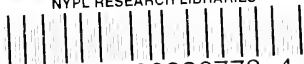


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DISCOURSES

ON

PRACTICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS:

BY JONATHAN COGSWELL, D. D.

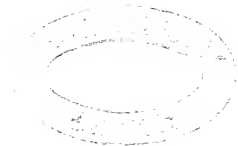
LATE A PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF CONNECTICUT

New-Brunswick, N. J.

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1845.

1845



P R E F A C E .



THE following discourses, when originally delivered, the author has reason to believe, were the means of the conversion of a number, who were then the people of his charge. They have been printed, and are now presented as a donation to the Presbyterian Board of Domestic Missions, with the hope and prayer that they may be useful to those, whom he has not seen and cannot expect to see in the present world.

New Brunswick, N. J. May 15, 1845.

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DISCOURSE I.



THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

“For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”
MATH. 16, 26.

The subject contained in the text is, I know, familiar to every one accustomed to listen to the sound of the gospel. It is not, however, on this account the less interesting. Indeed those subjects, I am persuaded, which are calculated to operate most powerfully on the human mind are too seldom considered in all their important bearings, because they are thought to be understood by every one. This may account for the cold insensibility which prevails in Christian congregations among those who are living without any good hope of salvation. Such persons do not dwell with intense thought and for any considerable time on those truths, which are best suited to alarm them or to rouse them from the slumbers of stupidity. How many may be found, who acknowledge the scriptures to be the word of God, but whose views of the sublime doctrines of revelation are too superficial to affect them! Some cannot be entertained except by perpetual novelty. They are like travelers, who pass too ra-

pidly over a country to examine satisfactorily any object. Others prefer such discourses, as are above the comprehension of the illiterate. While they are gratified, many are not profited.

Christianity places all men on the same level—proposes to them the same conditions of reconciliation, offers them the same rewards, and requires them to become fools that they may be wise. The object of the faithful preacher is not to be admired for the splendor of his genius and his extensive erudition, but to be approved of God.

In this Christian land, where the gospel shines with unclouded brightness, and where we may almost everywhere behold the wonderful works of the wonder-working Jesus; how many pass through life, as if ignorant of a future state, or, as if they thought it a matter of indifference, whether they are saved or lost! Their views of spiritual things are very obscure and circumscribed, and their affections are fastened to the perishable objects of this world. They willingly endure the greatest hardships and expose themselves to the most frightful dangers to obtain temporal riches and honors, while they neglect to secure an incorruptible inheritance and unfading glory. How many crowd places of amusement and live without any regard to the consequences of their conduct! The great mass of mankind must be awakened by the clearest exhibitions of such truths, as most deeply concern them. Can it be that those, who appear so cheerful and gay, and who are wholly engaged in worldly pursuits are destined to exist forever, and to be forever happy or miserable according to their conduct in the present state? How few have commenced that great work,

without the accomplishment of which they must be miserable forever ! Many seem never seriously to have considered what may be obtained or lost during their short life.

When Christ, who spake as never man spake, was upon earth, one argument he used to persuade men to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, was derived from his knowledge of the worth of the soul. Though it is beyond the power of any finite being fully to estimate the value of the soul ; yet some just views of its worth may be obtained from a consideration of its *capacities*, its *immortality*, and the *price of its redemption*.

I. The *capacities* of the soul will first be considered.

The soul of man is intelligent. It is this which renders him capable of making vast attainments in knowledge. The body, which is the habitation of the soul, is of the earth and differs only in form from the dust on which we tread. It is the soul, which gives lustre to the eye, expression to the countenance, and activity and vigor to the body. The body, as soon as the soul leaves it, loses all its beauty—becomes a mass of corruption, fit only to be the food of worms.

What vast treasures of knowledge a single individual may acquire during his short life ! How many volumes he may read, and how many subjects he may investigate ! He may understand the laws of nature—the structure of the earth we inhabit—the motions of the planets—and may, by just calculations, determine the times, when those phœnomena will be witnessed, which so greatly alarm the illiterate. Assisted by the light of revelation he that is in pursuit of knowledge may raise the curtain that hides from our

view the scenes of the invisible world. He may obtain a correct knowledge of heaven—even a more correct knowledge from the writings of the inspired penmen, than he can obtain from fallible historians of countries he never visited. With the volume of revelation for his guide, he may enter the New Jerusalem—survey its walls—walk through its streets—behold its magnificent temple—drink its pure water of life—and partake of the fruits which abound in the city. With the same guide he may go down to the prison, where the wicked are confined—listen to their heart-rending cries—and see many daily dropping into the abyss of woe. How vast and boundless the field of contemplation, presented to the view of those, who diligently study the scriptures! How sublime and glorious the objects, constantly before them! In 50 or 100 years after the soul is separated from the body it may acquire more knowledge than is now contained in the largest collections of books in the world. Those, who are illiterate when they die, will be far more learned than those, most distinguished for their knowledge, who after the lapse of a few years follow them.

2. It is the soul, which enables man to rise to a high degree of dignity.

Man was originally made but little lower than the angels and was crowned with glory and honor. God gave him dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things under his feet—all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field—the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. Though by his apostacy rendered baser than the beasts that perish; yet by sincere

repentance and faith in Christ he may rise higher than he was before his fall. The work of redemption has opened to his view a vast field of contemplation, and presented for his pursuit the most noble objects, which he never could have known had he continued innocent. What could man have known of the plan and work of redemption, had he never sinned? Had there been no sin, there could have been no need of one able to save from sin. By the grace of God man is permitted to enter the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, to commune with him—to walk with him—to sit at his table, and even to dwell with him. The secret of the Lord, said the Psalmist, is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. The sons and daughters of earthly kings are high in rank and dignity. How much higher are the rank and dignity of the sons and daughters of him, who is infinitely above all earthly potentates! All, who have been born of the spirit are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. How great is the dignity of the man, and how honorable, who has made great attainments in knowledge and moral virtue!

3. It is the soul, which makes man capable of accomplishing great good—of doing much to promote the glory of God and to effect the salvation of sinners. Who can calculate, how much good a single individual may effect, or how much evil he may occasion during his life, if we consider the connexion between the present and future state—and the consequences of the conduct of every man? How many stars will glitter in the crown of Luther and of Calvin—of Baxter and

of Whitfield ;—of Elliot and of Edwards—and I might add of many others! Those, who turn many to righteousness, we are assured, will shine as the brightness of the firmament and as stars forever and ever. Not a few, influenced by a patriotic spirit, who have not been truly pious, have been instrumental of great good in effecting the deliverance of their fellow creatures from great suffering. On the other hand, who can calculate the amount of evil, which has been occasioned by the writings of open or secret enemies of the truth—or by great conquerors, who have destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands, and even of millions of their fellow creatures? Severe must be their punishment and indescribable their suffering in the future world.

4. It is the soul, which is capable of enjoying the most exalted happiness. Some are satisfied with the pleasures of sense. Splendid habitations—elegant furniture, and rich viands are the objects they seek. Others aim at nothing higher than great literary attainments. They know nothing of that happiness which Christians experience. They never tasted that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. Nothing but God himself can fill all the capacities of the soul, and give true and permanent satisfaction. In him are inexhaustable treasures of knowledge and wisdom; strength and happiness. Who that has experienced that enjoyment, which is peculiar to the Christian when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost can highly value that, which is derived from the possession of the most valuable worldly objects? The happiness of the Christian in the present state is but an earnest of that, which will be unspeakable and everlasting.

5. It is the soul, which is capable of suffering unutterable misery.

The soul is capable of suffering misery, compared with which, the pains of the body, the disappointments and perplexities, which have reference to the present state, are not worthy of being named. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear. A man may, with an unbroken spirit, endure the loss of property and of friends; of health and of life, if he have a conscience void of offence; but who can endure that shame and suffering occasioned by inexcusable guilt? Indescribable is the distress of the awakened sinner, when he perceives the wrath of God abiding on him. What is the wrath of man, when compared with the wrath of God? Who knoweth—said the Psalmist, who hath any adequate knowledge of the power of thine anger? The wrath of God is as much more terrible than the wrath of man, as God is greater than man. Who, conscious of guilt can dwell with devouring fire? Who can inhabit everlasting burnings?

6. All the capacities of the soul are capable of perpetual enlargement. Whatever its acquisitions at any particular time, still there is a vast field unexplored. The powers of the soul, as soon as it is separated from the body, will no more be subject to languor, but will be more than ever active. But it is impossible for us in the present state to determine how rapidly the soul will increase in knowledge and strength; in holiness and happiness. Beloved, said the apostle John, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as

he is. New thoughts and new joys are constantly springing up in the mind of every saint, as God reveals himself more and more fully to him. In heaven the sun will never go down and the day will never end. But darkness will perpetually reign, where the wicked dwell.

II. The immortality of the soul will next be considered.

It is not my intention to *prove* the immortality of the soul, which none of you, I am persuaded, are disposed to deny; but only to show how this consideration increases our estimation of its value. There will be a point in eternity, when the capacities of one soul will equal the sum of the capacities of the whole human race now in the world, and all that have been and ever will be in the world. *How extensive, then, and sublime must be the views—how vast the knowledge—how profound the wisdom, how honorable the purposes, how mighty the power, how deep the piety and how exalted the happiness* of the christian after progressing for a few thousand years without any interruption or opposition in heaven! What an innumerable company of such holy and happy beings will dwell together near the throne of God! As they will stimulate each other to praise and honor God; how intense must be the love, which will be experienced by such an immense multitude of glorified saints!

However great may be the advancement of any one at any period, it will only be the beginning of that progress, which will never end. After millions of ages are passed, millions of ages will still be future. Time, however long the measure, when compared with eternity, is but a point. The value of the most

desirable objects is estimated according to their duration. The pleasures, derived from worldly possessions, which are but momentary, are not worth the pursuit. We scarcely taste them before they are gone and forgotten. The happiness one soul will experience in eternity, will be a greater good, than the sum of all the enjoyment the world ever has and ever will afford. And the happiness of the redeemed is incomparably superior in excellence, as well as greater in degree and duration, than that derived from objects of sense. What are the possessions of the world compared with that inheritance prepared for the redeemed! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him.

As the happiness of the righteous will be everlasting in duration, so will be the sufferings of the wicked. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. Does any one shrink from momentary pain and complain of the sufferings, occasioned by diseases and wounds of the body? How then can they endure the thought of being cast into that furnace, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched? You tremble when you hear of the downfall of kingdoms and empires; but the loss of one soul is a greater evil than the subversion of all the kingdoms and empires of the world. The sum of all the temporal misery, endured by the posterity of Adam, from the fall to the present time, added to all they will endure to the end of the world, will be less than that which one soul will endure in the future world. And the sufferings of the finally

impenitent will be as great in degree, as lasting in duration. To lose heaven is to lose a good, compared with which all other goods are but vanity. The sufferings of the wicked will not consist merely in the loss of heaven and all sources of enjoyment. The wrath of God will fall on them and abide on them forever. As a righteous sovereign, acting in view of all the subjects of his vast empire—to maintain his authority and to preserve the glory of his character, he must express his infinite hatred of all sin. How can he express his infinite abhorrence of sin except by punishing the wicked with indescribable severity? Everlasting punishment must, therefore, be the portion of all, who continue forever impenitent. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them, who persevere in impenitence and unbelief till death.

III. The price paid for the redemption of the soul will next be considered.

We are accustomed to estimate the value of things by the price demanded and paid for them. This is a proper and safe standard when the price is paid by a person, perfectly acquainted with the worth of the thing purchased, and who is wise in all his transactions. In the present case the price was paid by a person of infinite knowledge, wisdom and benevolence, who could not be deceived and who never makes any unnecessary display of his resources. All heaven was concerned in the transaction. It so interested holy angels that a multitude of the heavenly host accompanied the Son of God from heaven to earth, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the

highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men. God did not need the service of men to add any thing to his essential happiness and glory. He was influenced by the purest benevolence. For, it is written, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. We find the following passage in the first epistle of Peter. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. The display of the glory of God in the redemption of men is the great object he had specially in view in the creation of the world. The work of redemption exhibits to view perfections of the divine character, which the work of creation did not make known. If the soul be not of immense worth; how can the wisdom and benevolence of God appear in the plan he has devised and adopted for its redemption? He has a perfect understanding of all he does, and his wisdom as well as benevolence appears in all his acts. But to redeem the soul God gave his dearly beloved and only begotten Son to suffer the accursed death of the cross. What higher price could justice demand, or infinite benevolence pay?

“The ransom was paid down; the fund of heaven

“Heaven’s inexhaustible, exhausted fund,

“Amazing and amazed, poured forth the price

“All price beyond.”

What kind father would not part with all his treasures more readily than deliver a beloved and only son to suffer a disgraceful and cruel death? God the

Father loves his son with infinite affection ; for he is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Would the Son of God, in whom are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, have given his life a ransom for the soul, were it not of immense worth ? “I am the good shepherd,” he said ; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

When dwelling in the bosom of his Father, participating in all his happiness and glory, and worshipped by holy angels, he saw this world lying in wickedness, the whole human race exposed to everlasting misery, unable even by repentance, to which they are not disposed, to effect their deliverance. His eye affected his heart. He knew that without such an atonement as none but himself could make, the guilty must perish. It was such love as never before was manifested in heaven, and which filled the holy angels with wonder, that influenced him to interpose for the redemption of men. The work to be done was great and glorious ; and could not be accomplished without great labors and sufferings. To redeem the soul he made himself of no reputation—and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. Not one soul could have been saved without the death of the Son of God. For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Had all the angels of heaven consented to take the sinner’s place ; they could not have effected the salvation of a single individual.

