church. Every order of that people, from the humble peasant to the prince on the throne, had apostatized from the true God, and had lost that simplicity in his worship, and that zeal for his name which were their former characteristic and glory. The mass of the people, "forsaking the Lord God of their fathers," had mingled in all the absurdities of the idolatry of the nations around them : their princes "did evil in the sight of Jehovah," and no longer ruled for his glory, or the good of their subjects ; even those who were called to minister at the altar degraded both themselves and their office by a servile, corrupt, mercenary spirit : "The sun had also gone down upon their prophets ; these lights of Israel" were now darkened through error of principle, and licentiousness of practice ; instead of stemming the torrent of general defection by exposing with a holy heroism the iniquities of all classes, they rolled along with the stream, and rather tended to swell and infuriate it "by prophecying a false vision, and the deceit of their own hearts." There is not a more awful presage of speedy destruction to a nation than,

when, as the prophet expresses it, "there is like people like priest;" when corruption of manners generally prevails, and the messengers of the Lord of hosts have neither firmness nor fidelity to make an open opposition.

The Lord God, grieved and provoked with these abominations, gently, yet severely reminds Israel of her former zeal for his glory, and his delight in her as his peculiar people. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals: Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." He then appeals to heaven and earth, whether an example of such ingratitude and obstinacy could be found in any other nation. "Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done: she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot: and I said after she had done all these things, turn thou unto me, but she returned not: their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased, how shall I pardon thee for this?" At last worn out with their iniquities, and resolved to make a full end of them as a people altogether incorrigible, Jehovah calls upon Jeremiah to arise and at the peril of his own soul not to refuse denouncing their doom; "thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. Shall not I visit for these things saith the

Lord ;” “ Is not my wrath revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of man ? Can I consistently with the purity and rectitude of my nature ; can I consistently with my character as the moral governor of the world pass by with impunity these wanton, these repeated, these gross violations of my law ? “ Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?”

You will readily notice that the expression, “ shall not my soul be avenged,” is rather uncommon ; it is used after the manner of men and represents the great God as earnestly and unalterably bent on his purpose ; it is designed to express both the certainty and the severity of the judgments to be executed on infatuated Israel.

This day was set apart for the solemn exercises of fasting, humiliation and prayer on account of the alarming aspect of providence to our country. We are not called merely to deprecate that wrath which apparently hangs over our nation ; they are greatly mistaken who imagine that this should be our only, or even our principal exercise : we ought to be deeply impressed that our national offences are the cause of our national calamities ; we ought impartially to examine what transgressions on our part has kindled “ this hot displeasure :” to acknowledge the righteousness of Jehovah in all the judgments with which we are threatened ; to improve by faith the atonement of his Eternal Son as the only

mean of our reconciliation ; to return to him in the exercise of unfeigned repentance, and then earnestly to plead with an offended God that “ in the midst of wrath he would remember mercy.”

In order to assist you in these important exercises it may be proper,

I. To consider those crimes with which as a nation we are obviously chargeable—and

II. Those evidences of divine *vengeance* which we have occasionally felt and under which we now suffer.

1. As a nation, we are chargeable with shameful ingratitude for privileges enjoyed. It must be fresh in your own recollection when the spot where we now worship was ravaged by the incursions of a formidable, unpitied foe ; when the murderous savage with his tomahawk and scalping knife prowled around your dwellings, often piercing your souls with his terrific yells ; when the doors of your sanctuary were shut up ; when your habitations* were left desolate ; when the son,

* *The British army under the command of Gen. Burgoyne, in their descent from Canada, marched along the Hudson river, about sixteen miles to the west of Salem ; but small detachments of the enemy penetrated that and the neighboring towns, plundering the inhabitants : Parties of Indians also sallied out through these settlements, and murdered a whole family in the vicinity of Salem : and the town was almost entirely evacuated in August of 1777, when the inhabitants, through apprehension of the enemy, fled for shelter into the interior of the country.*

torn from the arms of his mother, and the husband from the embraces of his wife, were exposed to the toils and dangers of the field ; and you were driven to strangers for a miserable shelter from the inclemency of the season. In that hour of peril and panic, the avenger of wrongs interposed in your behalf ; disconcerted the adversary ; crowned with victory equally unexpected and signal* your feeble exertions, and restored you to the peaceful possession of your own habitations. Since the revolutionary war, which terminated in the independence of our country, we have enjoyed a degree of prosperity without a parallel in the history of any nation : We are favored with a constitution probably the most mild, the most equitable, and while supported by public virtue, the most diffusive of general happiness that was ever framed by man. While our ears have often heard the thunder of distant war ; while almost every arrival upon our coasts has brought the intelligence of the murderous battle fought ; of other wives made widows, and other children fatherless ; of old kingdoms convulsed, and new empires erected on their ruins, our peace has been uninterrupted : “ We have eat every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drank every one of the waters of his cistern,” without any to annoy or alarm : While famine has

* *The memorable defeat and capture of Gen. Burgoyne took place about the 17th of October, when the inhabitants returned to their own possessions.*

waved her scourge over other countries and driven thousands of the inhabitants to the necessity of begging their bread, we have literally rolled in worldly affluence ; our soil under the husbandman's cultivation has yielded a rich profusion of fruits, and our commerce has wafted upon our shores the productions of every foreign clime. These outward privileges have been crowned with the infinitely more precious means of salvation. We have enjoyed "the oracles of the living God" in our own language, and the various ordinances of his worship in their native simplicity and purity. When privileges so pre-eminent are bestowed on a person or a people, returns of thanksgiving, and obedience are expected in proportion ; but the blessings heaped upon us as a nation have been equalled only by our ingratitude and impiety. Have we as individuals, been walking in the fear of the Lord, regulating ourselves by his word as the rule, and consulting his glory as the highest end of our lives ? As families have we been offering up the tribute of praise to the common Author of our mercies : has each been encouraging the other to the performance of every civil, and social, and religious duty ; have we been "thus teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ?" Have we as a nation exceeded all others in gratitude, as we have been elevated above them in privilege ? As citizens, as ministers, as magistrates have we

advanced hand in hand, each aiming at the good of the whole; and all promoting the glory of Him who raised us to a rank so exalted among the nations of the earth? How reverse have been our character, and conduct? More ungrateful, more infatuated than "Jeshurun we have waxed fat; we have forgotten the God that made us," who redeemed us in the hour of jeopardy, "and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation." The distinguishing goodness of God instead of leading us to repentance and reformation of life has produced pride, presumptuousness, licentiousness of principle, and profligacy of manners. Our affluence, which ought to have flowed in supplying the wants of the indigent; in supporting the ordinances of religion; in propagating the gospel through the frontier settlements; and in conveying to the perishing heathen the means of salvation, has been prostituted to luxury of living; to extravagance of dress; to the aggrandizement of our families; or in adding house to house, and farm to farm. Our language has corresponded with that of the presumptuous monarch of Egypt, "Who is the Lord that we should obey him?" "Our gold, our silver, our possessions are our own, and for the gratification of our own appetites they shall be employed." Our ingratitude is thus a sin of high aggravation, and is one cause why the Lord God is pleading his controversy with our land.—
"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,

for the Lord hath spoken ; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. They have forsaken the Lord : they have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger, they have gone away backward." Might he not in righteous indignation have added, " Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries ; I will avenge me of mine enemies ?"

2. Our daring impiety manifested by a contempt of God, and his ordinances, is another cause of his controversy : one for which we ought this day to exercise humiliation in his sight. How is his infinitely venerable name profaned in the unnecessary, irreverend use of it by some, and in the impious oaths and imprecations of others ? Are not his ordinances neglected and despised by many, who live within reach of the sanctuary, and who, by their parents, were early devoted to his service in baptism ? Is not that precious *volume* the bible ; *that volume* which affords the most reviving expressions of Jehovah's love, and constitutes the broad charter of all our privileges and prospects ; is not that volume regarded by some with neglect and indifference ; by others has it not been derided as the offspring of superstition, or priestcraft ? Does not a licentious infidelity obviously pervade the higher orders of society in our country ? Was not that man who has appeared as one of the most open, bold, unblushing champions in this cause ; who has exhausted his talents in the

derision of every thing sacred; who has uttered the foulest blasphemies, which a polluted imagination could conceive, against the Son of God, against his Person, against the mysteries of his gospel, and the ministers of his religion; has not that man been invited to this country by the leading men of our nation; has he not been corresponded with, and caressed since his arrival? If this circumstance does not avow their real enmity to the Saviour's cross, it at least betrays an alarming indifference to its interests: And I am bold to assert that those who are hostile to our religion cannot be the real friends of our liberty, whatever be their political pretensions. Divine revelation is the great charter of our rights as men, no less than of our privileges and prospects as christians; it proclaims to man his dignified origin, as "created after the image of God; it inspires the individual with the most exalted sense of his own importance, by declaring that "the Lord God hath made of one blood all men to dwell upon the earth," and consequently that all are naturally possessed of certain equal, unalienable rights: This constitutes the greatest possible security for social order among men by enjoining us "to live soberly, righteously, and Godly; to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." These are not the sentiments merely of the divine; they are maxims firmly believed and openly avowed by the most accomplished legislators that ever adorned the world. Suf-

fice it to mention the observations* of Him whom all revered as equally the Statesman, the Hero, the Patriot ; on whom the eyes of every American citizen were fastened as the brightest ornament of our country ; our pride in peace ; our shield in war ; and, under God, the instrument of incalculable blessings to our nation. “ Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness ; these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens : The mere

* *His Excellency* GEORGE WASHINGTON, in his last address to the citizens of the United States.

