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# DISCOURSE.

DELIVERED

IN MILFORD, (MASS.)

ON

*LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 30, 1814;*

OCCASIONED BY THE

RETURN OF A COMPANY OF ARTILLERY.

UNDER

CAPTAIN RUFUS THAYER.

FROM

CAMP, AT SOUTH-BOSTON.

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BY DAVID LONG, A. M.  
MINISTER OF THE TOWN

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*PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.*

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## DISCOURSE.

### LAMENTATIONS III. 22.

IT IS OF THE LORD'S MERCIES THAT WE ARE NOT CONSUMED, BECAUSE HIS  
COMPASSIONS FAIL NOT.

THIS passage was written in a time of great calamity. The territories of the Jewish nation had been invaded by their enemies. Some of their cities had been taken and destroyed. Many of the inhabitants had been slain by the sword, and others led into captivity. These events tended to call to mind the prevailing sins of the land, which had excited the Divine displeasure. Still, however, the goodness of God appeared in the preservation of those who remained. Hence the prophet, while deeply affected with a sense of public calamities, remembers and makes mention of that goodness toward those who still enjoyed protection. While he acknowledges, that the Lord had afflicted them for the multitude of their transgressions; he acknowledges, also, that through his mercy many are still preserved and enjoy safety. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." He was convinced that they owed their protection.

not to their own power or wisdom, but to the superintending providence of God. This is a general truth, and may be extensively applied.

### DOCTRINE.

All the safety which men enjoy in times of danger is by the merciful providence of God.

By suitable attention to the subject, this proposition will appear correct.

It requires but little observation and experience to prove to our rational understanding, that men are incapable of securing themselves from danger. Innumerable unforeseen events may occur, against which no human power or skill can provide, which may expose our health, our limbs, and ultimately our lives, and which may incapacitate us for any exertion to secure ourselves. We are sometimes placed in a situation, and that by our own instrumentality, in which no human arm can reach us to contribute the least assistance. Or if help be at hand, it often proves unavailing, by some fatal error, or even some trifling mistake in the choice of means. In such a case, we see full proof, that we are wholly dependent on God for preservation. If we are secured, we are secured by his merciful interposition. When we consider, in how many ways evils may overtake us, which we have not the sagacity to foresee, and which we could not escape, if we did foresee them, we are necessitated to admit, that while we live, we are every moment subjects of divine protection.

The *human constitution* is liable to innumerable diseases, which, if permitted or commissioned, will baffle the most profound medical skill, irresistibly proceed to their final issue, and terminate in

death. A predisposition to those diseases is often excited in the constitution by the very means which we use for the support of life, or for the gratification of the corporeal appetites. When such predisposition to disease is once excited, the invisible, noxious qualities, or particles floating in the air which we breathe, may incorporate with the circulating fluids, and induce the most fatal maladies. To such calamities the human constitution is often rendered accessible, by a slight, and perhaps imperceptible deviation from strict temperance in the manner of living. To these incidents we may add those by which *irrational animals*, or *inanimate things*, which are useful in themselves, may be let loose upon us. The animals which we employ in our service, instead of producing the advantage which we design, may put our lives in jeopardy, or bring them to a close. Fire\* and water, those elements which are indispensable in the economy of life, may become our sure conductors to the gates of death.

But the exciting causes of danger are not found alone in the material world. The *human mind* is subject to a variety of restless passions, which often

\* This reference the hearers, at the time, readily understood. In the preceding week, a distressing event occurred in this town, in which a building, comprehending a saw-mill, a clothier's shop and die-house, and a weaver's apartment, took fire. Two young men, apprentices to the clothier, escaped from the second loft, by leaping from a window, and succeeded in securing two small children belonging to one of the weavers. But so rapid was the progress of the destroying element, that, in spite of every exertion, two women perished in the flames.