No Savior has been provided for the angels that sinned, though a superior order of beings—and though,

for ought we know they had for ages faithfully discharged their duty. To you, my hearers, pardon has been freely offered—

“Pardon for infinite offense! and pardon

“Through means, that speak its value infinite!

“A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine.”

That God should pass by the angels that sinned, and reserve them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day, and give his Son to be the Savior of men, is a wonderful proof of his distinguishing love. See the Son of God hastening from the depths and darkness of infinity—assuming a visible form, taking not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham that he may be the Savior of men! Angels behold him with wonder, and accompany him that they may have a *near* view of his wonderful works. Follow him now from the manger to the cross—go with him to the garden of Gethsemane, where in agony of soul he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground—listen to the prayer he offered, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death—O my Father, he said, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt—and learn of him the worth of the soul.

Behold him nailed to the cross, and crowned with thorns—mocked, spit upon, scourged, and pierced by unfeeling soldiers! The sun is darkened—the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The earth did quake—the rocks were rent—the graves were opened—many bodies of the saints which slept arose. At that awful crisis God the Father hid his face from his beloved Son, and left him to tread the

wine-press alone. He could not as on former occasions say—my Father, my Father—he could only use the language proper for a malefactor—and in his distress cry—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!—Who can meditate on the sufferings the Son of God endured on the cross for our redemption, and not feel as well as acknowledge that his soul is of immense worth? Were not the soul of immense worth, God the Father would not have given his Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world—and his Son would not have submitted to the accursed death of the cross.

In view of the subject under consideration it is manifest, that the price paid for our redemption is sufficient for all mankind. It is as sufficient for all as for a single individual. That law, which extends to the whole human race, and which all have broken, Christ has magnified and made honorable. God can be just, or appear righteous, and the justifier of every one, whether Jew or Gentile, of whatever nation, who believeth in Jesus. Christ is the light and the Savior of the world. Though provision is made sufficient for all mankind; yet millions and hundreds of millions are perishing for lack of vision. Christianity separated from all mixtures, is enjoyed only by a small portion of the human race. On us, my hearers, the light of truth shines with unclouded brightness. We are assured that a price of infinite value has been paid for our redemption. The language of the gospel is; come; for all things are ready. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is a-thirst, Come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Great must be the stupidity, blindness, and folly of those, who in view of the great things done for their redemption, refuse to accept the offers freely made of salvation. Wretched as is the condition of the unrenewed, who are under sentence of death and exposed to endless and indescribable misery; they have now an opportunity to obtain pardon and justification through faith in Jesus Christ. They are furnished with the means, by which they can satisfy the claims of justice. The kingdom of heaven is brought near every one of us. Christ himself is now in the midst of us, ready to receive every one disposed to come to him, and to trust in him. Behold, now is the accepted time! behold now is the day of salvation! The possessions of the world never did and never can satisfy the soul. Those, who are most highly favored, can enjoy the wealth they have acquired but a short time. The world itself, we know, will be destroyed. The day of the Lord will come, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. But the soul can never die. What are the honors and possessions of the world to a dying man? Go to the chamber of sickness, where one of the great men of this world is sinking under some incurable disease. The magnificence of his habitation—the splendor of his apartments—the excellence of his cordials—the skill of his physicians—the unwearied efforts of his attendants, and the tears of his dearest friends cannot add one moment to his life. A distressing gloom hangs on every object around him—every countenance assures him that his last hour is rapidly

approaching. Beyond the grave he has no home—no friends—no refuge—no cheering cordials, no rich viands—no inheritance but the wrath of God. When the light of eternity bursts on his sight, he would give a thousand worlds did he possess them, could he again enjoy the opportunities he once neglected, or could he occupy a seat, where he could once more listen to the sound of the gospel, and have one more offer of life. Repentance beyond the grave is of no avail. After death there will be no essential change in the character of any one. I must work the works of him, that sent me, said our Lord, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. There is a bound, beyond which divine forbearance will not extend. What we do must be done soon, while we have the use of our intellectual and moral powers. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, said our Lord to those, who were curious to know whether many or few will be saved; for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. How can any reasonably expect to obtain an incorruptible inheritance unless they value it enough to seek it? What temporal possession can be obtained without labor and some sacrifices? If any man will come after me, said our Savior, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life, i. e. his temporal life shall find it—i. e. eternal life. The greatest sacrifice any can make is not worthy of being named, compared with unfading glory and everlasting life. Go now to the chamber, where the Christain is gradually retiring from the world. The approach of death does not terrify and distress him. He rather

views the King of terrors as his deliverer, especially if his trials have been many and severe. Joy sparkles in his eye, and peace, that peace that passeth understanding, reigns in the soul. Death is but the door, through which he enters the world of glory. The scene now passing before him is wonderful—he has a home prepared for him, where his beloved and adored Savior dwells—he has innumerable friends, who bid him welcome to a seat with them—there he finds the patriarchs—the prophets—the apostles—the martyrs—and a multitude redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from every nation—there he becomes possessor of an inheritance, incorruptible—large as his desires and lasting as his existence—there he is free from all temptation to sin and from all opposition—there he can praise and enjoy God forever. Is not heaven worth seeking and the interest of the soul worth attention ?

But it is not our own happiness, which should be the ultimate object of our pursuit. God has claims on our service. It is no small offence to persevere in transgression of his law, which is holy, just and good—exactly fitted to our nature and constitution, and which requires nothing of us, which is not connected with our highest happiness. The penalty of his law must be executed on all, who refuse to repent and to seek refuge in him, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. God cannot maintain his authority and appear glorious in the view of all holy beings, unless he execute his law upon all the finally impenitent.

The sin of unbelief is more aggravated than transgression of the moral law—by as much as the work

of redemption is a more glorious exhibition of divine perfection than the work of creation. The Father and the Son have done great things for our redemption. How then can any escape, who neglect so great salvation! What can be more provoking to him, who for nearly 6,000 years has been gradually revealing more and more fully his gracious purposes, than for any, who deserve death everlasting, and on whom the light of Christianity *now* shines with meridian splendor, to treat with indifference and even contempt his beloved Son? Must not the resentment of all holy beings be kindled against all, who persevere till death in unbelief? Will it not be far more tolerable for the heathen, who never heard of a Savior, in the day of judgment, than for those, on whom the light of the gospel constantly shines, and who refuse to accept the offers of mercy freely made to them? Stop, sinner unrenewed, why so anxious, why in such haste to obtain worldly substance, while the wants of your soul are neglected? You must soon give up all your possessions, and you may any day be called to give an account of your stewardship. Consider—what must become of you, should this be your last day? What have you done to secure an inheritance in heaven? Are you in truth a Christian or are you not? Once more the Son of God, mighty and willing to save, has come into the midst of us, to hear how his word is preached, and with what feelings you hear it. How can he without strong feelings of displeasure notice every inattentive hearer? To make light of the sufferings he endured for your redemption must grieve his heart. Though you see him not, yet he speaks to you, sinner—and O that you could feel that the

Savior is addressing you.—Hark! he speaks—hear him—his words are full of love and pity—Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Those, who have been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, and who have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and who have some knowledge of the worth of the soul ought by their life and conversation to make the impression on the minds of all, with whom they have intercourse, that they regard the soul more than the body, and are more anxious to make sure of heaven than to lay up treasures on the earth. Can you, my brethren, you, who have tasted the sweets of redeeming love, look upon those around you, who are every moment exposed to endless misery, and not lift up earnest cries to God, in whom alone there is help, for their salvation? Have you forgotten the time, when you were as much devoted to the world as any you now behold? Have you forgotten him, who made you to differ—who sent the Holy Spirit to enlighten your understanding, to convince of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come—who created in you a new heart, and gave you power to do the will of God? You surely have not forgotten the place *where* and the time *when*, you first, after a most distressing conflict, experienced that peace, which passeth understanding. Can you recollect these things and feel that you can do too much to rescue your fellow creatures from impending and everlasting ruin? Can you do too much to persuade transgressors to

return to obedience—and unbelievers to become the disciples of Christ. The salvation of a soul reflects great honor on God—on his wisdom and benevolence—on the character and works of his beloved and only begotten Son. There is joy, we are assured in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. They rejoice, because an enemy of God becomes his friend—and because one that was exposed to everlasting misery has a good hope of never ending happiness. Willingly would I spend my life even to my last breath in persuading my fellow creatures to repent, and to make their calling and election sure. But, I know, in this all important work, my strength is but weakness and my arguments powerless without the mighty operations of the Holy Spirit. If God but speak the word, the blind will see—the deaf will hear—the dumb will speak, and the dead in trespasses and sins will awake to life and action. To him, with whom is the residue of the spirit we must look for sinners. May his word, spoken this day be like as a fire; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces.—Amen.

DISCOURSE II.



THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Come, see a man that hath told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?—JOHN iv 29.

THE inspiration of the Scriptures, it must be acknowledged by all the intelligent Christians, is a subject of immense importance. This, they probably never more deeply felt than at the present time. Never before, were so great efforts made to translate the Scriptures into different living languages, and to circulate them among the destitute. And it is the firm persuasion of all engaged in this holy enterprise, that every family which receives a copy, without note or comment, is furnished with the means of obtaining a correct knowledge of the method God has devised and adopted for the redemption of the world, and by the right use of which, they may obtain eternal life. It is a belief that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, which makes them appear to all who daily study them an invaluable treasure. And it is this, which makes the threatenings of the Divine Law, alarming to the unrenewed, and the promises of the Covenant of Grace, a source of consolation to every

true penitent. It may be added, all the certain knowledge we have of the immortality of the soul, and of the condition of the human race beyond the grave, is derived from the volume of revelation. Take this away, and future scenes must be involved in total darkness.

The importance of the subject proposed for consideration further appears from the well-known fact, that not a few men of high rank, talents, and learning, and influence, are rising up in every part of our country, not excepting the land of the pilgrims, who not only treat with neglect and disrespect the institutions of God, but boldly deny the inspiration of the Scriptures. Now, they must be convinced that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, before they can be made to feel their obligation to obey the precepts and to believe the doctrines they contain. Christians ought, surely, to be able to meet them with such weapons as cannot be broken, or turned against themselves. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," said the Apostle Peter, "and be ready *always* to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." None are excepted. Every Christian, whether learned or illiterate, is required to be *always ready* to give an answer to *every one* that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him. It seems to follow that the most illiterate Christian is capable of giving the true reason, and also that it must be *very simple*. True religion is not in any case the offspring of ignorance. All who are born of the Spirit, are first enlightened by this heavenly agent. The most illiterate have clearer and more correct views of the essential truths of

revelation, than unrenewed men, however distinguished they may be for genius and learning. Many, it is to be feared, were they asked why they believe the Scriptures inspired, would be able to give no better answers than the following. We believe as we were taught in our childhood, and as our parents and ancestors believed; or, our belief corresponds with the standards of the church to which we belong; or, our opinions are the same as have been maintained by great and celebrated divines, who could not be deceived. Such answers would not satisfy a serious inquirer for the truth, much less an intelligent infidel. Another question would be proposed, why did your parents and ancestors, or the Church, or great and celebrated divines believe the Scriptures to be given by inspiration of God? On what foundation did they build their hopes? In the concerns of the soul, we ought not to act without good and substantial reasons. To the serious inquirer for the truth, is the following answer, given by one of our most eminent divines, entirely satisfactory?

“The argument, on which the doctrine of inspiration should be made chiefly to rest, is the testimony of the sacred writers themselves.”* Now, unless we take it for granted that the sacred writers were inspired, the very thing to be proved, how can we implicitly rely on their testimony? Admitting fully that they were intelligent and pious men, unless they were inspired, their testimony could not be infallible. Good men may err in their judgment respecting their own experience. They may believe themselves to be moved by the Holy Spirit, when they are not; they may not

*Dr. Woods.

perceive things with perfect clearness, and they may forget important circumstances. With respect to the testimony of the sacred writers, to their own inspiration, the argument now under consideration ought to be reversed. The testimony of the sacred writers to their own inspiration does not, of *itself*, prove the fact; but the inspiration of the Books of Scripture proves that the writers were men of truth. To give an illustration of this particular: A merchant offers for sale, goods of a certain description and quality: A customer wishes to purchase such an article as is offered, and he chooses to examine it himself: The examination, if satisfactory, convinces him that the merchant is a man of uprightness and veracity. Now the testimony of the merchant in favor of his own goods did not prove that they were such as his neighbor needed; but the result of the examination of the latter proved that the former was worthy of confidence. The testimony of the merchant might be suspected, merely on the ground that he was an interested person. The writers of the Books of Scripture, if imposters, would testify to their own inspiration. How many such persons have pretended to receive communications from heaven! Who ever made higher pretensions than Mohammed? Some good men of an ardent temperament have, no doubt, been deceived, and have sincerely believed themselves to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, when influenced only by the warm feelings of their own hearts. The sacred writers might be in this way deceived, and might declare what they sincerely believed to be the truth. They might not, therefore, be inspired, and yet be good men. The testimony of a man in his

own favor has always been of a suspicious character, requiring confirmation. The most impartial and disinterested witnesses have ever been thought most worthy of confidence. So our Saviour and the Jews understood this subject. If I bear witness of myself, (said our Lord,) my witness is not true. He could not mean that a good man could not testify to his own innocence without uttering a falsehood; for, on another occasion, he thus expressed himself; "Though I bear record of myself, my record is true." Our Saviour was ready to admit that the testimony of a man in his own favor is of a suspicious character, and ought not in all cases to be received, without confirmation. The Pharisees excused their unbelief on this ground. "The Pharisees, therefore, said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true." They did not feel that in an affair of the greatest importance, they could rely on such testimony. The testimony of the sacred writers themselves to their own inspiration is of a suspicious character, according to the understanding of our Lord, of the Pharisees, and of all intelligent men. It is not to be regarded as true, without confirmation. It is not of much weight, unless we can prove without it that the Books of Scripture were given by inspiration of God. Besides, it may be added, all the writers of the Books of Scripture do not testify to their own inspiration. How are those to be viewed, which have not this testimony?