“ Christianity,” says Montesque, a celebrated French writer, “ has prevented the establishment of despotism in Ethiopia, notwithstanding its situation in the midst of African despotic states.” And Hume, although a malignant enemy to religion, has acknowledged that “ the precious sparks of liberty were kindled by the puritans in England, and to them the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.” I cannot help remarking that the observations of these authors are literally exemplified in New-England. There is no part of the christian world where pure religion more eminently flourished than in those states for generations after their first settlement : and there is perhaps no part of the globe, where the principles of rational liberty are better understood, or more zealously vindicated. On the other hand, what probably paved the way for the easy introduction of despotism in France than the general infidelity and licentiousness of the people.

politician equally with the pious man ought to respect, and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity."

Again, is not the holy sabbath, *that rest* which is ordained *for the people of God*; that institution which is calculated to secure health to the body, no less than happiness to the soul; that institution which is a lively memorial of the resurrection of our crucified Lord, and furnishes a constant pledge of our own resurrection, is not this day openly prostituted without a blush, and without remorse? Is it not profaned by some in idleness and amusements; by others in unnecessary visits, and by many in the deliberate prosecution of their secular employments? Is not the peaceful worshiper often interrupted and insulted as he repairs to, or retires from the temple of his God, by the wanton transgressors of that sacred institution? And does it not render our guilt more aggravated, and expose us to severer *vengeance*, that this profanation of the Sabbath is permitted in part by public authority? Our Legislature* has explicitly provided that

* *During the discussion of a bill relating to the Sabbath, which was brought before the Legislature some years since, a member was heard in the street to "damn the Sabbath and all its advocates." I mention this circumstance merely, to shew that in the election of the unprincipled, indecent man to public office, we not merely evince a want of zeal for God, a want of concern for the interests of morality, but a great want of respect to ourselves. Petitions in sup-*

no man "removing his family, or household furniture" shall be detained on that day. Does not this toleration virtually *make void* the command of Jehovah, "TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, AND BEAR NO BURDEN ON THE SABBATH-DAY, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow the Sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers." Have we not reason to fear that the Lord God, provoked by our impiety, will execute upon us the vengeance denounced against the nation of Israel, "I will draw out a sword after you, and make your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye shall be in your enemies country; even then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths."

3. The general, and very gross corruption of public morals is another cause of the divine

part of that bill were poured in from various parts of the state, and a single copy of the petition from the city of New-York, as was stated in a public paper, had eighteen hundred names annexed to it. As citizens of a free government we possess the right in a respectful manner to petition our legislative bodies, and our petitions, especially when presented by a large and respectable part of the state, are entitled to respectful attention. But in the instance of the member above mentioned, the maxim holds true, "that he who does not fear God will not regard man," not even his constituents from whom all his little importance is derived.

displeasure with us as a nation. May not the records of our courts of justice testify how common are the crimes of false swearing, and forgery ; crimes peculiarly offensive to God, and which tend to sap the very foundation of social order among men ? Do not our daily prints announce the very alarming increase of bankruptcies in our country ? Probably one thousand instances of private failure occur now, where not one occurred twenty years ago. This fact evinces the corruption of public morals, as these failures must ordinarily proceed either from a concealment of property with a view to defraud the creditor, or from a mode of living utterly beyond our ability. Is not that most unnatural, most horrid of all crimes, self-murder, become mournfully prevalent among us ? Is it not also a fashionable thing, is it not considered the test of real heroism, the character of the man of honor to take, or to aim at taking the life of another in dueling ? and is not this murderous* prac.

* *Is this epithet pronounced harsh ; it is supported by the judicial testimony of an honorable gentleman of our own age and country ; by one whose benevolence of heart must excite the affection, and whose integrity and capacity in his office command the esteem of all who know him. " As murder in contemplation of law essentially consists in deliberately killing a fellow creature, it is obvious where death ensues in a duel, that it is generally speaking the most aggravated species of murder, because it is accompanied with every species of cool premeditation that a spirit of envy could dictate "*—Charge to the Grand Jury of Reading, by the Hon, JACOB RUSH, Esq.

tice publicly sanctioned by the advancement of such offenders to stations of emolument and honor? Have we not this moment some standing high in office in our own state, and in the United States, whose consciences are stained with the guilt, and whose hands are encrimsoned with the blood of their fellow-men? Can we expect that our country in overlooking with impunity this daring offence, will escape the vengeance of him who has solemnly ordained that, "**WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED, FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE HIM.**"

How common among us are the vices of intemperate drinking; of rioting, of gambling and swearing? Are there not some men presiding on the bench of civil justice who are grossly profane in their conversation; who have lived in repeated acts of uncleanness; who are devoted to gambling, and by whom the Lord's day is often spent in their worldly occupations? This dissipation of conduct is offensive in any man but accompanied with peculiar aggravations in the magistrate who is explicitly pronounced a **MINISTER OF GOD FOR GOOD** to others: it is a direct prostitution of his sacred function, and renders him a "terror not to evil works, but to the good." Civil government is as really an ordinance of God, as ecclesiastical government; he, therefore, who sustains an office in the state ought to aim at purity of conver-

sation, no less than he who sustains an office in the church ; and when they who *rule* in either capacity lose sight of the solemnity of their station, they degrade both themselves and their office. It is the uniform, the upright, the dignified deportment of the man which gives majesty to the minister : it is no less the uniform, the upright, the dignified deportment of the man which gives majesty to the magistrate. Besides, a wanton, dissipated conduct in those who sustain the office of civil magistracy has a tendency to demoralize society at large. When the root of a tree is rotten, the branches cannot remain verdant and flourishing ; if the fountain itself be polluted, we cannot expect the stream to be pure, and when the head of the body politic becomes disordered the deadly contagion necessarily spreads through all parts of the system.

There is another evidence of public corruption which I dare not pass over unnoticed : I mean the obvious prostitution of the *right of suffrage*. In our free government the choice of all rulers either immediately or remotely depends on the people. This right of electing our own representation is the great privilege for which our fathers fought, and which is bequeathed to us, sealed with the blood of thousands : this is a privilege for which *many* of you fought, and for the purchase of which *some* of you bled : it is the full enjoyment of this right which distinguishes the citizen from the subject ; which exalts the freeman in one coun-

try above the abject, insulted, degraded slave in another country : But is not this right criminally prostituted among us ? What is the primary qualification which is ordinarily sought in the candidate for public office ? Do we attend to the admonition prescribed by eternal truth, “ He that RULETH over men must be JUST, RULING in the FEAR of the Lord ? ” Have we pursued the maxim delivered by the wisest of men, and the most magnificent, prosperous of Princes, **RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION**, and offered our suffrages for those who in private life were patterns of righteousness, and as rulers would probably use their influence for promoting it among others ? Have we not more generally enquired, “ where is the decided, ardent partizan ; the man who will most zealously adhere to that political section to which we belong, ” without regard to moral, or religious, or even intellectual qualifications ? In the warmth of party-spirit have we not contributed to the advancement of those who were the known enemies of religion, and have allowed themselves in falsely slandering its ministers ? On this day of humiliation as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, and as I desire to be found faithful to my trust when the storm is blackening over us, I bear my testimony against the promotion of unprincipled, immoral, impious men as a most aggravated iniquity in our land ; and I believe, as firmly as I believe my existence, that without speedy and special repen-