rage beyond control. Men have their separate, and often times contending interests. By pursuing these, their plans of operation often interfere. The selfish passions, impatient of opposition or restraint, inspire revenge and rage. Hence originate destructive wars and desolating conflicts. We have not the controul of other men's passions, nor have they the controul of ours. Contention may be easily excited, but not so easily restrained or allayed. When nations erect the standard of war, a system of plunder, devastation, and cruel and relentless slaughter, becomes legalized. The contending parties are disposed to vie with each other, in inflicting wounds, and spreading desolation. Intent on victory, each seeks the advantage, till death, the king of terrors, with countless miseries in his train, often triumphs over both. In such a state, danger is never wanting. Many are called to leave their dwellings, their families and friends, the scenes of domestic tranquillity, to meet a frowning foe, and to return no more. On the sanguinary altar, unnumbered throngs are immolated, while through the martial field echoes the din of arms, announcing to afflicted hearts the solemn tidings. Happy the nation, which is not called to such a scene! Happy the men, whose lot is free from the alarm of war! Self-defence, however, may sometimes imperiously call men to the field, and justify them in obeying the call. But danger none the less attends, and none the less they need divine protection. If they are preserved, it is by a divine hand. He who holds the destinies of men, can discourage an enemy from hostile attempts, or defeat his enterprizes. So he sometimes does, and brings those back in safety, who might, in

common with others in arms, have fallen to rise no more. Viewing the many ways in which danger, unforeseen or unavoidable, may approach, we may confidently believe, that *all the safety which men enjoy in times of danger, is by the merciful providence of God*. And those who escape may with propriety adopt the language of the prophet, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

In view of the leading idea now illustrated, we are conducted to the necessary conclusion, that whenever we enjoy safety, we are under obligations of gratitude and praise to God for preservation. Reason dictates that we should thankfully acknowledge favours received from the hand of any being, on whom we have no legal claim. When that which is essential to our happiness, comfort, or convenience, is gratuitously bestowed, it confers an obligation. And when we have neither the means, nor the ability, to return a reward, gratitude becomes an indispensable duty. And when it is considered, that this costs us nothing but a reasonable and agreeable exercise of the heart, expressed in the language of the lips and correspondent actions, no excuse for the neglect can be admitted. When, therefore, God manifests his merciful interposition in our favor, in *preserving* us in times of danger, or in securing us *against* danger, we ought thankfully to remember where our safety lies, by whose hand we have been secured, and to whom we are indebted for such favours. When he requires nothing more in return for such goodness than a thankful improvement, we should readily give him all our hearts, and raise our

voices in his praise. And this, we may be assured, is not only just, but honorable. Who does not, in the common walks of life, esteem a man the better for expressing proper gratitude for favours received from his fellow men? How much more suitable and honorable, then, is becoming gratitude to that God on whom we are at all times dependent, and from whom we receive every favour?

If, then, all our safety is in the merciful providence of God, and if gratitude is due to him for protection: hence we may be assured, that gratitude will be an acceptable offering: and that those, who sincerely present it, have reason to hope for future mercies, whenever they shall be needed. To shew the correctness of this, we may reason from analogy. We know by our own experience, that when we confer a favour on any of our fellow creatures, if they suitably acknowledge the favour, and manifest thankfulness, we are pleased. And we are pleased, because they appear as we know they ought to appear. When we perceive that they possess such a disposition, we mark them as being suitable persons on whom to bestow favours. And we are even more ready to grant a second favour than the first, because then we have previous evidence that it will be well received, and that it will not be lost upon them. So have we reason to believe, that gratitude is pleasing in the sight of God, and tends to secure his future favour. Those who have experienced his protection, when called into exposed stations, and have exercised gratitude for his goodness, have reason to rely with confidence on his readiness to continue his favours. They may again repair with cheerfulness to the post of danger.