Another answer to the inquirer for the truth, has been given by a distinguished German writer in his essay on inspiration.* The following remarks have

*Flatt.

been made on the essay by an American writer of celebrity:—"It will be understood by readers in general, that the author considered the *promises of Christ* as affording the *only* valid argument for the inspiration of the Apostles. The argument urged so conclusively in this essay may justly be regarded as the *chief* argument for the inspiration of the Apostles, but not as the only one." Let us now examine the argument of the German writer, and ascertain what proof he has given of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Do the promises Christ made to the Apostles afford any proof that the Books of Scripture we now have, were given by inspiration of God, unless it be first proved that the record of the promises was inspired? The inspiration of the Scriptures does not depend on the promises of Christ, made to his Apostles, but might be proved had he never made the promises to which there is reference. How can we know that Christ made the promises, recorded, unless we first prove, independent of them, that the record is inspired? If they had special reference to the Books of Scripture, how have they been fulfilled with respect to those who have left us none of their writings? Besides, all the writers of the books of the New Testament, were not Apostles. Mark and Luke were not Apostles. Paul did not become an Apostle till some time after the crucifixion of our Lord. These three writers occupy a pretty large place in the New Testament. With respect to them, the argument of the German writer fails; as he maintains that the promises of Christ to the Apostles, afford the only proof of the inspiration of the books of the New Testament. The essay of the German writer must be considered a

failure. Most writers on the subject under consideration, it is believed, make human testimony one of the connecting arguments in the proof they have given of the inspiration of the Scriptures. This appears to be a defect which completely invalidates their reasoning. No matter how large and how long a chain is, by which a valuable ship is fastened ; and no matter how excellent the materials, of which it is made, if one part, however short, be made of that which has no strength ; what security does it give in a violent tempest ? Its strength can be no greater than that of the weakest part. Should the authenticity, the credibility, and the divine authority of the scriptures be as fully proved as they can be by human testimony ; it must be confessed this is not infallible, and must be received with some reserve. Some lingering doubts will remain in the mind of him, whose hope rests on no better foundation. It is readily admitted that the external evidence exhibited by Bishop Wilson, in his lectures, is an important appendage, but not essential to the proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures. But according to him, one of the stepping-stones, on which we must rest before we reach the object of our pursuit, is fallible human testimony. It is so understood by those to whom no other proof is exhibited. Of this, the learned Wilson was himself aware, as is evident from the following passage in his twelfth lecture ; “ Many considerable writers on the evidences of Christianity, of late, have satisfied themselves with proving its divine authority, generally, and have tacitly, but most inconsistently, given up or denied the infallibility of the books, in which it is recorded. They speak of authenticity, veracity, credibility, but

not of inspiration. Thus the impression left on the minds of the readers has been, that the Bible is authentic indeed, and credible, and contains a revelation from God, but that it was indited by good and pious men only, with little more of accuracy than what would belong to them as faithful historians." This is the impression, Bishop Wilson observes, which is made on the minds of many; and, it seems to me, by the same reasoning, from which he infers the inspiration of the Scriptures. Though he expresses himself so decidedly, as if he had convinced every serious inquirer, and gained a complete victory over the whole host of infidels, yet the argument by which he proves the inspiration of the Scriptures, is fallible human testimony, which ought never to satisfy any intelligent, reflecting Christian. He has not fully proved what, with a great display of learning, he attempted to prove. He has followed the steps of a host of learned men, and collected from them much that is useful; but, after all, has left a wide chasm in the evidence, which ought to be filled with something more firm than fallible human testimony.

The truth seems to be, that learned men overlook, or look beyond the proper evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures. They are not unlike Naaman, the Syrian, who thought he must do some great thing to be cured of his leprosy. He could not, for a time, believe that washing seven times in so small a stream as the river Jordan, could effect a cure. The learned Dr. Samuel Clarke thought he could better satisfy the minds of atheistical men by attempting to prove from reasoning *a priori*, the being and attributes of God, than by directing them to the works of creation. He

relied more on the resources of his own fallible mind, than on the proofs God has himself given. This argument, though a proof of a vigorous mind, was no proof of the being and attributes of God.

Having shown, in a few particulars, what cannot be considered as satisfactory evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures, I shall attempt to exhibit that which does convince the serious inquirer for the truth. It may not be improper in this place to notice a distinction between revelation and inspiration. "The words inspiration and revelation," says the learned J. D. Michaelis, "are to be distinguished from each other; for the former has a more general meaning, while the latter refers only to those things, of which the prophets were ignorant, before they were divinely taught. Revelation may be admitted and not the inspiration of the writer." The common view of inspiration is probably very nearly correct. The Scriptures are, by every Christian, believed to be the volume which contains the revelation God has made of his gracious purposes to this world, and a true history of the administration of his government for more than four thousand years. And it is believed that the sacred penmen were so far assisted and directed by the Holy Spirit, as to write just what God intended they should write, and to be kept from all error. The language in which the books of the Scripture were originally written, was that which was well understood by those for whom they were first intended. The writers were so guided, as to use such words as best expressed the truths which God chose to communicate, and which the great mass of his people could readily understand.

Now it may first be observed, of all books, the Bible is the most *independent*. It does not need the praise of men to recommend it, and it does not need human testimony to prove its inspiration. It needs only to be carefully examined to convince the reader that it is the word of God. It is itself a *miracle*, a super-natural work, which none but God could perform. When Moses was steadfastly looking at the bush which he saw burning and not consumed, he was convinced that God was there. He knew that none but God could perform the wonders he witnessed. Those who saw the miracles Christ performed, reasoned in the same manner. "Rabbi, said Nicodemus, we know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Had not Moses attentively observed the bush which he saw burning, he might have concluded that some one had kindled a fire in it, and that it would soon be consumed. Those who carefully survey the works of creation, may not come to any just conclusion respecting the being and attributes of God. The heathen, who are devoted to the worship of such gods as are most agreeable to the feelings of their corrupt hearts, are without excuse for their ignorance of the God of nature. "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead ; so that they are without excuse."

Every true Christian, whether learned or illiterate, believes that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God. The more diligently they search them, the stronger is their belief in their inspiration. Those who are totally ignorant of the arguments used by the

learned to prove the authenticity, the credibility, and the divine authority of the Scriptures, have a firm persuasion that they were given by inspiration of God.

The question then, is, what is the real foundation of this strong belief? Though the humble Christian may not be able to answer all the inquires, and to meet all the objections of a subtle believer; yet his faith will remain firm. He can testify to what he has experienced and to what he knows. That faith, for which no good reason can be given, cannot be acceptable to God and cannot be saving.

The question still returns: What is *that*, which convinces the believer, or serious inquirer, that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God? Here let it be remembered, it is made the duty of every Christian, however feeble the powers of his mind, and however illiterate, to be *always ready* to give the true answer to the inquiry which has been mentioned; and a satisfactory answer may be given. It must be *simple*, or it could not be the duty of every Christian to be always ready to give it. Let me now ask you, my brethren, why do you believe, the Scriptures to be given by inspiration of God? Think, for a moment, and recollect the answer presented to your mind. Can you give any better answer than that which was given by the women of Samaria, to prove that Jesus is the Christ? "Come," she said, "see a man that hath told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" The process in her mind was short, but the conclusion just. It was similar to that in the mind of Moses when he saw the bush burning and not consumed. And it was similar to that in the minds of every one who saw the miracles performed by our

Lord. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she perceived that the person conversing with her had a perfect knowledge of her life, her conscience confirming all that he said, concluded that he must be the Messiah, or that God must be with him. It is added, "and many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman who testified: *He told me all that ever I did.* And many more believed, because of his own word." He so accurately described their feelings, their consciences testifying to the truth of all that he said, that they were convinced that he was the Messiah.

That book, then, which with perfect accuracy, describes all our feelings, our hopes, and fears; our consciences confirming all its declarations, must have been given by inspiration of God, who searcheth our hearts. None but God could be the author of such a book. What other argument convinces the multitudes of children and youth, who attend our Sabbath Schools, and the thousands and tens of thousands who compose our Christian congregations? What other argument convinced Peter's hearers, on the day of Pentecost, that Jesus is the Christ—or those whom the Apostles addressed, that the Scriptures, from which they reasoned, were inspired? On what do our missionaries, who have been sent to the heathen, rely? And on what do all our ministers, in the faithful discharge of their duty, rely for proof that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God? What would preachers accomplish, should they commence their labors with discourses on the authenticity, the credibility, the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures? Should they adopt such a method would,

they not multiply infidels? The Scriptures are themselves, let it be remembered, a miracle, or an assemblage of miracles, and the evidence of their inspiration is as clear and convincing to the careful reader, as the evidence that the wonderful works of Christ were wrought by divine power.

A brief analysis of the very simple argument by which we prove the inspiration of the Scriptures may be added.

1. The moral law, which is the law of nature, is interwoven with all the doctrines of revelation. This exactly corresponds with the constitution of every man. The natural conscience approves what the law approves, and condemns what the law condemns. Every man feels that he is accountable to God for his conduct. All his actions, which the law and his conscience condemn, fill his mind with apprehensions of evil. That law, which extends to all his thoughts, feelings and motives, and which condemns what his conscience condemns, and approves what his conscience approves, he very naturally and very justly infers, must be of divine origin, and must be from him to whom he is accountable for all his conduct. The principles of this law he finds to be the same in every part of the volume of revelation, though exhibited in a great variety of particulars, and operating in a like manner on all classes of persons, and in every age and country. Who, but God, could give us a law exactly suited to the nature and constitution of all mankind, which their reason and conscience approve in every variety of circumstances? It is this consideration which convinces every serious inquirer for the truth, that none but God, who made us, and who has

a perfect knowledge of the hearts of all men could give us a law, every precept of which, however much it condemns us, we can not but approve. The more intensely we meditate on the moral law, the more firm is our belief of its divine origin ; and that the Scriptures that contain it were given by inspiration of God.

2. With respect to Christianity, this contains the moral law. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. He has magnified the divine law, and made it honorable. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Christianity contains the law. But the latter does not contain the former. By the law we are made to feel our need of just such a Savior as is revealed in the Scriptures. The revelations made of the gracious purposes of God so exactly answer the demands of the violated law, and exhibit to our view such a plan of redemption, so well suited to the wants of all mankind, as to convince us that Christianity must be of divine origin. That book, which describes all our spiritual maladies, and makes known to us such a remedy as we need, must be inspired.

3. But it must be observed, that faith, which is saving, is the gift of God. It is wrought in his people by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. "For by grace are ye saved," said the Apostle, "through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Most writers on inspiration overlook the teachings and operations of the Holy Spirit, which attend the reading and hearing of the word, and by which the understanding is enlightened. and the heart renewed. We may meditate so intensely on the Scriptures, and be so enlightened and moved by the Holy Spirit as to

feel as if God were actually speaking to us, and using the very words of the inspired writers. This is a remarkable fact, the greater the advancement any make in holiness, and the more thorough their knowledge is of the Scriptures, the more fully are they convinced of their inspiration. Even when they are most troubled with doubts respecting their own interest in the great salvation, they have no serious doubts respecting the truths of revelation. Indeed, it is their conviction that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, and that they faithfully describe the essentials of the Christian character, which alarms them. It is by no means strange, that those who seldom look into the Scriptures, should persuade themselves that they are not inspired. Those, who never seriously survey the works of creation, and who never meditate on the events of divine providence, may deny the being and attributes of God, when the proof of his power, wisdom and goodness are above and around them. After all, is it not a secret conviction that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, which prevents professed infidels from searching them, especially because they condemn the practices they are determined to pursue? Were not this the fact, curiosity would induce them to examine that book, which has interested so many millions of the human race, and which has been highly valued by not a few of the greatest men that have ever lived. What book is so ancient, and at the same time so well suited to the wants of the present day? Where shall we find more impartial history, more sublime poetry, finer specimens of true eloquence, and a philosophy better supported by well established facts? Why does

the infidel hate the sight of the Bible? Is it not because he knows it reproves him? It would not trouble him, if he did not secretly believe it to be the Word of God.