tance on our part, this insult to the Lord of hosts will bring wrath upon our nation, "until both our ears will tingle." Has he not most solemnly forewarned us that "when righteous men are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule the land mourneth?" Besides, the election of men to public office, who are destitute of moral rectitude, is impolitic in the extreme, and puts in jeopardy our most important interests as citizens. Hear the sentiments of a reverend member who adorned our counsels during the struggle with Great Britain; one in whom were united the eminent divine, the enlightened statesman, and the uncorrupted, ardent patriot. "Those who wish well to the state ought to choose to places of trust men of inward principle, justified by exemplary conversation. Is it reasonable to expect wisdom from the ignorant; fidelity from the profligate; or application to public business from men of dissipated life? Is it reasonable to commit the public revenue to one who has wasted his own patrimony? Those therefore who pay no respect to religion and sobriety in those whom they send to the legislature of any state are guilty of the greatest absurdity, and will soon pay dear for their folly. Let a man's zeal, professions, or even principles as to political measures be what they may, if he is without personal integrity and private virtue, he is not to be trusted. I think we have had some instances of men who have roared in taverns

for liberty and been most noisy in public meetings, who have become traitors in a little time. Suffer me on this subject to make another remark. With what judgment will laws against immorality be made, or with what vigor will they be executed by those who are profane and immoral in their own practice. Let us suppose a magistrate on the bench of justice, administering an oath to a witness or passing sentence of death upon a criminal and putting him in mind of a judgment to come. With what propriety, dignity, or force can any of these be done by one who is known to be a blasphemer, an infidel, or by whom in his convivial hours every thing serious or sacred is treated with scorn. '*

Permit me to notice as another cause of the divine displeasure those bitter contentions, those mutual reproaches which abound among us. What are our seasons of election but seasons of detraction, and defamation, by which the passions of each other are inflamed? What liberties are frequently taken in reproaching public men, and misrepresenting public measures. Does not the living God explicitly forbid the indulgence of "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath and heresies?" An untender, unforbearing spirit between man and man is always inexcusable, but it is peculiarly offensive when cherished by those

* *Dr. Witherspoon in his sermons delivered on a general fast at the commencement, and a general thanksgiving at the conclusion of the late revolution.*

who are citizens of the same commonwealth ; whose civil and social interests are intimately blended together. In republican forms of government, where public virtue is the great pillar on which the *government* rests, a degree of party spirit may be profitable : one portion of the community thus proves a “ watch-tower ” to the other ; but when this spirit becomes outrageous and infuriated, when jealousy pervades every class of society, and extinguishes almost every spark of mutual confidence, it proves equally reproachful, and ruinous.

These are a few of those provocations with which we are chargeable as a people, and for which without sincere repentance on our part the scourge of a righteous God will unavoidably overtake us. For such provocations were his judgments formerly denounced against even his favorite Israel, and owing to their obstinate impenitence were finally executed in their utter destruction. “ If ye will not hearken unto me, saith Jehovah, and do all my commandments : and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhors my judgments ; I also will do this unto you ; I will appoint unto you terror, consumption, and the burning ague that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart ; and ye shall sow your seed, and your enemies shall eat it ; and I will make your cities waste and bring your sanctuary into desolation. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies land, even

then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. Again, If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

Brethren, when we read these fearful denunciations, and then contemplate our own conduct, who must not tremble for his country? Was the holy sabbath more generally or wantonly profaned in Judea, than in America? Were the streets of Jerusalem more frequently polluted by the unhallowed buyer and seller on that day, than are the streets of our own settlements and villages and cities? Must we not rationally expect "that the soul" of our offended Sovereign "will be avenged on such a nation as ours?" Is the violation of his law less aggravated among us whose light is more clear, whose privileges are more exalted than among them; or is the Lord God less righteous to avenge the quarrel of his covenant? Nay, have not our judgments already commenced?

To consider the evidences of divine wrath which we have occasionally experienced, and under which we now suffer, was the second part of our subject, and demands our attention.

1. Has not a Holy God often plead his controversy with our land by a fearful pestilence? Receiving its commission from on high, has not

this scourge gone abroad through our country and visited in their turn our cities from the northern to the southern extremities of the union ? In its hostile career has it not desolated for a season the sanctuaries of God ; driven from their abodes thousands of our citizens, and mingled in sudden, promiscuous ruin the babe, the youth, and the hoary head ?

As another mark of his indignation, and another mean of reclaiming an ungrateful, apostatising people, has he not commissioned the fire to become the avenger of his quarrel ? Has not this devouring element laid waste in some degree many of our cities, and reduced from affluence to poverty hundreds of their inhabitants ? The messengers of Jehovah's wrath have not been confined to our cities, but have occasionally visited all parts of the country. The insect, an army small, imperceptible, yet irresistible, has marched though the land, and cut down in its progress, the staff of life. Before it our fields were clothed with verdure, and flourishing "as the garden of Eden, but behind it a desolate wilderness." Did he not in one year "shut up the windows of heaven," refusing to us "the early and later rain in their season ;" and by intemperate rains in another year did he not destroy the fruits of the earth, blast the hopes of the husbandman, and alarm with apprehensions of *cleanness of teeth* ? Such are the scourges which we have occasionally felt in years that are past ; such the expressions of divine indignation under

which our land has often trembled : Natural causes have been ingeniously assigned for all these calamities : Presumptuous, impious mortals would fondly exclude the Living God from all agency in the world, as they extinguish every generous impulse of his fear and love in their own hearts : Every occurrence, whether prosperous or adverse, is ascribed by them to secondary means ; but “ the man of wisdom ” will consider them “ as coming forth from the Lord of hosts,” and as visitations either of his mercy or wrath. “ Is there evil in the city ; is there evil ” in the country, “ and the Lord hath not done it ? ” Does the pestilence consume the persons of our citizens, or the fire devour their property ? Does the rain prove our scourge in one year, or the drought in another, or the *mildew* in another without his permission and appointment. They are alike the ministers of almighty God ; they come only at his call, and they continue to fulfil the the high commission received from his hand. Thus he declared to Israel formerly, and thus he may declare to America now, “ I have withholden the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest : I have smitten you with blasting and mildew : I have sent among thee pestilence after the manner of Egypt : I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”

“ For all these his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” Is not our nation trembling at this moment un-

der awful appearances of the divine displeasure? Has not the cloud collected, and spread, and darkened every part of our horizon, and is seemingly ready to burst forth in our destruction? Are we not now assembled in this sanctuary for the very purpose of deprecating the displeasure of our God; of confessing and mourning over our national guilt as the procuring cause, and to implore his return in loving kindness to our land? "The anger of the Lord hath divided us" as a people; "he no longer regards us." Do not a diversity of sentiment, and alienation of affection almost universally prevail? Has not mutual confidence departed from our fellow-citizens, and the fell demon of discord succeeded in its room? Is not the brother alienated from his brother; the son from his father; the neighbor from his neighbor; the citizen from the magistrate? Nay, has not mutual confidence departed in some instances from the spiritual pastor and the people of his charge? Is it not a notorious fact that if the servants of the cross remain faithful to their trust; if they expose "without partiality and without hypocrisy" the corruptions of men and magistrates, they are immediately slandered in public houses and public prints; they are represented as rallying under the standard of party, and as converting their pulpits into political engines. Have not these jealousies, these contentions diffused their deadly influence through every part of the community? Do

they not tend to distract the proceedings of every assembly, from the petit-jury up to the highest deliberative council in the nation ! Has it not become a matter of course that a measure proposed by one class of the community will be opposed and reprobated by the other ? Although we are citizens of the same commonwealth, and united by the dearest social connections ; although we have all that is interesting to us in time, our property, our liberty, our religion, our lives embarked on the same bottom, yet we mark the movements of each other with all the suspicion of the avowed, irreconcilable enemy. This alienation of heart ; those bitter revilings I formerly mentioned as our sin ; I would now mention them as a most deplorable calamity, and as an evident and awful proof of the Lord's controversy with us. It is an old proverb, uttered by an infallible teacher, that " a house divided against itself cannot stand." When we see a particular family split up into factions ; each member torturing the feelings, crucifying the character, and opposing the interests of the other, we conclude without hesitancy that the Lord has departed from that house, and that its desolation is near. It is not less true of nations than of particular families, unite and you establish ; divide and you destroy. When Jehovah denounced the overthrow of Egypt for their contempt of his name, and the cruelties which they had perpetrated upon his people, he declares, " I will

set the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and they shall fight every man against his brother, and every man against his neighbor ; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." May we not therefore consider our internal dissensions and distractions as " coming forth from the Lord of hosts," and as his righteous judgment upon our guilty land ? Are we not constrained to deplore in the plaintive language of the prophet, " the anger of the Lord hath divided us ; Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, and they together shall be against Judah."