when duty calls, even where life is exposed, relying on divine protection. Such a disposition and such actions are truly noble, and worthy of imitation. And could we oftener hear acknowledgments of dependence on divine protection, and see gratitude for preservation manifested, by men whose lot it is to be called into perilous scenes, we might oftener enjoy the consoling hope, that protection would be extended, and success would be granted. But the want of such acknowledgments often covers with a gloomy veil the most important undertakings. And the want of such gratitude often fixes a stain on the most brilliant actions. Success, in the most important enterprizes, we have reason to believe, is sometimes lost through a criminal neglect of acknowledging God. In proportion to the evidence which we see, that gratitude for favours is acceptable to God, and calculated to insure his future favour, we have also evidence, that ingratitude under the enjoyment of divine protection is dangerous. It is reasonable to suppose, that God may be provoked to withdraw his protection from those who will not thank him for it.

In view of what has been said, all might with propriety be reminded of their dependence on the superintending providence of God, and their perpetual obligations to exercise gratitude for safety at any time enjoyed. But waving for the present a general application, it is proper that we notice, on this occasion, the gratifying event which we now have the pleasure to witness, of the safe return of our friends and fellow citizens, who had been called out for the *defence* of our rights and liberties. With heartfelt emotions we welcome them to the friendly society of those

from whom they had been separated, and whose best wishes have not ceased to follow them during their absence. The order which called them to leave their friends and their peaceful dwellings, was more indicative of danger than of safety. In other parts of the theatre of action, many who had been called in like manner, had fallen on the sanguine field. The possibility was, that such might be the lot of some of these. And what events were before them, no one could certainly know. They doubtless viewed themselves as proceeding to an exposed situation, where military operations might be something more than mere amusement. Their connexions whom they left behind, probably felt a similar impression. The pencil of anxious imagination was perhaps added to heighten the already glowing colours, and even to exaggerate the idea of danger. Although it was uncertain whether life would be at all exposed, yet because it might be so, the fears of relatives, uniting with affection, might almost persuade them, that the then parting scene would be a final one. It might indeed so have proved. On such an occasion, nothing could be more sensible, than an acknowledgment of dependance on the Ruler of nations, and seeking aid by prayer. A request was sent to the proper quarter, by the proper authority, in an honorable manner, for dispassion. And surely nothing but extreme bodily indisposition,\* could have prevented a ready compliance. But many hearts have been earnestly engaged in interceding for their safety

\* The author was then labouring under a paroxysm of the asthma.



and protection. And through the interposition of Divine Providence, in restraining the enemy and preventing diseases and other incidents, safety has been their lot, and their return is witnessed with pleasing satisfaction. A tribute of gratitude is due from them for preserving mercy. Let your hearts, my friends, glow with thankful emotions to the all powerful Disposer of events, for the favours already received. And in view of past goodness, learn to trust his faithful hand for future protection. You will lose nothing by confiding in and *openly* acknowledging God, in every important undertaking, and in every scene of danger. Learn to trust him, and he will take care of you. And should you ever again be called forth in arms for the defence of the country (which may God prevent by the speedy return of peace) we flatter ourselves, that the military character which both Officers and Soldiers have established, for promptitude and regular habits, will remain unsullied, and that your valour will abide the test of trial. And be assured that our most earnest desires for your preservation will again follow you.

A tribute of gratitude is also due to God from the families and connexions of those who have thus returned in safety. You, my friends, are not called, as many others have been, to hear the heart-rending tidings, that your friends had fallen on the field of battle. Here you see them,\* after being called out for our defence, safely returned to your friendly society and the enjoyments of domestic life. Remem-

\* The Company was present as a body, by mutual agreement.

ber, that God has done it; and by your present gratitude secure his future kindness.

Let us all feel our obligations to God for this and all other expressions of his goodness. And let an answerable improvement insure to us an interest in his favour. Then may we be handed through the changing scenes and troubles of the present life in peace, and at last hear the welcome sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." There may we rest from all our toils and sufferings, free from the alarms of war, beyond the reach of sin and sorrow: and, in the presence of the Almighty Conqueror, the PRINCE OF PEACE, dwell together in eternal day.











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