With respect to some real or supposed errors, which have crept into the volume of revelation by the carelessness of transcribers or printers; they do not affect the great outlines of divine truth, more than the prominent features of the earth are affected by the labors of men.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Great are our obligations to God for the volume of revelation. It needs no addition, and contains nothing superfluous. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues, that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book." One of the greatest excellences of the Scriptures, and which by many is overlooked, is the proof which they themselves contain of their inspiration. It is sufficient to satisfy the mind of the most illiterate Christian. Were not this the case, what propriety would there be in sending copies of the Scriptures, without note or comment, to the destitute in this or in any other country? Is not the law of God, in this way, as fully promulgated as the laws of the land, when they are sent to every town and family? It is, indeed, mortifying to the pride of the learned, who are disposed to do some great things, and to admire displays of human power, to be obliged

to give so simple a proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as the woman of Samaria gave that Jesus is the Christ. Should any one of you, my hearers, be asked the question, why do you believe that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God; it will be sufficient for you to answer, they describe all my thoughts and feelings—hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, require only what my conscience approves, and prohibit only what my conscience condemns. They make known just such a Saviour as I need, and whom, by happy experience, I have found to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto my salvation. Are there any who have been accustomed to rely on human testimony, who still have doubts respecting the subject under consideration? Let them search the Scriptures daily and carefully—let them examine them as they would an article they wish to obtain and for which a high price is demanded. If the examination does not satisfy them, nothing else will.

2. Though the preached word is of great importance; yet when the Scriptures are sent to a destitute family; or, are translated into different languages and sent to the heathen, we rejoice in the belief that they are able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Jesus Christ. Teachers are not necessary to prove that the Scriptures are the Word of God. They are never employed by Missionary Societies for this purpose. The most able, faithful and successful, take it for granted that the Bible is the Word of God, and commence their labors by appeals to the consciences of their hearers. Unless they can fasten some truth upon the consciences of their hearers, they can accomplish nothing. They ought, indeed, to be prepared to

answer every objection, which may arise in the mind of an inquirer, when meditating on any difficult portion of the volume of revelation. Some things in the ways of God we cannot expect in life to understand. "Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, broader than the sea." But all those truths which most deeply concern us, may without difficulty be understood, being made plain by every variety of illustration. It may be added, the effects which almost uniformly follow the faithful preaching of the gospel, afford conclusive evidence that Christianity, as contained in the Scriptures, is adapted to the wants of all mankind. In every part of the world, in every nation, in every family, Christianity meets the wants of every individual, and, when cordially received, produces the same happy change.

When Paul stood before Felix, and reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the Roman Governor trembled, his conscience testifying to the truth of all the declarations of the Apostle. When King Josiah for the first time heard the book of the law read, he was alarmed and rent his clothes. He was at once convinced that it was of divine origin. As well may men who have eyes, and refuse to open them, complain that they cannot see the objects around them; as complain of the insufficiency of the evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures, when they do not diligently examine them.

3. If the most illiterate, and men of the feeblest capacities can discover the evidence of the inspiration

of the Scriptures, and can firmly believe the truths they contain; what excuse can there be for the unbelief of those, who boast of their talents and learning? The fault is not in the Scriptures; but in their own hearts. Such cases our divine Lord seemed to have in view, when he offered the following prayer. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, (i. e. those who trust in their own wisdom and prudence,) and hast revealed them unto babes, (i. e., such as have a teachable spirit.) Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Great must be the guilt and just the condemnation of those who, favored with the best advantages for education, and the best opportunities for knowing the truth, persevere till death in unbelief. While not a few, whom they despise on account of their weakness and ignorance, find and pursue the way to heaven, they themselves walk in darkness, and perish.

4. *Finally.* Endeavor, my hearers, when you search the Scriptures, or hear the word preached, to realise that God is addressing you. You never read or hear with so much advantage, as when you fix your thoughts on the great and holy God. It is, indeed, wonderful that a being of infinite perfection, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, whom you have offended by innumerable transgressions, should not only cause a book to be written, under the guidance of his Holy Spirit, so perfect as to make known every thing essential to your salvation, and to prove its inspiration without the aid of human testimony; but should call and send forth men to explain and enforce the important truths he has revealed to the

world. Be assured, God will not only fulfil his promises, but execute his threatenings. The inhabitants of the old world, with the exception of one family, did not believe that God would destroy it by a flood. But proofs of the deluge are found everywhere on the surface of the earth, as well as in the Scriptures. The captivity of his covenant people, and the final destruction of their temple and chief city, were but the execution of his purposes, made known to them long before the events were witnessed. The Scriptures are a light, which perpetually shines upon that path which leads to heaven. You cannot plead, with any justice, that you are ignorant of your duty, or of the way by which you may escape the wrath of God, and obtain everlasting life. Why are you afraid of death? Does not your fear arise from a belief that the Scriptures are the Word of God; which you will not acknowledge, because they condemn practices you love, and are not disposed to abandon. You labor to accommodate your opinions to your manner of life. Were your opinions at variance with your habits this would be a source of inquietude. As men become more and more corrupt, so their opinions differ more and more from the truths of God's word. Sincere repentance prepares the heart for the reception of all the truths peculiar to Christianity. The proud, unrenewed heart is the source of that unbelief, which rejects the volume of revelation. Mankind are disposed to embrace some religion. In looking forward to a future and an eternal state, their hope of future happiness must have some foundation. What more can they desire of any religion than Christianity is able to secure? A man is made unspeakably happy, when he becomes a Chris-

tian, is supported in all his trials, and at death rejoices in the confident expectation of a blessed immortality. Be persuaded, my hearers, to imitate the example of the Bereans, of whom honorable notice is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

“These 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. Therefore many of them believed, also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.” Amen.

DISCOURSE III.



THE WAGES OF SIN.

The wages of sin is death.—ROMANS vi, 23.

THE leading and most interesting subjects of revelation have become so familiar to the minds of those, who have long been accustomed to listen to the sound of the gospel, that they hardly excite the attention of such, as are still unreconciled to God, and whom they most deeply concern. Their prospect of future happiness is, therefore, gloomy. While they see others, no greater sinners than themselves, and some of their most intimate friends, making their escape from the wrath to come, and seeking refuge in

Christ ; they seem to be contented to be mere spectators of the scenes passing before them, without deeply feeling the necessity of a work of grace in their hearts. No new truths, my hearers, can be presented to your mind. God will make no addition to the volume of revelation. What more can be done than has already been done. The very fact that the most solemn truths have made no lasting impressions on your minds is alarming. Awake, I pray you, call into exercise all the powers of your mind, and give your undivided attention to a message from God. The intolerable dullness you experience, when exhorted to seek the Lord, while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near, must be overcome, or you will be lost forever. While sitting so quietly in this house, and while every thing around you appears to be at rest ; you are moving onward with great rapidity to the places you must occupy forever, either in heaven, or in the dark regions of misery. Soon eternal realities now so dimly seen, will rise before you. How sublime must be the scenes, which will burst on the view of the pardoned sinner, when he takes his final leave of this visible and rebellious world, and when the vast empire of Jehovah is revealed ! What enlarged conceptions he must then have of the evil of sin, and of the grace of God, manifested in its pardon !

You all admit, my hearers, that you are sinners. Some of you have a hope that your sins have been forgiven. You have as yet but limited knowledge of the remains of sin in your heart. The longer you live the more sensible you will be of your unworthiness. As your knowledge of the riches of divine grace

manifested in your salvation will forever increase ; so your knowledge of the evil nature of sin will forever increase. There are some here, who have no hope that they have ever been born of the Holy Spirit. You sometimes perceive an uneasiness of mind, while you remain in this state—you feel that something must be done, but you defer to a future time that work, which ought to be done immediately. Life, you know, is short and uncertain. To day, after so long a time, as it is said, To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Let me for a short time direct your thoughts to the evil nature, and dreadful consequences of sin.

1. The evil nature of sin will first be considered. Sin is a want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God. Thoughts, dispositions, and motives, as well as words and actions may be sinful. What a multitude of sinful thoughts spring up in the mind in a single day ! They may be compared to the sparks, constantly poured forth from a burning furnace. As the law of God is an expression of his will, so every feeling, which is not conformed to it, is sinful. The law of God extends back to the very beginning of our existence. The man, who has arrived to years of maturity, if unrenewed, is not essentially different from the little infant. The little plant possesses, though in a very small degree, all the essential properties of the full grown tree.

The law of God is the law of his kingdom. Sin is rebellion against God, and it is an injury to all his subjects. The claims of God are the claims of his empire. He must, as a righteous sovereign, require the perfect obedience of all of his subjects. He cannot do

less than this and appear glorious in view of all holy beings. As the sovereign of the universe he is under a moral necessity of imposing upon all intelligent beings, his creatures, such laws, as are calculated to produce the greatest amount of good to his vast empire. This world is only a small province. It probably bears not so great a proportion to the whole empire of Jehovah as this society does to the whole nation. But it is so connected with other provinces, however different they may be in many respects, that the administration of his government here, if in any particulars defective, must have some influence on other parts of his dominions. In our own country there are different laws for different classes of persons; and the manner, in which the laws made for one class are executed, must have an influence upon all other classes. It is known in heaven what treatment God receives from men, and what treatment they receive from him. The greatness of the evil of sin must be measured by the greatness of the empire of Jehovah.

Sin is a want of conformity to, or, transgression of that law, which is holy, just and good. This law is exactly suited to the nature and constitution of man. It was imposed on him when he was created, and when he was innocent. His apostacy, which has affected all his descendants, whom he represented, as their federal head, has not diminished their obligation. Our obligations to love and serve God are infinitely great. That inability which results from the apostacy of the human race, affords no excuse for any sin. This is manifest from a very familiar illustration. The honest bankrupt does not feel that he is not still under obligation to his creditors, whose demands he has been

unable to satisfy. When such persons have been prosperous in their business, they have voluntarily fulfilled those engagements, from which they were legally free. Our inability to do what God requires of us does not excuse our impenitence and unbelief. By our continued impenitence we do approve the disobedience of our first parents. By repentance, which is a most reasonable duty we may escape the punishment to which transgressors are exposed; and by faith in Christ we may be justified.

As God is perfectly acquainted with our capacities, and as he loves us as his creatures; so he can have no motive to impose on us laws we are unable, if disposed, to obey. Perfect obedience to the precepts of his laws would produce perfect happiness. Every good man loves that law, which is perfect, and which demands of him sinless perfection. His conscience condemns every transgression, and of course approves every precept.

The law of God is the result of infinite wisdom and benevolence. Better laws could not be made to promote our own honor and happiness as well as the honor and happiness of the kingdom of God.

Sin is a contempt of the authority of God—a denial of his right to command us, and it implies a disregard of the interest of his empire. The sinner is not only a rebel against God and an enemy of all holy beings; but is united with the adversary and with all the wicked. God commands him to submit to his authority, places life and death before him—life, if disposed to do his duty, but death, if determined to refuse. This God must do, or suffer his name to be dishonored. The secret feelings of sinners may thus be expressed.

They say unto God, depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? And what profit should we have, if we should pray unto him ? They will not do what God requires because He requires it. Their inquiries are, what is reasonable, what is honorable, what will be for our advantage, or, for the benefit of our friends ? What will be approved among men ? Urge them to perform an action, because God requires it, and all the base feelings of their heart are moved. Had the sinner power he would destroy the law of God and subvert his throne.

The evil nature of sin may be farther shown from its tendency. The tendency of sin is to destroy all good. But some are unable to see how this can be. The tendency of poison is to destroy life. The medicine taken to counteract its influence does not alter its tendency. A spark of fire, if not extinguished, may occasion the destruction of a great city. The water used to quench the flame does not alter the nature of fire, or of its tendency. The man, who has without cause injured another, may become his enemy forever, on account of a single act. And that enmity, which is indulged without any cause, or excuse, is the most bitter and deadly.

Now let us take a view of sin, such a view as we shall have when all the inhabitants of this world and all holy beings are assembled before the throne of God, as spectators and judges.. God, as the righteous sovereign of the world, appears in all his glory, and his law is exhibited in all its excellency. Extend now, my hearers, your view to the utmost bounds of this immense congregation, consisting of innumerable

millions of intelligent beings, see one of the human race, an impenitent sinner in the midst, observed by every eye: Jehovah speaks, silence prevails—he gives his commands, they are holy, just and good; but this worm of the dust, with such boldness as shocks the angels, and as makes even devils smile, refuses to obey his Maker, and makes light of his commands. In this light all sin will appear at the great day.

Of all sins committed against God the sin of unbelief is the greatest. This is a transgression of the great command of the gospel. And this is the commandment, said John, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 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. What can be more provoking to God than to question his veracity, so many proofs of which he has given us? Prove God guilty of one falsehood and you ruin his character. It has usually been the aim of wicked men, if possible, to impeach the veracity of the most faithful servants of God, when an attempt has been made to destroy their influence. Unbelief treats the testimony God has given of his Son, as if unworthy of credit. And unbelief rejects the Son of God. Now, nothing wounds the feelings of a benevolent person so much, as to have his acts of kindness disapproved, or treated with indifference. No one is so much offended with him, who refuses to discharge one honest debt, as with him, who, though in want, rejects his favors.