" For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." We are now pressed down under a general and heavy calamity : our commerce, the chief source of wealth to the individual, and of revenue to the government, is in a great measure destroyed, and even our peace is endangered by the hostile appearance of foreign nations. More than a year have we suffered under these complicated evils, and their effects have produced embarrassment among all classes of society. No longer is employment offered as formerly to the laborer ; no longer is the toil of the husbandman rewarded by a liberal compensation for his produce ; no longer is the merchant animated to enterprise by success in his trade ; no longer are our harbors enlivened by a race of hardy, generous seamen ; no longer does our canvass whiten the ocean ; no longer do our ships return wafting upon our shores the

wealth, and the luxuries of every clime : Different causes are assigned for this sudden, calamitous reverse of our situation : By some it is attributed to the want of wisdom and energy in our administration ; by others to the intollerant, oppressive measures of Britain ; by others to the ambition, intrigues, and corrupting influence of France, but this “ also must be considered as coming forth from the Lord of hosts, and” by this he is avenging his quarrel with our country. It is his blessing *which maketh rich* ; that crowns with prosperity the individual, or the community, and it is his displeasure which blasts their enterprize : His displeasure causes citizen to become alienated from citizen ; wisdom to depart from our rulers ; commerce to quit our shores, and which is now threatening *to muster the hosts* to the battle: “ Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws ; changed the ordinance and broken the everlasting covenant : The new wine mourneth ; the vine languisheth ; all the merry hearted do sigh : He stretched out his hands against the sea ; the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.”

I must trespass on your patience by noticing another evidence of the divine displeasure with our country ; it is one which must peculiarly interest and alarm the hearts of all who realize our dependance on the God of na-

tions, that our attention has never been directed to the real source either of our miseries or relief. A spirit of lethargy, and of slumber when the great God is shaking his rod over a nation is not merely their sin, but the presage of a more dreadful visitation. "Because they consider not the works of the Lord, nor regard the operations of his hand ; therefore the Lord will destroy them and not build them up." There is probably not a more awful evidence that an individual, or a nation is abandoned of God, and marked as victims for his wrath than to be given up to themselves ; to be permitted to remain unwakened and unconcerned amidst the alarming dispensations of his providence. When "the cup of the iniquity" of Israel "was nearly full," and the decree for their destruction had irreversibly passed, how awful is the commission given to the prophet, "make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes," see my judgments which are already gathered and lowering over their heads ; "and hear with their ears," hear my voice of warning in my word, or by my messengers, or in the movements of my providence ; "and understand with their heart," be really affected with their own abominations as the meritorious cause of their miseries, "and be healed."—The prophet melted at hearing the doom of his deluded country affectionately replies, "Lord, how long ?" He is answered by the

oracle, "until the cities be waste without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

Brethren, does not our situation as a nation obviously and awfully correspond with that of deluded Israel? Can we imagine that they were more stupid, more infatuated amidst the terrors of the Almighty than we are in America? Much time has been occupied in devising the means of safety; much treasure has been expended in fortifying our harbors: message after message has been transmitted to foreign courts representing our grievances and demanding redress; but during all our alarms and all these exertions for maintaining our rights has the Lord of hosts been acknowledged by us as a nation; have we been called by our civil Rulers to ask the interposition of HIM by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice; by whom princes rule, and nobles even all the judges of the earth?" Nay, I mention it with the most profound emotions of regret, and of trembling; of humiliation for the past and apprehensions for the future, that during eight years we have not been recommended in a national capacity to acknowledge the Ruler of nations: no tribute of thanksgiving has ascended to his throne in the season of prosperity; neither have we in adversity been directed to the confession of guilt, nor to ask the interference of that arm which works salvation. Was such the example exhibited by our illustrious patriots of

'76 ; by those who then directed our councils, marshalled our armies in the field, and were, under God, the instruments of our national glory ? On the seventeenth of May in that year, a day that must remain memorable while the love of liberty is cherished in our country, the oppressed millions of America at the call of their rulers approached the mercy-seat, laid a history of their grievances before the avenger of wrongs, implored his interposition in their behalf, and his ear was graciously open to their cry.

From this doctrine, thus explained, it is obviously suggested,

1. That verily " there is a God who judgeth in the earth." Vain, impious mortals frequently ask, " who is Jehovah that we should obey him ? " In the infatuation and madness of their hearts, they often challenge, " how doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most high ? " In the enthusiasm of their impiety, they are resolving, " let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us." But notwithstanding all their presumption and self-confidence, " their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them ; the Lord shall hold them in derision : Then shall he speak to them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Though hand join in hand his soul will be avenged ' sooner or later on the wanton, incorrigible person or people. What is the history of the

world, but a history of Jehovah's judgments in the overthrow of haughty, licentious nations? Where are now the once mighty, magnificent empires of Egypt, of Assyria, of Greece, or of Rome? Where are now their splendid cities, their adamantine walls towering towards heaven; their disciplined armies; "their gates of brass, their chariots of iron" which promised an invincible defence against every assault from without? We behold them in their turn receding from the earth, and "their memorial has" nearly "perished with them:" there remains nothing but their name feebly written on the historian's page. "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished?" What crashing of thrones and kingdoms have we witnessed with our own eyes? Where is now the ancient, august monarchy of France; that which stood for ages, and apparently defied even the hand of time? Have we not seen it and many others totter to their foundations, and hundreds and thousands of the inhabitants lost in the general wreck? Is it argued "that these kingdoms, having grown old, decayed and mouldered away of course, as every thing created naturally tends to dissolution;" or is it argued, "that internal causes may be assigned for all these effects; that violent insurrections convulsed the empire of Rome, and that Babylon was taken during the licentious rioting of her princes and nobles?" These objections do not in the least militate against the argument.—

The sovereign Ruler of nations accomplishes his purposes by secondary causes ; by means he protects the righteous, and by means he executes vengeance on the deluded, insolent opposers of his government. As a proof, for instance, that the conquest of Babylon and the destruction of the empire was of God, this event was foretold ages before its accomplishment ; the instrument of its overthrow was mentioned by name ; the very manner in which he should execute his purpose was minutely expressed ; and yet all was represented as the effect of divine vengeance against the Assyrians. " Come down," saith the Lord by his prophet to that impious city, " come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon ; sit on the ground : For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness ; thou hast said, none seeth me : Therefore shall evil come upon thee ; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth ; and mischief shall fall upon thee ; thou shalt not be able to put it off ; and destruction shall come upon thee suddenly which thou knowest not." Through the anger of almighty God these fearful desolations are spread among the nations of the earth : A flood of impiety, and licentiousness on their part is succeeded by a flood of wrath on his part.

2. We learn from this doctrine who are the enemies of a country ; who disturb her peace ; who interrupt her prosperity and endanger her very existence ; they are those who live in

the contempt of God, and the violation of his righteous law. These are the *Achans in the camp* who bring wrath upon the nation of Israel. The immoral, impious man ; the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the insolent scoffer of religion and its institutions ; the parent who is undutiful in his station, who is not diligent in educating his offspring for God and his service ; the magistrate who does not *rule in the fear of the Lord*, but pollutes the land by a loose, licentious deportment and conversation : These are the persons, by whatever political name they are known, or under whatever mask they appear among their fellow-citizens, who bring down the judgments of heaven on settlements, and cities, and nations : These are the persons who occasionally shut up the windows of heaven, suspending “ the early and latter rain in their season ;” who dry up the streams of commerce ; who give commission to “ the pestilence wasting its thousands in our streets ;” who unsheath the sword of war, and drench a land in the blood of its inhabitants. “ Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel :” hear his word, ye citizens of America, “ for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God. By swearing and lying, and killing, and committing adultery they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish with the beasts

of the field and the fowls of heaven." They, on the other hand, are the true patriots "who fear God; who work righteousness; who render to all their due, giving unto Ceasar the things that are Ceasar's, and unto God the things that are God's; who keep holy the Sabbath by "spending it in the public and private exercises of divine worship; who visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and preserve themselves unspotted from the world:" parents who are devout in their habitations: who early infuse into the hearts of their children the principles of religion and virtue; magistrates who feel the solemnity and responsibility of their station, being "ministers of God for the good of" society; who assume the important office, not from motives of interest, or honor, but that they may rule for the glory of him by whose authority they act, and to whose bar they are accountable; who by the blamelessness of their conversation, and by the impartial discharge of every official duty "become a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well;" ministers who "abound in the work of the Lord;" who are not lured from their sacred function by considerations of worldly ease, or emolument, but actuated by the same spirit with their divine Master, "go about doing good:" such persons, such magistrates, such ministers are the genuine patriots and friends of their country. Contemplating such I may freely exclaim in the language of a Jewish king to the pro-

phet of Jehovah, "my Father, my Father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." They are the massy pillars which give stability to a nation within ; they are the broad shield which render her invincible and impenetrable by any opposition without. Their prayers, their intercessions, their alms are of more importance towards her defence than all the speculations of the vain philosopher ; than all the schemes of the self-confident statesman ; than all the martial prowess of either the soldiery or navy. For the sake of these, judgments are often averted and days of calamity are shortened. The waters never gushed upon *the old world* until Noah was secured in the ark ; the arm of the destroying angel was stayed from the destruction of Sodom until "Lot had escaped to the mountains," and when "Phinehas arose, and," as a faithful magistrate, "executed righteousness the plague was" instantly arrested "in the camp of Israel. Run," saith the Lord God to his messenger, the prophet, "run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and seek ye in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man ; if there be any that executeth judgment ; that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it."