Nothing provokes the anger of God the Father so much as the rejection of his Son by those very persons, for whom he gave his life, to be a sacrifice. Affecting is the situation of every unbeliever in this house at the present moment. Solemn and interesting is the scene now present. Angels, both holy and unholy, are witnesses of all that is passing. They are not unconcerned spectators. The all searching eye of God is fastened upon every one of you—he knows every heart, and all your secret thoughts. He is observing with strong feelings your treatment of his beloved Son—the Holy Spirit is whispering, behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; your conscience too is urging you to submit to the will of your offended Sovereign. These whispers, now so soft and tender, if not obeyed, will be remembered with the deepest sorrow, when time is no more. Hard must that heart be, which an enlightened conscience cannot move, and which can resist the Holy Spirit. Wherever the gospel is preached Christ is present. Though now unseen, he is looking in upon this audience. It must awaken the indignation of God the Father to see any of you persevere in unbelief. How can you be unmoved, sinner, unrenewed, when you know Christ stands before you—with out stretched arms to receive you, and to save you from death and from sin! How affectionate his invitation—Come unto me, he says, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Many are the sins, which are chargeable against every individual. The

indulgence, or practice of them is constantly hardening the heart of the sinner. Every day till truly penitent his heart becomes harder and harder.

II. Your attention, my hearers, will be directed to some of the consequences of sin.

The wages of sin is death. The original word used by the apostle properly signifies the pay, which soldiers receive from those, whom they serve, after the most terrible battles. What is the life of a soldier in time of war but a series of privations, hardships and sufferings? The way of transgressors is hard. And what is the just reward of him, who is guilty of high treason, and who acts with the enemies of his lawful sovereign? All governments have decided that such persons ought to die. The judgment of God must therefore be approved by the long record of the judgments of men, and men the most eminent. Death, the wages of sin, includes both the loss of all good, and the suffering of the wrath of God. The loss of good is a natural consequence of sin. The first sin ruined the whole human race. It involved our first parents in darkness, banished peace and happiness from their souls and made them the enemies of God. Death temporal, spiritual, and everlasting is the natural consequence of sin. Should God leave sinners to themselves, take from them all restraints, and inflict on them no positive punishment; they would destroy themselves. Displace one of the smallest wheels of a very curious and complicated machine; and its motions ever after will be irregular. Should one of the planets be drawn but a short distance from its orbit; the balance, from which the harmony of their motions results must be

disturbed. Without the interposing hand of God the whole system must rush into confusion, and there must follow an endless war of elements. The sinner, except when blinded and rendered stupid by the god of this world, can enjoy no happiness in this life. When awakened by the Spirit of God he is miserable. The law of God condemns him, and his conscience approves the sentence, and awakens fearful apprehensions of evil. Offer him a palace, a large estate, the highest honors, and he replies with an aching heart, what shall it profit me; should I gain all the world and lose my own soul. Away with these tempters, they trouble me—he cries, I had rather be cast into the most miserable dungeon with the evidence of being reconciled to God, than to be lord of the world and have no hope of a place in heaven. Life is but a vapor, it will soon pass away. Time is but a point, it will soon be swallowed up in eternity. At death all worldly possessions must be given up. Does the rich man carry any thing out of the world with him? When he is dead we see his buildings, his lands, his goods of every kind, his costly apparel, his servants, every thing, which, while living, contributed in any way to his comfort. If impenitent, his possessions in this world only make him more miserable after death. He has no house to protect him from the storms of Divine wrath—no home, no possessions, no clothing, no food to satisfy his hunger, and no hope of relief, however distant. The loss of all good must necessarily result in the misery, which cannot be described. Such are the capacities and appetites of the soul, that if cut off from all supplies, they must be violent tormentors. The suffering of the impenitent

beyond this life, which is a natural consequence of sin, must be intollerable in degree, and everlasting in duration.

Dreadful as would be the misery of the sinner, were he left to suffer only the natural consequences of his guilt, without any distinct view of the wrath of his offended Sovereign, and without the infliction of any positive punishment; this is light compared with the full measure of his woe. The frown of God, when his glory is revealed must be terrible. As moral governor, he must express his feelings toward sin—and he must express them toward his enemies. This expression must correspond with his infinite hatred of sin, and love of holiness. To give proof of his sincerity, his deeds, must correspond with his words. You may inquire, why need God punish sinners with such awful severity? I answer. He cannot do otherwise and be a faithful sovereign. Punishment is his strange work. He has no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The gift of his Son is a proof that he delights in mercy. Angels would not adore and worship him should he suffer any sin to pass unnoticed. The strength of their love and the intensity of their feelings must correspond with the bright exhibitions he makes of his purity and his hatred of sin. Surely it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Who knoweth, said the Psalmist, the power of thine anger? Its height and depth, and length and breadth; who can by searching find out? When the sentence is pronounced, depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, what anger will flash from the all piercing eye of Jehovah? Jesus, now the sinner's friend, will shew no pity, when

he sits to judge the world. All holy beings will approve the sentence of the judge. The scriptures assure us that the wicked will be cast into a furnace of fire, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. This furnace, kindled by the wrath of God, must be far more terrible than that kindled by the king of Babylon—as much more terrible as God is greater than man.—Such is the end of the wicked, who persevere in impenitence. As there will be no change in God, and none in the principles of his government; so the suffering of the sinner will be perpetual.

REFLECTIONS.

In view of this subject, let me seriously ask you, my hearers, who of you are now exposed to the wrath of God—who to everlasting burnings? If still impenitent and unbelieving; you are liable at any moment to be cut down and to be cast into that furnace where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Think of this. Hear not for others but for yourselves. Let the truth take possession of your mind. The most painful truths are most profitable to the unrenewed. To the anxious sinner the most solemn discourses interest him most. That there is a place of torment, prepared for the impenitent, cannot be doubted. The Scriptures are explicit on this subject. Why did God call prophets and apostles, and inspire them, to make known to us, who are favored with the light of revelation, the heart rending fact that there is a hell as well as a heaven! Was it not that we might escape the one and obtain the other? Here we have a proof of his love. Why did the Son of God come down

from heaven to this earth? He left the bosom of his Father, the most delightful place in the universe—took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham—that he might make an atonement for our sins, and save us from everlasting death. Would He have done all this were not the unrenewed exposed to the wrath of God? The impenitent must be convinced that they have great cause for alarm. They are in danger. Had they a proper view of it, they could not be unaffected. They would cry, men and brethren, what must we do? You may think these are hard sayings. But the half has not been told you. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things God hath prepared as well for them that hate him as for them that love him. Should you perish you would never blame preachers for representing the truth in too vivid colors. You will rather blame them, because they did not more fully expose your guilt and danger.

A more favorable opportunity than the present you never can have for the accomplishment of that great work, which must be done while you live, or you will be lost—lost forever. As salvation is of grace you need not delay for a moment. Your own works will not save you. Cease to depend on what you have done, or expect to do. You may imagine that you must do something before you can come to Christ. This is an error, and an error, which has ruined many. While making this preparation the Spirit has left them and they have returned to a state of stupidity and carelessness. Your first and immediate duty is, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the end of the law for righteousness. * *

While sitting in this house, while listening to the message, not of the preacher, but the message God has sent you to day, fix your thoughts on Christ—keep them fixed on him, till your affections flow out to him—and till he is revealed to you in all his loveliness and glory. Suffer nothing to come between you and Christ—no resolutions of amendment. Present your heart, depraved as it is, to him. He can cleanse it in his own precious blood. He can make the hard heart tender. Him, that cometh unto me, he has said, I will in no wise cast out.

Suffer no delay. The tempter will whisper, there is time enough yet. Many have been ruined by such whispers. They are disposed to regard them, because their hearts, till renewed, are opposed to the holy character of God. The young, whose anticipations of worldly happiness, are strong, imagine, if they become religious that they shall be miserable the rest of their life. But they have only to look around them to be convinced of their error. Religion does not cut them off from any lawful enjoyment. It delivers them from that distressing fear of death, which is experienced by all the unrenewed when exposed to great danger. While they partake of the good things of this life, they have a hope beyond the grave. Those, who defer till old age, the concerns of their souls, usually die without any good hope of salvation. Though the attachments of the young appear to be strong; they are not so deeply rooted as at a later period. Besides, their minds are more susceptible of receiving impressions, and of being rightly directed, than when their habits of thinking have become established. It may be added, as a most important consideration, the great

majority of those, who ever become pious become so early in life. To the young, therefore, let me say, if you ever expect to be saved, you must improve the present period, and make sure of heaven now, before the cares of the world occupy your thoughts. They that seek me early, God hath said, shall find me.

It is not the fact, that Christians are less happy in this world than the unrenewed. It is true they do not give themselves up to all the pleasures and amusements, which are sought with so much eagerness and valued so high by the thoughtless, gay and fashionable. The enjoyments of Christians are reasonable and lawful. They leave no sting. It is not thus with the amusements, which are most admired. They commence, when the Christian is offering to God his evening sacrifice, and end when his first thoughts in the morning watch are ascending to his kind and heavenly Preserver. They are productive of innumerable diseases, and hurry many to the grave before they have lived out half their days. The joy of the Christian is concealed from the world. His life is hid with Christ in God. It is not then strange that the unrenewed imagine that Christians are cut off from all sources of enjoyment. The tears they shed on account of the unhappy condition of those, who remain in sin, are thought to be proofs that they themselves are miserable. But what is their testimony?—the testimony of every true convert? They are ready to declare, a day spent in the service of God is better than a thousand spent elsewhere—they had rather be door-keepers in the house of their God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. The happiness of the Christian is far more excellent than that of the man of the

world. The enjoyments of the world never satisfy—they are hardly tasted before they are gone and leave an aching void—a craving for something else. Indeed worldly men are always seeking something new, something they never have possessed, still hoping to find the thing desired. They continue the pursuit till death, and are at last convinced, when it is too late, that they have been deceived—and have been following shadows all their days. They die without any hope beyond the grave.

It is not so with the Christian. When he finds Christ he finds a true friend, one in whom he can trust, one, in whom there is an infinite fulness of all good. True religion satisfies the soul. It is impossible to describe the joy experienced by the new convert. It far exceeds all the descriptions he ever read. He is ready to acknowledge that the hundredth part was never told him by the most pious and eloquent preacher. He finds it different from any thing of which he had before any conception. Now can you not believe the testimony of all Christians? What motive can they have to deceive? Be convinced, should you my young friends, become Christians, you will be happy for time and for eternity; incomparably more happy, should you dwell in a humble cottage, than could you be without religion should you occupy a palace, and possess the treasures of the world. I see you now standing on slippery places, liable every moment to fall into the abyss of woe. I see God angry with you because you do not love and serve him—and because you remain with his enemies—I see Jesus, who has a perfect knowledge of his Father's wrath, and of your guilt and danger—I see him near you—

weeping over you, and hear him, with the most tender feelings of compassion inviting you to come to him. Will you not give him your heart? He now waits for your decision? Can you, dare you say to him, go thy way for this time—when I have a convenient season I will call for thee? Will not such treatment grieve and offend him? Should he once turn his back upon you, he may never again visit you. He may leave you to fill up the measure of your iniquities. Instead of his kind invitations, you may hear him thus address you. Because I have called and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand and ye have not regarded it. But ye have set at nought all my counsel and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then you will call upon me but I will not answer; you will seek me early, or earnestly, but you shall not find me; for that you hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, you would none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore shall you eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices.

Before I close I must not forget those, who have passed the period of youth and are still unreconciled to God. Your prospect of future happiness is becoming darker and darker every day. You are becoming more and more closely wedded to the world. If heads of families, your cares are many, and you have less leisure than formerly for retirement, meditation and

prayer. May I ask, do you daily pray to God—daily search the scriptures? Do you care as much for your soul as for your body? Have there not been times, when the Holy Spirit was striving with you? You resisted and grieved that Holy Person who sought your salvation. Do you not find that you feel less and less anxious respecting your future condition, and that you find it more and more difficult to fix your mind on the most important subjects? And are you not alarmed? Day after day is hurrying you on to the grave and to the judgment, and you are not prepared to meet your God.

How would you feel, if cast upon a desolate island, without food; should day after day pass affording you no relief? Would not your anxiety and distress increase with the delay of help? Have you not reason to fear that you belong to that class, whom God has not chosen to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth? You have seen others taken while you have been passed by and left. All that were given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, we are assured, shall come to him. God is now gathering in his elect and making preparations for the future judgment, when it will appear that all his purposes have been accomplished. Where will you then stand—on the right hand, or left hand, of the Judge? Will he say to you come, ye blessed, or depart ye cursed?

You have one more call, and may God make it effectual. What you do must be done soon. The day with some of you is far spent, and the night is approaching. Defer, I pray you, no longer that

business, which requires immediate attention. Give yourselves no peace till your peace is made with God. Rest not, till you have a good hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.



THE NEW CREATION.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.—2. Cor. v. 17.