3. We learn from this doctrine the suitable exercises of a people in the season of impending judgments ; they ought diligently to enquire into the cause of the Lord's controversy ; they should aim at discovering those national sins which are the procuring cause of

national calamities. We hear the prophet complaining with respect to the people of Israel, "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: When thy hand is lifted up they will not see, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." This complaint is mournfully applicable to us amidst the present alarming appearances of divine providence. Our attention is chiefly confined to the instruments, one party is disposed to throw the censure upon the other; the citizen reprobates the ruler, and one portion of the rulers reproach the other as the cause of our evils. But whatever sinful instrumentality men have in involving our country in the present state of embarrassment and alarm, the Lord God has a sovereign, righteous agency; he is avenging his quarrel with an ungrateful, disobedient nation: and until we become sensible of his displeasure as manifested in our judgments; until we discover our own iniquities as justly provoking this displeasure; until we are sincerely humbled on account of our iniquities, and led to the blood of reconciliation as our only remission, I shall entertain little hopes that the rod will be removed. Let all, on this day of humiliation, turn their eyes upon their own hearts and impartially examine their particular exercises; are they cordially melted for their own iniquities and for the abominations "that prevail in the land?" Are they

sincerely humbled before the Lord that ordinances are so generally neglected ; that Jesus and his great salvation are despised ; that the holy sabbath is wantonly prostituted by all classes in our nation ? Such were the exercises of the church formerly in the season of her calamity, and such, if we have received an unction of the same spirit, will be our exercises this day. “ O Lord, to us belong confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers because we have sinned against thee ; yea, all Israel have transgressed thy laws : therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written.” With confession of former sins let us connect earnest resolutions of amendment in the time to come.— Would to God that henceforth all classes of our citizens *were going* hand in hand, *and weeping as they go ; saying*, with penitent Israel, “ let us return to the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal ; he hath smitten and he will bind us up : come and let us join ourselves to Jehovah in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Such exercises would be the surest pre-sage of future peace and felicity and glory to our nation : They might be considered an infallible pledge that the cloud which now darkens our horizon will shortly vanish, and that the sun of prosperity will revisit with his cheering beams our long favored land.

O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years ; in the midst of the years make known : in wrath remember mercy. AMEN and AMEN.

SERMON XV.

AMOS IV. 12.

And because I will do this unto thee ; prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

THE holy scriptures are admirably adapted to man in his present, imperfect, militant state. They forewarn him of approaching calamities ; they afford direction in every perplexity ; they inspire with confidence in the hour of surrounding peril, and impart consolation amidst the various adversities of life. The admonition contained in our text must appear peculiarly seasonable to Israel, when we realise her awful and interesting situation at the time of its delivery: It was uttered by the inspired messenger “ in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” The visitation of the Jewish nation by an earthquake is noticed only in this place, and by the prophet Zechariah. The latter as the messenger of divine wrath declares, “ I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled : and ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains ; yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled before the earthquake* in the days of Uz-

* *This event is particularly mentioned by Josephus in his “ Antiquities of the Jews ;” he relates that “ Jereboam the son of Joash was a prince most dissolute and licentious in his practices, by which he brought*

ziah king of Judah." The Lord God never wants instruments for avenging his quarrel with the enemies of his government : All elements are subject to his sovereign controul, and all agents, visible and invisible, rational and irrational, from the least insect which moves on the earth to the loftiest angel who walks the streets of heaven are at his disposal, and stand ready to perform his pleasure either of mercy or wrath : Yet HE is infinitely *slow to anger*, and displays his *exceeding, abundant* compassion in giving previous intimations of approaching calamities. *The cloud* usually makes its first appearance *small as a man's hand* ; it gradually rises higher and becomes darker, before it bursts forth upon the object devoted to destruction. The great God warns the wicked by his word, raising up messenger after messenger ; by his providence, inflicting lesser judgments as a mean of reclaiming and saving them from more awful visitations. He thus proves to the satisfaction of every rational spectator, " that he is merciful, and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth ;" that he *has no pleasure in* the temporal destruction of nations, or in the everlasting ruin of individuals, but would rather that both should repent, and return, and

almost innumerable calamities upon the people of Israel ;" that " in his days there was a terrible earthquake ;" that " the roof of the temple opened with the shocks of it, and one half of the mountain Ege was torn from the other."—Jos. ant. 145. 6. N. Y. ed. '92.

live. Before he “opened the fountains of the deep,” and brought the flood “upon the old ungodly world,” he raised up Noah a preacher of righteousness, and warned them year after year ; previous to the overthrow “of Nineveh, that great city,” he commissioned Jonah to go forth and proclaim “in the streets, yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed ;” and before he pours out the fury of his anger upon Israel, his once favorite people, the offspring of Abraham his servant, he addresses them in the admonition which you have heard, “prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

In the preceding verses of this chapter, the prophet, in the name of his God, recapitulates to this deluded, obstinate nation the various methods which had been employed for their reformation. “And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : And I have also withholden from you the rain, when there were yet three months to the harvest, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have overthrown some of you, as the Lord overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the

Lord." Who that has noticed, in the most superficial manner, the dispensations of God toward us as a people, must not read in our punishments a counterpart of the punishments formerly inflicted on Israel? Did not a righteous God, year after year, "withhold from us the rain of heaven," causing the pastures to fail in the field, and the corn to languish in the valley? Has he not occasionally "smitten us with blasting* and mildew? Has he not sent among us again and again the pestilence† after the manner of Egypt?" And is not the accusation, which was brought against Israel, at least as applicable to us, "yet have ye not returned unto me, [saith the Lord?]" Where is there any evidence that either our mercies or our judgments have proved effectual for reclaiming or reforming us? Are the living oracles more generally read, or revered? Is the sanctuary attended *now* by those who *formerly* lived in the neglect of its ordinances?

* *In the summer of 1802, just as the fields began to whiten for the harvest, a mildew pervaded the northern and western parts of this state, and blasted in its course two thirds, perhaps three fourths of the wheat, the staple commodity of this country.*

† *Not to mention those malignant, mortal epidemics, which have fearfully scourged our principal cities, the influenza, a species of pestilence, has repeatedly taken its course through almost every state in the Union. So generally did it prevail in the autumn of 1807, that scarcely a family in this town escaped it: and on a particular sabbath, through the almost universal indisposition of ministers and people, various churches were laid desolate.*

Are the praises of God resounding now in houses where that celestial melody was formerly unheard? Is the holy sabbath more conscientiously sanctified through our land, or does the power of Godliness shine more illustrious in the lives of those who possess the form? Is the charge of pride, extravagance, injustice between man and man, and ingratitude to the God of our mercies less applicable now than in years that are past? Nay, has not the tide of our impiety and profligacy risen with the tide of our prosperity, and when the divine hand has been stretched out for our correction "we have not seen it," neither have we trembled under the displays "of the majesty of the Lord." Is such the fact, beloved brethren, then I cannot address you in language more appropriate than the admonition of the prophet to his nation "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

The people to whom the warning is directed are *Israel*, the visible church of God. The fire of divine jealousy burns peculiarly awful around his altar: *There* the light shines most clear; *there* the voice of admonition is most frequently heard; *there* the privileges are most exalted, and consequently *there* the *consumption determined* usually commences its career.—Those who rank first in point of privilege are ordinarily made the first and most fearful monuments of divine indignation. "Judgment must begin at the house of God." Rebellion in a son is both more unnatural and

inexcuseable, than in a servant : Our abhorrence is much more excited by an act of treachery in a pretended friend, than in the open, avowed enemy ; upon the same principle the crimes of a professing people are most offensive to God, and expose to the severest marks of his displeasure. “ You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; I will therefore punish you for your iniquities.” The history of the world fully confirms the truth of these denunciations.—Those very parts of the earth which were long, and singularly favored with a pure dispensation of the gospel, have been afterwards as singularly the seat of judgments, both temporal and spiritual. Turn your eyes for a moment to Jerusalem, once the most distinguished spot of the earth ; that city where the temple was erected ; where the living oracles were proclaimed ; where the morning and evening sacrifice, this lively pledge of our Great Propitiation, was offered up ; where the incense arose in sacred columns from the censer of Aaron the type of “ the high priest of our profession ;” where the ministry of our Lord was chiefly accomplished ; where miracles the most sublime were frequently wrought by his hands, and celestial truth flowed from his lips : Behold also Corinth,* Sardis, Smyrna, and

* *A modern traveller represents, in a most affecting light, these once distinguished parts of the world. Sardis, according to his account, “ was overthrown by a most terrible earthquake, and is now only a poor*

Thyatira, cities where flourishing churches were early planted by the Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord. How has their external importance sunk, and their spiritual glory departed? Just in proportion as evangelic light formerly shone clear around, a cloud dark and impenetrable envelopes them, and the wretched inhabitants are debased by ignorance, and superstition, and every species of abomination.

This verse thus explained, presents to our consideration,

I. A solemn event, *a meeting with our God*; and

II. Our duty in the prospect of this event, "prepare to meet thy God."

Each individual of the human kind must meet Jehovah at death: The immortal spirit, immediately after its separation from the body, is summoned to the tribunal of its judge; then it is called to render a solemn account of its stewardship, and afterwards, according to its works, is adjudged to an unchanging destiny, either of glory or of shame. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after habitation of shepherds, living in low and humble cottages: howsoever," he elegantly adds, "the ancient pillars and ruins lift up their heads, as unwilling to lose the memory of their former glory:" and Corinth which the Roman orator pronounced "*lumen totius Græciæ*," the light of all Greece, was burnt to ashes for its insolence to the legates of Rome.—See CALMET's Dic. on Jer. and WELL's Geog. of the Old and New Test. v. ii. 259, 60. 275, 6.

death the judgment :” Again, “ we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to the things done in his body, whether they be good or evil. ’

All mankind collectively must *meet* Jehovah in the hour of general retribution. “ The Lord God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained. ” The trump of the archangel shall sound ; the great white throne shall be erected : the sign of the son of man shall appear ; the judge shall descend ; all the living shall be instantly changed, and all the dead arise ; then the kindreds of the nations shall flock to the judgment seat of their common Lord, and receive one general irreversible sentence, “ 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 the one from the other : ” the deeds done in the present life must then undergo a review the most minute, the most impartial, and the countless myriads of the human family be awarded to everlasting life, or everlasting perdition.

But the *meeting with God* to which the prophet alludes, and for which he admonishes *Israel to prepare*, is an event materially different ; it belongs to particular communities, or nations, in their public social capacity.

There are periods of national retribution, no less than of personal retribution : *periods* when the adorable Ruler of the universe rises from his throne, and comes forth to reckon with the inhabitants of a country ; when he takes a review of all the privileges bestowed upon them ; of all the deliverances wrought from time to time in their behalf ; of the duration of their national peace ; of the degree of their national prosperity, and then chastises them for the abuse of their privileges. “ Hear, all ye people ; hearken, O earth and all that therein is : For behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come and tread on the high places of the earth : For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the iniquity of the house of Israel.”

The dealings of a sovereign God toward individuals and nations obviously correspond. He spares the particular person notwithstanding numerous provocations ; he affords him the means of repentance, and the offers of life ; he alternately alarms and allures ; he tries him *now* with mercies, *then* with judgments, before he gives commission *to cut him off* as utterly incorrigible : And such also is his conduct toward nations in general. He admonishes them for their impiety ; he forewarns them *now* by his messengers, *again* by the movements of his providence of calamities that are approaching ; he executes one threatening as a mean of awakenining them to repentance, and saving them from other and se-

verer scourges : He thus entreated with *the old world* one hundred and twenty years by the ministry of Noah ; he thus reprov'd *the cities of the plain* by Lot as his messenger, before *he turned them into ashes*, making them public monuments of his vengeance. With what long-suffering did he expostulate with the nation of the Jews before he finally marked them out as “ the people of his wrath ? How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee, Israel ? How shall I make thee as Admah ? How shall I set thee as Zeboim ? My heart is turned within me : my repentings are kindled together.” And upon their partial reformation in the days of Samuel, of Asa, and of Josiah he immediately suspended the execution of his judgments, and wrought salvation in their behalf.

When an individual wilfully closes his eyes against the light of the gospel ; when he shuts his ears against its pointed and repeated admonitions ; when he tramples with deliberate hardihood on mercies and judgments Jehovah in awful sovereignty leaves him *to his own delusions* ; he ceases to reprove him either by his word, or spirit, or providence ; and pronounces him a “ vessel of wrath fitted for destruction :” His condition then becomes utterly and everlastingly desperate : All his prayers, all his tears, all his remorse for past transgressions, or resolutions of amendment in future are unavailing. “ He that being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck, shall sud-

denly be destroyed and that without remedy." As it is with individuals, it is also with nations. They have *their accepted time*, and, if the expression be allowed, *their day of political salvation* : But if this be misimproved ; *if they fill up their cup of iniquity* by ingratitude for national mercies, and by a spirit of slumber and impenitence amidst the scourges of his providence, the Lord God abandons them as altogether incorrigible, and irreversibly *decrees their consumption* : All the intercessions of righteous individuals, and even a general reformation will be unavailing for the removal of divine vengeance : *Though Noah, and Daniel, and Job* should interpose and supplicate, *spare thy people*, their prayers may rest in blessings upon their own heads, but will not stay the hand that is stretched out for correcting the nation. The sovereign Ruler of the world either pours upon them a spirit of discord and confusion, making one part of the community the instrument of destruction to the other, or he surrenders them up an easy prey to some foreign foe. What an example of his vengeance against the disobedient, incorrigible nation do we behold in the final overthrow of the Jews and their city. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not : Behold your house is left unto you desolate. If

thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Is there not reason to apprehend that such a *meeting with our God* is awaiting us as a nation; that it is near at hand? The signs of the times are peculiarly ominous and deserve the attention of all: "The Lord God has come out of his place, and" in a manner unusually awful "is punishing the inhabitants of the earth." With our own eyes we have beheld him *shaking all nations*; we have seen the sword of war unsheathed in almost every part of the globe; we have seen her crimson flag unfurled by land, and on the ocean; the earth has been reddened, and the very waters of the deep have been tinged with the blood* of the slain; we have seen the most ancient and stately empires shook to their center; crowns tottering on the heads of princes; princes hurled from their thrones, and princes and peasants mingled in promiscuous ruin. "Nation has been rising up against nation, and the Lord of hosts has mustered the hosts of the battle." Hitherto, through his tender mercies, we have escaped the all devouring vortex; our peace, with a few inconsiderable

* *The battles of Marengo and Jena by land, and the naval engagements at the Nile, in the Channel, and at Trafalgar, whether we regard the obstinacy with which they were fought or the numbers that were slain, probably stand without a parallel either in ancient or modern history.*

exceptions, has been uninterrupted, and our immunities as an independant nation have been uninfinged. But the period of our public tranquillity, we have reason to apprehend, has nearly expired. Are not our natural rights at present wantonly violated, and our commerce invaded ; has not the property of our citizens been violently wrested from their possession on the high seas, and sold at foreign markets, and their persons laid in chains, and doomed to languish in cheerless dungeons : Every effort used for the restoration of our neutral rights, and the redress of our grievances has hitherto failed, and the cloud is daily spreading and blackening over our heads.