THE Apostle made known in the text the fact, that the distinction, which for many generations had been maintained between Jews and Gentiles, ceased to exist after the commencement of the Christian dispensation, and that salvation was freely offered to all men of every grade and of every nation on the same terms. All mankind are found to be by nature in the same state—condemned by the same law, in need of the same Savior and the same radical change. The plan devised and adopted by infinite wisdom and benevolence for the redemption of man is suited to every variety of case. But if any man of any nation, whether Jew or Gentile, whether bond or free, whether

rich or poor, whether old or young, whether male or female, whether learned or illiterate be in Christ he is a new creature. We are here clearly taught by the inspired Apostle that no man can become a Christian, without first becoming a new creature. This truth or doctrine is, by not a few, denied. It demands, therefore, serious consideration. Your attention, my hearers, will in the following discourse be directed to the *necessity* and *evidences* of that *new creation*, without which no one can become a Christian.

I. The *necessity* of a *new creation*.

1. It may, *first*, be observed man was originally created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. Though infinitely inferior to God yet he was like him. He was so created as to be able to discern the moral beauty and excellency of the divine character. This power to discern spiritual things was as essential to his moral constitution, as his power to understand other things was to his intellectual nature. Spiritual discernment is as necessary to the performance of spiritual duties, as intellectual discernment to the performance of such works as cannot be accomplished unless we understand them. Now as the understanding of a work is not the doing of it; so the discernment of spiritual things is not the discharge of spiritual duties. Many understand how to do what they do not attempt to do. There must, therefore, be a distinction between a power to understand, and acting according to its instructions. So there must be a distinction between the power to discern spiritual things, and those exercises, which are spiritual. When man was originally created, he not only had power to discern spiritual things, but the feelings of

his heart corresponded with his discernment. To know God was to love him. Now by his apostasy man lost his power to discern spiritual things. This we are clearly taught by Christ himself, and by the chief of the inspired apostles. Jesus answered and said unto him, (Nicodemus,) Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God. But the natural man, said the Apostle, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. There is then a defect in the moral constitution of all the posterity of Adam, the federal head of the human race. They have lost their power *to discern* spiritual things, and consequently their power to do what is required of them. How can a man love an object, of which he can have no conception? It is manifestly impossible.

The subject admits of an illustration, which every one may understand. Two men, one rich, the other poor, dwell near to each other, and for a number of years live in great friendship. The rich man is liberal to the poor man, and bestows on him many favors, for which the latter acknowledges and feels his obligations. At length the poor man sees something very beautiful in the possession of the rich man, which the latter values very highly, and with which he is unwilling on any account to part. This the poor man covets, and without permission secretly takes. Immediately his love is changed to hatred—he ceases to be a friend and becomes an enemy. And the tendency of enmity is to destroy its object. The enemy discovers nothing lovely in the character of him whom

he once loved, and for whom he once would have been willing to expose his life to danger and suffering. He never can see him without feeling condemned, and without perceiving the enmity of his heart excited against him. The less cause he has for his enmity and the greater are his obligations to his kind benefactor, the more deadly is his enmity against him. We have, in the New Testament, a history of the hatred the Jews manifested towards Christians. It was acted out by them. He that hateth me, said Christ, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated, both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled, that is written in their law. They hated me without a cause. I will not attempt to describe, except from its effects, the change produced in the heart of our first parents by their apostacy. Nor will I attempt to describe, except by its effects, the change experienced by those, who become Christians. This is certain, without a new creation, no means employed by the most pious and eloquent men have ever proved sufficient to persuade any one to become a Christian. We have the testimony of those, whose minds were enlightened, by the most faithful preaching, attended by the teachings of the Holy Spirit, that they were never so sensible of the hardness of their hearts as when their convictions were clearest. Some, whose convictions have been very clear, have confessed that the enmity of their hearts was most discoverable, just before they experienced the change, which occasioned that joy, which was unspeakable and full of glory. Some, who admit the necessity of

the illumination of the Holy Spirit, deny that there is any moral evil in the human heart, which does not consist of exercises or actions. They deny that any thing more is necessary than light—or a knowledge of duty. The Spirit of God, they suppose, operates on the mind to give it activity, and to enlighten it—and that when it is excited and enlightened without any change of nature, it will put forth holy exercises. This is denying the doctrine of native depravity, as generally understood, and as has been understood in all ages by orthodox churches. Those representations of the holy character of God, which move the feelings of the Christian and dissolve his heart in tenderness and love, only excite very different feelings in the hearts of the unrenewed. The unrenewed, therefore, need new susceptibilities, or a new nature, to qualify them to receive Christ in all his offices, and to do all that is required of them. The increase of light only increases the hardness of their hearts, and their opposition to the truths, peculiar to Christianity. They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

2. It is not denied that the unrenewed act freely—that is, without compulsion. So does the thief, the drunkard, and the murderer act freely; though they may act contrary to the dictates of their conscience. He is a moral agent, who acts as he chooses to act. But his choices correspond with the affections of his heart. Does a man choose to do what he hates? Can he be perfectly free in his choices, unless he loves the things he chooses? Men in their natural state are not free in the same sense, in which Adam, when first created was free. The Scriptures represent them as slaves. Slaves may act freely so long as they remain

ignorant of their condition. As a proof that the unrenewed are not free in the most important sense; they always experience a severe struggle when awakened, their conscience urging them to return to God without delay by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, but their hearts refusing to obey. They are like a person in bondage, made acquainted with his condition and endeavoring to escape, but unable to effect it. They never can know by experience what true liberty is till they are delivered from the bondage of sin by the renewing power of the Spirit, or by a new creation.

3. There is in every Christian a new principle of life. The Spirit of Christ, which is his strength, dwelleth in him. I am crucified with Christ, said the Apostle, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Christ who liveth in the believer is the source of all the joy, peace and strength he experiences. It is impossible to see how a sinner, if pardoned, could ever with composure and even joy behold the face of his injured Savior, when recollecting his sins, without the creation of new susceptibilities. It is the new creature, who is the subject of new feelings and emotions. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. The following exhortation we find in the epistle to the Ephesians. That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according

to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God, (or the image of God) is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. iv. 22—24.

4. The new creature is with great propriety denominated a new man. In some respects it may be compared to a new sense, but this would not afford a perfect illustration of the subject. Should a man born blind be made to see—by a miracle—or by a new creation—he would have one new sense, and one new source of enjoyment. This would be confined to objects of sight. But the new creature or new man has as many spiritual senses or capacities as the natural man has natural senses. The scriptures notice them. “The work of the Spirit of God in regeneration is often in scripture”, says President Edwards, “compared to the giving a new sense, giving eyes to see and ears to hear, unstopping the ears of the deaf, and opening the eyes of them that were born blind and turning from darkness to light. And because this spiritual sense is immensely the most noble and excellent, and that without which all other principles of perception and all our faculties are useless and vain ; therefore the giving this new sense with the blessed fruits and effects of it in the soul, is compared to a raising the dead and to a new creation. This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties, but are new principles of nature.”

Now to create is to bring into being something, which did not before exist. This is a work, which none but God can perform. No one can suppose that God creates *exercises*. The supposition is absurd.

God creates men with powers to put forth exercises. They are the agents, or authors—whose character gives character to their exercises and actions. As Adam was created in the image of God in righteousness and true holiness ; so all, who are created in Christ unto good works are created in righteousness and true holiness. For, said the Apostle to the Ephesians, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. The warfare maintained by the new man with the old is described in the vii. chapter of the epistle to the Romans. For that, which I do, said the Apostle, I allow not : for what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I.

If we admit the doctrine of native depravity, it must be manifest that nothing good can proceed from the unrenewed heart. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? Not one. Can darkness produce light, or hatred love ? Can the dead themselves awake and live ? The new creature or new man has susceptibilities, or capacities totally different from any before possessed. His sight, his hearing, his tasting, his feelings and his power of action are all new. The power of motives cannot produce a radical change—a change of nature. We might as well expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles by cultivation, as to effect a saving change in any one by the power of motives. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit, Matthew vii. 18.

Those conversions, which do not result from a change of nature, are of no value. They are deceptive and ruinous. They may be traced to the operation

of selfish considerations. Though the subjects may appear well outwardly ; yet they often manifest more opposition to the peculiar doctrines of revelation than ever. Great is the change, experienced by every one, who becomes a true Christian. And he does not hesitate to acknowledge that it is the work of God.

II. The *evidences* of that *new creation*, which is essential to salvation.

1. The views of the new creature are different in kind from any he before had. They are spiritual and transforming. A man may be enlightened, he may admit the truth of the distinguishing doctrines of revelation—and may zealously defend them, and yet may have no spiritual discernment of their beauty—and may not love them. The light, which shines clearly and powerfully in the understanding may produce a strong belief of the truth—a belief also of its importance—and may occasion outward reformation and great exactness of moral conduct. There may be a great change in the views, feelings and life of an individual, which is not radical and saving. The Christian discovers a beauty in the holy character of God, which he cannot but love, whether saved or lost. More especially he beholds with delight the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Many, it is feared, who have indulged a hope of salvation, have never discovered any beauty in the character of him, who saves from sin. Representations of Christ crucified try the feelings of the human heart more severely than exhibitions of the attributes of God, who is the Creator and Governor of the world. The serious infidel has no objection to discourses on the attributes of God. He does not disapprove the

precepts of the law of nature or the moral law, which is interwoven with the gospel. To the real convert the Scriptures, with which he had been familiar, appear to be a new book—every subject appears in a new light. The change in him causes an apparent change in every object he beholds, and every subject, on which he meditates. A new world is opened to his view—and a new class of truths is discovered in the volume of revelation. Those doctrines, to which the unrenewed are most opposed, appear most precious to the Christian. Without any additional instruction those truths, which once occasioned the greatest distress, now afford the greatest satisfaction and delight. To the unrenewed the church of Christ appears to be a root out of dry ground—and the most pious members the most unhappy; but to the sincere believer the church appears to be the perfection of beauty, and the most pious the most happy of all men. It grieves the Christian to see any live in disobedience to that law, which is holy, just and good, and to neglect the offers of mercy through faith in Jesus Christ. He views with pity and with tears those, who continue under sentence of death and exposed to the wrath of God. He mourns on account of the defects he discovers in the church and in himself; but still loves and endeavors to promote the cause of his Redeemer. To the unrenewed those benevolent institutions, the support of which requires some sacrifices of property, are viewed as real evils. Though they may be desirous of being praised for their liberality, they would be better pleased should there be no occasion for it. But to him, in whom dwelleth the spirit of Him, who though rich became poor for our sakes, to him, I say,

who feels his obligation to his Redeemer, and who is anxious to see an increase of the number of his disciples, every enterprise, the design of which is to enlarge his kingdom, appears to be honorable and worthy of approbation. The greater the number of the streams, whose waters refresh the kingdom of Christ, the more the Christian rejoices.

The worship of God, whether public or private, has no charms for the unregenerate. They may be constant, urged by their conscience, at the house of God on the Sabbath. They may be unwilling to expose themselves to contempt by treating with disrespect an institution generally approved. However exact a man may be in the performance of outward duties, if not influenced by love he cannot be accepted. The real Christian loves the house of God, and the duties required of him. One thing, said the Psalmist, have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. Again. For a day spent 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. And the more distinguished any are for piety the more they delight in communion with God in secret.

One of the peculiarities of the views of a true convert is the general respect he has to all the truths and precepts of christianity. Those, who have indulged a false hope, are often found to be in some things very zealous, while other things are totally neglected, or, are treated with indifference. There is also a solemnity, which attends all the operations of the Holy Spirit,

2. As the change essential to salvation is wrought in the heart; so it produces a great change in the emotions, feelings and affections of the heart. Many things before loved are now hated. Now as there has been no change in the things hated or loved; so it is too evident to be denied that the change must be in us. Worldly men too generally avoid the company of christians, especially those, most distinguished for their piety, and choose for companions such as are like themselves. They feel reprov'd in many particulars when in the presence of decided and consistent christians. On the other hand the true christian chooses the society of those, who can sympathize with him. The place of prayer, which once he could not contemplate with pleasure, he now visits with delight. His attachments are strongest to the most devoted friends of God, and he views with the greatest abhorrence the most profane. I am a companion, said the Psalmist, of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The conscience of the unrenewed may urge them to perform duties, they do not love. But a very different principle influences the true convert. His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. O how I love thy law! said the Psalmist, it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. The affections of a convert correspond with his new views of spiritual things. He loves the church of God—and loves them most, who most nearly resemble his adored Redeemer. Love, which is the fulfilling of the law, makes duty a delight. It was said of Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion, and as a proof of it—behold, he prayeth.

No doubt he had many times before prayed and made long prayers; but never before with right feelings of heart. The Christian cannot live without prayer. It is his meat to commune with God. It is indeed a privilege to be permitted to make known all our wants and desires to him, who notices every tear, and who can supply all our wants. The Sabbath and all christian institutions appear precious and honorable to every sincere Christian. When the Christian meditates on the gift of Christ, to this lost world, especially when he dwells on his love, manifested in his sufferings and death, and indulges a hope of salvation through faith in his blood; his heart overflows with gratitude and love to the Father, who gave his Son to be the Savior of men—to the Son, who freely gave himself a ransom for his people. He cannot find language of sufficient force to express his sense of obligation to God, who has done such great things for the redemption of men.

When the Christian reviews his life and calls to recollection many acts, which once he hardly thought sinful, they appear in a new light, and he is grieved and broken hearted on account of them. He is grieved not so much on account of the injury done to himself, as on account of the injury done to God. The cause of God he makes his own. He rejoices when it is advanced, and mourns when it is opposed.

3. A new creation produces new hopes and fears.—The hopes of the unrenewed correspond with their desires—and their liability to lose the objects they most value awakens their fears. Their friends, their home, their possessions, are all in this world. Their thoughts seldom carry them beyond the present state. The ambitious are constantly seeking for preferment.

Their thoughts are constantly occupied with their ambitious schemes. In the pursuit of fame, too many persuade themselves that the end justifies the means best suited to attain it. The same principle influences those, who are in haste to be rich. He that hasteth to be rich, saith the wise man, hath an evil eye and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

The Christian looks beyond this world for complete happiness. He knows that riches take to themselves wings and fly away—and that those, who are one day the favorites of the multitude may another day be condemned and rejected. He cannot depend on any earthly good to satisfy the desires of his soul. Heaven is the home, to which the Christian is bound—the friends of his Redeemer are his friends—the inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away is the object of his hopes and pursuits. Another object of the Christian hope, is to see the church of God enlarged by the addition of true converts and the restoration of backsliders. Influenced by such hopes he employs all his powers to accomplish his objects, on which his affections are placed.

The fears of worldly men have reference to their possessions and pursuits. If raised to places of honor, they are constantly in fear of losing them. If in pursuit of fame, they are afraid they shall not succeed. The rich are every night afraid of being robbed. Men of business are perpetually anxious lest they suffer by the dishonesty or failure of others. Such is the instability of all earthly things, that no man can enjoy peace of mind, who depends on them for happiness. The fears, by which the Christian differs from men of the world, have respect to spiritual things.—He is

afraid of offending God, who is infinitely excellent and glorious—and who looks upon all sin with just abhorrence. He is one, who trembles at God's word. He has a tender conscience. He knows that his influence and usefulness as a Christian depend very much on his strict morality. No matter how great the zeal of a professed Christian, if dishonest, and regardless of his word; all his arguments in favor of the truth and religion are powerless. The Christian therefore, is careful to keep all his promises, to make no declaration, not known to be true. He chooses to suffer wrong rather than do wrong. A strict observance of the precepts of the moral law is necessary to give influence to the Christian. Think not, said our Savior, that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. There have been some, who have made high pretensions to piety, and who have occupied high places in the church; but whose moral conduct has not been spotless. They cannot be respected by the intelligent. The Christian is no less afraid of offending God, when he has a prevailing hope of salvation, than when he is troubled with doubts, respecting his interest in the merits of his Redeemer. It is not the fear of future misery, which influences him so much as his fear of offending Him, whom he loves on account of his own excellency. He cannot but have fears sometimes of being deceived. When he carefully examines himself—notices the operations of his heart and compares his life with the word of God; he discovers so many defects that he

thinks it hardly possible that he can be a Christian. Remissness in the performance of duty will always produce darkness and doubts. While in the world the Christian cannot but have some regard to his temporal interest. He must provide for his own and especially for those of his own household. But the salvation of his own soul and of the souls of those, who sustain a near relation to him, appears to him to be an object of great magnitude, more especially as it is connected with the honor of God.

4. That change, which is denominated a new creation, is permanent. This gives it value. Many of the changes, which encourage the subjects of them to indulge a hope of salvation, do not reach the heart, and consequently are not permanently beneficial. The new creature is immortal. It is so connected with Christ, that nothing can destroy it or change its nature. Christ liveth in the believer and maketh intercession for him. I am the vine, said our Lord to his disciples, ye are the branches. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live ye shall live also. If it were possible the very elect might be deceived, and might perish. But the gift of God is eternal life, and all his attributes are engaged for the protection and salvation of all, that have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God. They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. It is as agreeable to the nature of the new creature as to the nature of our first parents before their apostacy to love God. The promises of God make sure their salvation. My sheep, said our Lord, hear my voice and I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal

life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

From the view we have taken of the subject under consideration it is manifest that the change, essential to salvation, is a work of God. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy. It is true salvation is promised to all who sincerely repent and believe; but repentance and faith are fruits of the Spirit. It is not correct to maintain that the Holy Spirit persuades sinners to make to themselves new hearts merely by enlightening their minds—and presenting to them proper motives of action. This is not the scripture view of the subject, nor does it correspond with genuine Christian experience. During a season of refreshing many are aroused from their slumbers—greatly excited, and enlightened; who do not become Christians. When the excitement experienced subsides they often become more opposed than ever to the peculiar truths of Christianity. There are but few, who deny that they are in any sense dependent on the Spirit of God for renovation of heart. But the principle is the same, whether we are more or less dependent for salvation. If it be inconsistent with our freedom of action to be dependent on God for grace to enable us to do our duty—or to be dependent on him for a new heart, then it is inconsistent with our freedom of action to be dependent on him at all. Every true Christian is ready to acknowledge that the change wrought in him was wrought by God. How can a good action be performed without a discernment

of spiritual things—that discernment, which is peculiar to the Christian? The discernment itself is not love, or faith, or repentance. It is a pre-requisite, possessed only by the new creature.

2. As it is manifest from the view we have taken of the subject under consideration that the conversion of sinners is a work of God, and that we are dependent on him for its accomplishment; so it is important that Christians feel that their own strength is weakness, and their wisdom folly—and that by earnest prayer they must look to God alone for success in all their labors for the salvation of men. Few men distinguished for their talents and learning are willing to humble themselves so much as to take their place in the dust, and to look to God alone for help. It is more gratifying to their pride to depend on some philosophical theory, or on some peculiar means, or instrumentality than on the Spirit of God. When God revives his work and sinners are pricked in their heart; they are convinced and feel that none but God can give them power to do his will. Create in me a clean heart, O God! is the cry of the condemned sinner, and renew a right spirit within me. The great fault of Christians is that they have not a proper sense of their dependence on God. When successful they attribute it to some peculiar instrumentality—to some second cause or means, and not wholly to God. But when unsuccessful, they attribute this to some defect in the ministry, or to some other secondary cause. Often they censure one another—often he that ministers in holy things is censured, and dismissed, with the belief that another may be obtained who will be successful.

3. As help can be obtained only from God, so Christians should accustom themselves to meditate on those truths, which are best suited to humble them and to keep them humble. When we see Christians deeply humbled, weeping on account of their unfaithfulness—pleading with God as those, who feel their dependence on him; we can with a good degree of safety predict that a revival is at hand. The means best suited to keep Christians in a humble state are best suited to promote a revival of true religion.

4. The view taken of the subject, under consideration, is suited to alarm the fears of all the unrenewed. When any are awakened, nothing alarms and distresses them so much as to find that they are in the hands of God, whose law they have broken, and to whom they have made no proper returns for the many mercies received. To find that they are in the hands of an angry God, without any power to escape, and that they are dependent on his mere mercy for salvation produces that agony of soul, which cannot be described. This is the state of feeling to which every one must be brought before he can become a Christian. He must be divested of all dependence on himself, and feel his dependence on God alone for salvation. Does his dependence allow him to wait? Does the criminal condemned to die, who depends on the governor for pardon, refuse to ask for so great a favor?

Those, who persuade themselves that they can at any time become Christians, are always disposed to defer the commencement of that work, which demands immediate attention. So long as affectionate parents believe that a beloved and only child, danger-

ously sick, may be restored to health by human instrumentality at their command, they experience some alleviation of their distress; but when convinced that their dependence is on God alone, then their solicitude and distress reach the highest degree. Let the sinner then make a full confession of his guilt and dependence. If we confess our sins, said the Apostle John, He, (i. e. God,) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Amen.

DISCOURSE V.



THE REPENTANCE OF A SINNER A GREAT EVENT.

Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.—LUKE xv, 10.

THAT event must be great, which so deeply interests and affects a kingdom as to occasion general and public rejoicing. But an event of less importance may produce emotions of joy in the bosom of an individual. A poor woman loses a small piece of money, which on account of her necessities is to her a serious misfortune. She mourns and weeps; she searches diligently and at length finds it. The degree of her joy is high in proportion to the depths of

her poverty. She calls together her neighbors, who on account of their low condition can sympathize with her, to participate in her joy. When we hear the sound of national rejoicing we know that some object has been obtained, or that some important event is commemorated. Now the difference between a poor woman and a whole nation is less than the difference between an earthly kingdom and the kingdom of heaven. How great then must be that event, which occasions joy in the presence of the angels of God! The number of them is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. They do not rejoice without good cause. They are higher in dignity than any of the potentates of this world—their knowledge is more extensive than that of the most learned men that have ever lived. The intelligence which reaches them is correct. Nothing but the truth is received in heaven.

The inquiry may by some be made, can any event known in this world be worthy of the notice of holy angels and cause them to rejoice? We are assured in our text that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. The humble penitent can hardly realize that the angels of God feel interested in his welfare. But the repentance of the most obscure and illiterate individual occasions joy in the presence of the angels of God. How differently is the event viewed in this world, and even by the church of Christ! A few Christians may mention it with some degree of interest. Much of the joy experienced may be occasioned by selfish considerations, or by mere sympathy. Those, whose joy is like that of the holy angels, rejoice with trembling, know-

ing that some, who appear well for a time, do not persevere to the end.

It is my design in the following discourse to describe very briefly the nature of true repentance, and to show in what sense the repentance of one sinner is an event of sufficient magnitude to occasion joy in the presence of the angels of God.

I. I am to describe very briefly the nature of true repentance.

1. A knowledge of the divine law, by which our conduct is measured is necessary to repentance. By the law is the knowledge of sin. I had not known sin, said the Apostle, but by the law: for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. That repentance which is the offspring of ignorance, or which is produced by a view of danger, to which our conduct has exposed us, is of no value. When a sinner is awakened by the Spirit of God he has new discoveries of the extent and spirituality of the divine law. From the time of his first serious impressions, if at length truly converted, his knowledge of the divine law becomes more and more extensive till the very close of his life. The law of God includes every thought, purpose, feeling and motive as well as every action. God as a righteous sovereign requires us to love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind and strength. He can demand nothing less. A knowledge of the divine law is connected with a sense of obligation to keep it, and a sense of guilt on account of our transgressions. Our sense of guilt cannot be greater than our sense of obligation. God demands of the sinner unreserved submission to his will, and immediate repentance in view of his disobe-

ence. When awakened from the slumbers of stupidity by the Holy Spirit he feels that the claims of God are reasonable and that he has no excuse for his sin. His conscience, when enlightened, approves what the law of God approves, and condemns what it condemns. There can be no true repentance without an acknowledgement of the authority of God and his right to command us. When the sinner discovers that he has injured God—the great and holy God, he exclaims, what have I done? His conscience like a strong man armed contends against him, is an accuser and a judge to condemn him. Every page of the Scriptures condemns him. The sin of unbelief more than any other distresses him. Nothing is so offensive to God as the rejection of his Son; and nothing appears to be so base to the awakened sinner as his treatment of Christ. As no one can be a true convert without consistent, affecting and transforming views of the character of his Redeemer; so no one can experience genuine and thorough conviction without feeling condemned for the sin of unbelief. To the awakened sinner, when the Spirit of God applies divine truth to his conscience, it appears that God is actually addressing him—that he is angry with him—that he is a great transgressor, and that he is justly condemned to suffer everlasting death. What shall I do, he cries?—Whither shall I flee?—How can I escape the wrath of God?—How can my neglected and abused Savior forgive me? Not in a single instance have I done my duty with right feelings of heart. I have ruined myself and see no ground of hope but the sovereign mercy of God. To him then I will look, for he can, and he may create in me a clean heart. The sacrifices of God are a broken

spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

2. That contrition of heart, which is essential to true repentance, must arise not only from a sense of our guilt, but from love of the holy character of God. Sin appears to be hateful, when viewed as separate from its consequences. Actions, we know, independent of the consequences, may be viewed as right or wrong. If we love God only on account of what he has done for us and which we expect him to do for us, our love is selfish and is not the fulfilling of the divine law. True penitence results from a work of grace in the heart. It extends to every known sin. In this particular it differs from that repentance, which is not unto life, and which extends only to some particular sins, while some besetting sins, or sins concealed from the world are not mortified. The Psalmist aware of the deceitfulness of his heart offered the following prayer to God. 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. The same motives, which influence a true penitent to forsake one sin, will lead him to forsake every sin. Whosoever is born of God, said the Apostle John, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. With this passage the following may, perhaps, harmonize. For that which I do, said the author of the Epistle to the Romans, I allow not; for what I would that do I not; but what I hate that do I. If then I do that, which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. That, which is

born of the Spirit, the new creature, is holy and cannot sin. When overpowered by the remains of sin, it still resists and is an unwilling captive. When we discover any essential defect in the character or life of a professed friend of God—dishonesty, a disregard of the truth, intemperance, or any other immorality; we are compelled to conclude that he is not a true penitent.

II. I will now endeavor to show that the repentance of one sinner is an event of sufficient magnitude to occasion joy in the presence of the angels of God.