Amidst these dangers from abroad, how humiliating is our situation at home ? Instead of harmony in concerting measures for our national defence, is there not universal distrust and distraction ? No longer rallying around one centre, and blending ourselves in the common name of AMERICANS, are we not assuming different names, and flocking to different standards, as if we neither regarded each other as children of the same family, nor members of the same community ? Does not a spirit of discord pervade from New-Hampshire to Georgia ? Have not the different parties become so intollerant, and infuriated, that seemingly they want only an opportunity to rise up in open hostilities ? And remember, of all wars, that of citizen against citizen

is the most to be deplored : This flame when once kindled is the most inextinguishable in its nature, and the most wasteful in its progress : It is *like a torch in a sheaf*, and usually consumes a nation both root and branch. O my country ! unless the Lord of hosts speedily interpose in thy behalf ; unless he restore mutual confidence among thy sons, and harmony to thy public councils, **AN END, THINE END MUST COME :** “ The sword without, and terror and confusion within must destroy thee.”

Is such our situation, and are such our apprehensions, then the enquiry must appear equally appropriate and important, how shall we “ prepare for meeting with our God ?”

This was our second proposition, and to it your attention is now invited.

1. All should prepare for this event, by fleeing without delay to Jesus-Jehovah as their *city of refuge*. He is a “ hiding place from every storm, and a covert from the tempest ;” sheltered beneath *this rock* by a living faith ; having our consciences sprinkled with his atoning blood, and our souls adorned with his immaculate righteousness, we may sit secure when the cloud has actually bursted, and the storm is exhausting its fury. The believer, with the lively exercise of all his graces, is like a rock in the midst of the ocean, unmoved, immoveable by all the dashing of either wind or wave : But, “ where, ah, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear,” when the

wrath of Almighty God “has gone forth ;” when it “consumes the earth with her increase ; when it sets on fire the foundations of the mountains, and burns to the lowest hell ? Where, ah, where will appear” the empty professor ; the man who possesses merely the mask of christianity, and is an utter stranger to its power, “where will he appear” when the Lord God in his jealousy “will search Jerusalem as with lighted candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees ; that say in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Where, ah, where will then appear” the gay, the thoughtless, wanton youth ; “those who put far away the evil day ; who crown themselves with rose buds ; who chant to the sound of the viol,” and remain deaf to all the entreaties of friends, and parents, and ministers, “where will they flee for help, where will they leave their glory,” when the whirlwind of divine wrath shall sweep terribly the earth ; “when the fierce anger of the Lord shall come upon them, when the day of the Lord’s anger shall come upon them ?” To all such every temporal scourge is only a pledge of that hour “when the Son of man shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, and the world and the things that are therein shall be dissolved.” But they who are reconciled to God by the blood of the Infinite Surety, are secured, infallibly secured from avenging wrath, and therefore may sit unruffled amidst all the agitations of the world.

“ Being justified by faith they have peace with God, and if God be for them who can be against them ?” With his wisdom to direct ; his omnipotence to defend ; his all-sufficiency to supply, and his mercy to sympathise, they enjoy “ a peace which passeth understanding” amidst every outward storm.

2. We ought to prepare “ for meeting our God” by walking circumspectly and “ keeping our garments unspotted from every pollution.” Upon all occasions it is our duty to “ be sober and vigilant ; to keep our hearts with all diligence ; to walk worthy of him who is calling us to glory and virtue,” but this is pre-eminently our duty and our interest in the hour of impending judgment. True it is, there is nothing meritorious in the services of the creature ; our most perfect performances fall infinitely short of the pure law of Jehovah ; yet the reflection that we have *walked circumspectly* before him ; that we have not willingly deviated from “ the paths of righteousness to the right hand or to the left,” inspires with confidence and joy when his rod is stretched out to scourge a nation and we must participate in the common calamity. While conscious guilt then stands appalled ; while it startles “ at the shaking of every leaf, the righteous is bold as a lion ;” looking for protection to that God whom he has served ; to whose glory his life has been honestly devoted, he bids defiance to all external danger ; he considers that all the afflic-

tions of time are short and inconsiderable when compared with the glories of eternity ; he contemplates death itself as stripped of every terror, and no more than a dark entry to the regions of unclouded, everlasting day. With what consolation in the depth of distress ; with what holy heroism in danger, did a consciousness of their integrity inspire the three Israelites in Babylon ; it extinguished in their bosoms every impulse of fear ; it enabled them to behold undismayed the majesty of the princely throne, and the horrors of “ the fiery furnace : O Nebuchadnezar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter : If it be so, if we must resist even unto blood in adhering to our religion and our God ; if our tortures are even aggravated by a *furnace seven fold hotter* than usual, *we are* not alarmed at the prospect, nor anxious about the issue ; our God whom we serve is able to deliver from this burning, fiery furnace ; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King.”

3. We ought to prepare “ for meeting our God ” by awaking to greater diligence in the discharge of every duty, and “ abounding more eminently in the work of the Lord.” When the tumult of war is heard, and the enemy appears in view, the prudent soldier instantly arises ; he collects his armor ; he fastens every part of it in its proper place ; he arranges himself in order for battle, and thus stands ready every moment for the arduous onset ; when a storm is expected on the ocean ;

when the clouds collect and blacken ; when the distant thunder is heard and the lightnings begin to blaze around, the vigilant mariner takes the alarm, and makes the requisite preparation. Such should be the christian's conduct when the judgments of Almighty God are commissioned to pass through a nation. Of whatever kind the calamity be, " whether war, or famine, or pestilence ;" on whatever that he esteems precious the assault may be made, whether on his liberty, or religion, or life, he should aim at standing prepared ; at shaking off his spiritual sloth ; " at having his lamp" carefully trimmed and, replenished with oil from Jesus Jehovah " the anointed one," burning with the purest flame ; he ought to become more *fervent* in prayer ; more edifying in his conversation ; more sincere in repentance for his own iniquities, and the iniquities of the nation with which he is connected ; more abundant in all the duties which are incumbent upon him as a man and a christian. This is the best possible preparation for all the calamities of life. To all such the Lord God will become a " little sanctuary" when the sword of his vengeance is drawn, and his wrath consumes a guilty land. 'The angel spreads his pavilion around the pious Lot, " when the cities of the plain are turned into ashes ;" the houses of the Israelites were passed over without injury, when " the first born ' was slain in every family of the Egyptians, and the minister of justice ne-

ver disclosed his commission against Jerusalem, “until a mark was set upon the forehead of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of the land.” The providence of God has even miraculously interposed for the protection of his faithful followers ; he has proved a wall of fire around the individual, the families, and the settlements that have cleaved to him in the hour of general apostacy.

The application suitable for this subject will be readily suggested by your own minds.

1. Let all be exhorted to improve their distinguishing privileges while they are yet enjoyed. You have long sat undisturbed under the means of salvation ; the heavenly manna has been descending in showers around your tents and you have been entreated again and again to partake this divine provision ; the river of life has been rolling plenteously around you its refreshing waters, and you have been urged again and again to draw near and “drink and live for ever.” Whether these golden opportunities will be long continued is altogether uncertain ; it depends on the mere sovereignty of Jehovah : I would therefore most solemnly admonish you to “walk in the light while you have it : Give glory to the Lord your God, lest he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains :” Let the drunkard abandon his cups ; let the swearer cease from his impious oaths ; “let him that stole steal no more, but render to all

their due ;” let those who have indulged themselves in sensual gratifications “ crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ;” let the covetous remember “ that neither their gold nor their silver will deliver them in the day of the Lord’s anger ;” let every prayerless person awake from his unconcern, and “ arise calling upon his God ; let those who have wasted the precious sabbath in idleness, or worldly employments hereafter “ keep holy that day to the Lord our God by not finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words ;” let the secure, impenitent hearers “ break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by turning to the Lord.” Are there any present who, “ through the cares of this world, or the deceitfulness of riches,” or the influence of ungodly associates, “ have departed from the holy commandment,” and thrown off their christian profession, let them be impressed with the danger of their situation, and return in the exercise of repentance to the Living God : let the vain and the thoughtless youth “ remember their Creator, lest they mourn at the last when their flesh and their body are consumed, saying, how have we hated instruction and our hearts despised reproof ?” By all that is dreadful in the wrath of Almighty God, by all that is desirable in his loving kindness I exhort sinners of every age, and condition *to turn* this day “ to the strong holds while they are prisoners of hope. The door of the city of refuge” is now open, and Jeho-

vah Triune, Father, Son and Holy Ghost are inviting you to enter in. "The door of the city of refuge" is now open, and all the redeemed on earth, and all the redeemed in heaven, and all the angels of light will hail with transports of joy your entrance, and your escape "from the avenger of blood." Hasten, hasten to Jesus Christ, to his sacrifice, to his righteousness as your only security from "the wrath that is to come." The Lord God of gods in whose presence I now stand, "whom I serve in the gospel of his Son" bears me witness that I have aimed on this day of humiliation "at espousing you all to one husband," and thus "preparing you to meet your God ; to meet him" now as he is coming forth to avenge his quarrel with our country ; *to meet him* hereafter in the hour of final, irreversible retribution. "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

2. Be exhorted "to live at peace among yourselves, and whatsoever ye do, whether in word or in deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let the Saviour's cross be the only point around which you rally in all your deliberations, whether civil or religious ; let it never be mentioned to the reproach of the christian name ; "let it not be told in Gath, let it not be heard in the streets of Askelon" that an avowed enemy of the

dear Redeemer, who coincides with you in political sentiment, should lie nearer your hearts ; should possess a greater, or an equal share in your confidence and affection with a brother in grace, whose political views may be different from your own : And I am bold to affirm that while you live habitually “ on the Son of God ; while you daily derive from him that “ wisdom which is pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and easy to be entreated,” all your diversity of sentiment respecting public measures will not alienate your hearts from each other. This sacred *unction* will excite to the exercise of mutual forbearance wherein you differ. A variety of political opinions must be expected. In this state of imperfection “ where we see but in part, and know but in part ;” where we are actuated by different motives, and look through different mediums, it is rare that our views fully harmonize on any subject : This very diversity of sentiment affords a greater opportunity for exercising the most illustrious graces, “ charity, patience and forbearance.” At a moment so critical to our own country, so eventful to the world in general, I cannot therefore address you more suitably than in the language of Joseph to his brethren, “ see that ye fall not out by the way.” Every citizen possesses an equal right to the enjoyment of his own sentiments, and in this free government he has liberty to communicate his views on public men, and public measures : but let this freedom be al-

ways exercised with moderation and prudence. Liberty of speech, when used with discretion, proves a public blessing, but when indulged in a manner intemperate and indiscreet, it becomes a political curse. “Finally, brethren, be perfect ; be of good comfort ; be of one mind ; live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Should those sparks of dissention, which are already kindled in every part of the community, burst into an open flame, it will be a consolation to reflect, in the general calamity, that I never added fuel to the fire by irritating the passions of my fellow-citizens.

I should feel chargeable with the omission of a very important duty did I conclude these solemn exercises without directing your attention to *the signs of the times*. A cloud is seemingly collecting over the church and the nations more gloomy than has been witnessed for ages. It is the general opinion of commentators,* who have made prophecy the subject of particular investigation, that *the two witnesses* mentioned in scripture are yet to be slain, and that the religion of papal Rome will obtain a universal diffusion through the earth. The remarks of a learned expositor,† who appeared in the last century, are so inte-

* *The calculations of expositors both ancient and modern, relative to the slaying of the witnesses, have been lately exhibited by the author, at considerable length, in two lectures, which he designs to offer to the public.*

† *Dr. Gill in a sermon delivered in 1750.*

resting that you must readily excuse me in quoting them at large. "The light of the gospel will be wholly withdrawn for a while; the slaying of the witnesses is yet to come; it will make a dismal night, and be accompanied with the universal spread of popery." A late divine,* in the church of Scotland, was so deeply impressed with the same sentiment, that he is said to have collected every fragment which has been written in opposition to that heresy, and circulated it among his correspondents in different countries. Do not the present appearances of the world obviously correspond with the opinions of these commentators? Probably in no period of time did the anti-christian religion extend its influence more rapidly than in the present. It is now the established worship of France. There is a decree of that government, that "no church-book, no psalm book, nor catechism shall be published without the permission of the bishop of the diocese." It is virtually established in Holland and Switzerland, as the regulation of all ecclesiastical concerns is committed to their sovereigns who are papists: This religion has recently obtained a rapid spread through Germany, and other countries adjacent: Bills, at different times, have been brought before the parliament of Great-Britain for securing to the votaries of Antichrist privileges in common with the protestants. If we turn our eyes from Europe

* Dr. JOHN ERSKINE.

to our own country, how very alarming is the prospect ? In several of our capital cities the churches, professing the religion of Rome, are more flourishing than those of any other communion. When we add to these the open infidelity of some, the abject ignorance and utter indifference of others, there is little, humanly speaking, to prevent the general spread of that *abomination* through our country.

Amidst these realities and apprehensions our duty is obvious. Let every man look to his own interest, by “ making his calling and election sure : ” Let every parent look to the dearest interests of his children, “ by bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; ” let him consider a profound education in the doctrines of christianity as the most impenetrable shield against the assaults of either superstition or error : Let every master look to the dearest interests of those committed to his charge, by recommending Jesus and his salvation as, beyond comparison, their most enriching portion : Let every magistrate, as he regards his peace in the hour of peril, execute with unremitting vigilance and unshaken fidelity, the duties of his office : “ Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord,” awake to double diligence in their vocations ; let them “ weep between the porch and the altar, saying, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach.” Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, “ what

shall I say more ?” To *you* it is the call of Jehovah in his word ; it is his call by the very awful movements of his providence, “ come, my people ; enter thou into thy chambers ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity ; the earth also shall disclose her blood and no more cover her slain.”

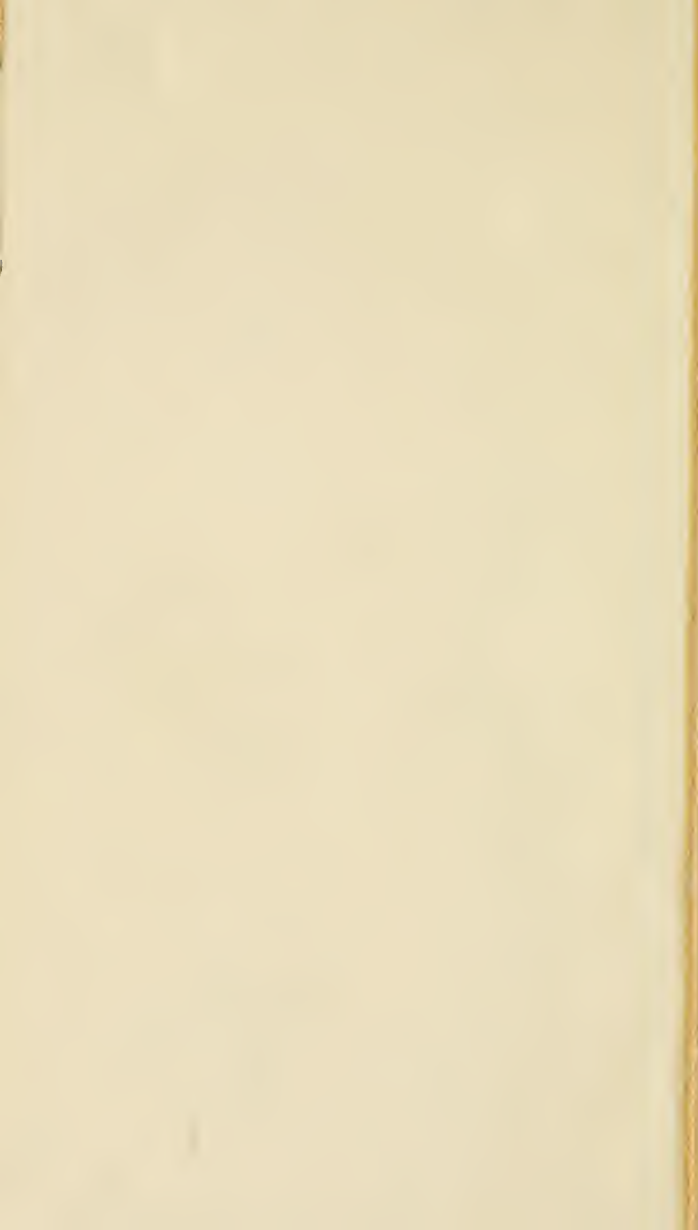
“ O Lord, thou sittest upon the floods, thou sittest King forever,” look with a compassionate eye on our guilty, miserable world, and shorten these days of calamity ; proclaim to every scourge that has desolated our earth, “ it is enough, stay thine hand ;” may the thunder of war expire ; may the sword of slaughter return to its scabbard, no more to be bathed in the blood of man ; let not nation any longer rise up as the destroyer of nation, but may the peaceful banner of Messiah wave in triumph around the globe ; hasten the period when creation shall become one sanctuary, and men of all kindreds one assembly, in doing homage to the God of Israel. **AMEN, even so, come, LORD JESUS.**

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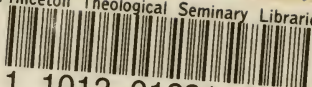
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