1. The repentance of one sinner is to him, who is the subject of it, an event of great importance, whether we consider the misery he escapes, or the happiness he obtains, and which is promised to him. By nature he is a child of wrath, by grace an heir of glory. As it is impossible to describe the misery, which awaits the impenitent, so it is impossible to describe the happiness prepared for every true penitent. Who but the Christian can conceive of the joy, experienced by him, who has obtained a good hope of salvation? When the sincere penitent looks back on the dangers he has escaped, he cannot be sufficiently thankful for the grace, by which his deliverance was effected. When he looks forward and contemplates the prospect before him his heart overflows with gratitude to God for his distinguishing love. He is made a joint heir with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Take from him every thing but his hope, and he will still rejoice. Go to the humble cottage of the penitent, and offer him the largest estate if he will deny his Lord, and renounce his hope; and he will reject the offer with just indig-

nation. He knows that time is short, and that he must soon leave the world. What will it profit him, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what can be given in exchange for the soul. What are the treasures of the world to a dying man? Can the rich, the mighty, the learned and the honorable, if impenitent, be truly happy, when every moment liable to be cut down and to be cast into that furnace; where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched? As well may we consider him happy, who has been condemned for some capital offence, and is uncertain as to the day of his execution. Every impenitent sinner is under sentence of death, and liable at any time to suffer the penalty of the divine law. Holy angels, who are ministering spirits to Christ and to his church, and who are influenced by the most benevolent feelings, rejoice when any of the human race are delivered from the power of the adversary and made truly happy. When any are converted all holy angels acknowledge them as their friends and as belonging to their company. Any accession to their number delights them.

2. There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth, because complete success attends the scheme devised and adopted by infinite wisdom and benevolence for the redemption of men, in which justice and mercy shine with equal splendor. The glory of the divine perfections is as clearly seen in the conversion of one individual as in the conversion of a multitude. The more angels and saints meditate on the plan of redemption the more they admire the wisdom and benevolence of God. Should all the wise and mighty men of this world, or all

the angels of heaven endeavor to convert one sinner ; they would be no more able to do it than to create a world. None but God can create in any one a new heart.

The repentance of one sinner is an event of greater magnitude than the most splendid victory ever obtained by the most powerful army. The means employed for the conversion of one sinner are greater than were ever employed by any nation for the accomplishment of any public object. In the conversion of a sinner there is a severe struggle—the wicked heart opposes the truth, and all the powers of darkness exert their utmost to oppose the Spirit of God. But where God is determined to save an individual, he overcomes all opposition. When he but speaks the word, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the dead awake to life and action. His power is infinitely greater than that of all his creatures united. Holy angels rejoice when Christ is victorious and his enemies are confounded. The great apostle could say with a spirit of triumph in view of the subject under consideration ; For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three persons in the ever blessed Trinity, are all equally concerned in the redemption of men. Such is the scheme of redemption that God can appear righteous to all intelligent beings, and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus. The conversion of one sinner affects the whole empire of Jehovah. Whatever he does on earth is known in heaven, and also by the spirits of darkness. Should any defect be discovered in his character, or in

the administration of his government, holy angels would cease to love and worship him; and wicked spirits would rejoice. In all his works God has respect to his great name. The conduct of men and the treatment they receive from God must effect his whole government. It is too manifest to be denied, that where the gospel is faithfully preached its influence is salutary—makes men better and happier in all the relations and departments of life.

3. It is impossible for us in this present state to have any adequate view of the important consequences resulting from the repentance of one sinner. The good accomplished and the evil prevented in the present world, by the labors of one good man, are great. The conversion of one sinner will have an influence on the kingdom of God forever. Who then can determine how great it will be? God the Father will never cease to be pleased to see his beloved Son honored and adored! God the Son will never cease to be delighted with the success of the scheme devised and adopted by his Father, in which he feels so deeply interested, and which he suffered so much to execute. The Holy Spirit will ever reign without opposition and rejoice the hearts of all renewed by his power. How sublime, solemn, and glorious must be the scene, when all the truly penitent stand before the judgment seat of Christ and hear him say to them—Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world! Then there will be such joy in the presence of the angels of God as they never before felt. Then a multitude of glorified saints redeemed by the blood of Christ, will unite with them saying,—Blessings and honor and glory and power, be

unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.

REFLECTIONS.

1. In view of the subject under consideration it may be observed, if there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, then it must follow that what takes place on earth is made known in heaven, and that holy angels are interested in the affairs of the church on earth. As they are ministering spirits to the church, they are probably messengers which carry the news, which affects the kingdom of Christ, to heaven. Those Christians who at their deaths left many friends and relatives still unreconciled to God, must rejoice exceedingly when they receive intelligence of the conversion of any of them. It may be a question whether the redeemed, when they reach heaven, continue to labor for the conversion of sinners. It is written—If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his. Now the spirit of Christ is still a spirit of intercession. His priesthood is unchangeable. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Now, if saints in heaven have the spirit of Christ and have fellowship with him; how can they help uniting with him in labors for the advancement of his kingdom on earth? Till the work of redemption is completed on earth, holy angels and saints in heaven will feel interested in it. Surely there is something delightful and solemn in the thought that there may be now holy angels near us, to be witnesses of all our conduct—listening to every thing that is said—

encouraging some and restraining others. As God makes use of ministers—pastors of churches, to establish his kingdom on earth, and to enlarge it by speaking to the ear, and by holy living; so he may employ another class of ministers to co-operate with the invisible influences of the Holy Spirit. We know the Spirit of God dwells in the heart of every believer, and that the work of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot always distinguish the operations of the Holy Spirit from the movements of our own mind, which are not produced by his power. It is not strange, then, if we find it more difficult to know, when holy angels are ministering to us. That holy angels do minister to the church there can be no doubt. Take heed, said our Lord, that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven. What power angels have over us we cannot determine. They must be great in knowledge, wisdom, benevolence and power; but they are under the immediate direction of Christ. They exactly obey his commands, and accomplish all that is required of them. May we not suppose that angels are constantly arriving in heaven, from churches, missionary stations, and pious families, communicating intelligence respecting their prosperity and their trials? How must the patriarchs and prophets—the apostles and martyrs, pious ministers and saints in heaven rejoice, when they hear of the triumphs of christianity on earth! How must your pious friends, parents, or relations, now in heaven rejoice, my hearers, should they receive this day intelligence that some, whom they left impenitent, have become truly pious? An

angel is now near at hand, perhaps, waiting to carry to heaven an account of your treatment of Christ this day. What report shall be sent? Shall he inform the holy angels and your pious friends in the other world that you are still determined to continue impenitent and unbelieving? God commands you this day to repent. What answer will you give him? Dare any refuse to obey the plain commands of God? Say, O sinner, I will no longer neglect my immortal soul, I will no longer refuse to repent.

2. If the conversion of a sinner be an event of such importance as to cause joy in the presence of the angels of God; then no exertions are too great to effect the salvation of men. Many acknowledge the soul to be of immense worth; but few only have any affecting view of the situation of perishing sinners. The object which our fathers sought, when they fought and bled to obtain liberty and independence was great; but by no means so great as that for which faithful ministers labor. There will be a point in eternity, when the capacity of one soul will be equal to the sum of all the capacities of the present inhabitants of this world. The salvation of one soul is an event of greater magnitude than can be calculated. The whole world is of less value than one soul. The loss of one soul is a greater evil than the subversion of an empire. How great then must be the work to be done by the church? It demands the employment of all her resources. As God works by means and has connected with the prayers and labors of his people the conversion of sinners great must be the responsibility of the church, denominated the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. Great, very great is the respon-

sibility of ministers. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, said the apostle to the Corinthians, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; to the other the savor of life unto life; and who is sufficient for these things?

The more distinguished any are for piety, the more sensible they are of their defects, and the more they feel their responsibility. As they grow in grace, so they increase in zeal and in exertions for the salvation of men. When God revives his work, they are too soon weary and satisfied. They are willing to labor for a short time with the expectations that their work will soon be done. So long as they feel their dependence on the power of God, so long the work of grace continues. But when they begin to attribute their success to some peculiar means employed by them, or to their superior piety, then the Holy Spirit is grieved away. As it is with individual christians so it is with churches; where they have for a time enjoyed a season of refreshing they relax their exertions and become remiss in the performance of duty. The tendency of a revival of religion is to give them a more affecting view of the situation of the impenitent. When we see some converted we feel stronger desires for the conversion of others. As nothing on earth, no event seems to interest the angels of God so much as the success of the gospel; so nothing so greatly delights the most devoted christian as to hear of the repentance of any of his friends. Churches ought always to be seen, either rejoicing in the presence of God, or mourning his absence. A state of indifference is highly offensive to God. It is feared that there are

many churches, which are not unlike that of Laodicea which Christ thus reproveth. I know thy works, he commanded the angel to write, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. The most difficult work to be done by christians, and that which they are most disposed to neglect has reference to their own hearts. They are more willing to multiply meetings and to give their money, than thoroughly to examine their own hearts and to humble themselves before God. What distress men of the world feel, when unsuccessful in the accomplishment of important objects of pursuit? Why should not christians experience as deep distress, when the means employed for the conversion of sinners are not blessed. The darker their prospect, the greater should be their solicitude. It is not usually long after christians renounce all dependence upon themselves, and on any particular instrumentality; look to God alone for help and cry earnestly to him for his Spirit, before they discover proof of his presence. The advancement of the kingdom of Christ should be the chief and all-absorbing object of true believers. But a small place his Spirit occupies in the hearts of many, who have been redeemed by his precious blood.

Love of Christ should be the spring of all our actions. The more ardently we love Christ, the more we shall be grieved, when we see many, favored with the clear light of the gospel, remaining in unbelief, and the more we shall be willing to labor for their salvation. Judging from what some have done, we may hope when young men of promise are converted that

they will be no less useful in the Church than were such men as Augustin, Luther, Calvin, Elliot or Edwards. The prayers and labors of those scarcely known in the world may be the means of producing changes, highly beneficial to the cause of Christ. Those who are most conspicuous, and who are most applauded by men, may not prevail so much with God, as those, who weep and toil, and pray in places where their labors are not by many observed. How often the most powerful revivals of religion commence in some obscure corner of a parish, and doubtless in answer to the prayers of some, who are hardly noticed by the church to which they belong. Christians ought not to be willing to leave the world without doing something for him who gave his life to redeem them.

3. If there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, then we may conclude that no true convert will fall away so as to perish. God will not suffer holy angels to be deceived or to be disappointed. Should their joy in any instance prove to be premature, it would occasion unhappiness, which does not exist in heaven. God never allows any false intelligence to be published in heaven. How could angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, if it were possible the next day that he might return to his former state? Where we have evidence that God has commenced a good work we feel assured that he will carry it on till it is perfected. What joy could christians experience in this world over one sinner that repenteth, were it probable that he would soon cease to be a true penitent? What encouragement would there be to labor for the salvation of men, were not their repentance connected with their future happiness and

glory? What sufficient motive has the husbandman to expend much for the improvement of land, for which he has no good title, and which at any time may be taken from him? The scriptures are explicit on this subject. Who, said the apostle, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. If there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, how anxious every impenitent sinner should be, to experience that change, which is of sufficient magnitude to interest all the holy angels of heaven. Few seem to have any just conception of the value of the object, exhibited to their view, in the gospel for their pursuit. They are blinded by the God of this world. But if our gospel be hid, said the apostle, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them. It may truly be said, christians themselves see through a glass darkly. The lives of the most pious by no means correspond with the importance of the object of their pursuit. In too many instances they make the impression on the minds of those with whom they are conversant, that they are

more anxious to obtain worldly possessions than an inheritance in heaven. Vast provision has been made for the salvation of men. God is waiting to be gracious to repenting sinners. Christ is weeping over them—knocking at the door of their hearts till his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Have you, sinner, till this time refused to give him a place in your heart? Have you not reason to fear that the Holy Spirit will depart from you never again to return? There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. The work to be done demands immediate attention. You have now, sinner, one more opportunity to make your escape from the wrath to come. To day, if you will hear the voice of mercy, harden not your heart.

Hark! hear you not sinner, the compassionate Saviour still knocking at the door of your heart, and calling upon you in the most affectionate manner to repent—that you may escape the wrath to come and obtain everlasting life! Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation! Do you not perceive within an uneasiness? Does not your conscience approve the word of God, and urge you to repent without delay? It is the Spirit of God, which is moving upon your heart, and laboring to effect your deliverance from sin and its consequences. Resist this heavenly agent, I pray you, no longer. Awake—arise, burst the fetters which bind you to this world—open the door of your heart that you may receive him who is mighty and ready to save. And may God, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, make his word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.



THE GOOD MAN.

But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,—ISAIAH lxvi, 2.

I KNOW of no *other* passage of scripture, which, in so few words, presents to our view the most important and distinguishing features of the Christian character. The history of the visible church affords abundant proofs of the fact, that the professed friends of God may have correct views of the leading doctrines of revelation, may be exact in the performance of religious duties, may sustain an unblemished moral character, and yet may lack that which is no less essential to their salvation. One capital defect in the character of any individual, will as certainly exclude him from heaven, as if it were in every particular defective. The mariner having performed a long voyage, may perish as well when within a few leagues of his own country, as when a thousand miles from it. The hope of the almost christian will be found in the day of trial to be of no more value, than that of the avowed infidel. In his sermon on the mount, Christ thus spake to his disciples. For I say unto you, that except your

righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. On another occasion he thus addressed them. Woe unto you Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. They doubtless thought, if so exact in little things, they would be esteemed persons of uncommon piety. The same address of our Lord seems to be applicable to all at the present day, who appear to think more of forms, and things least important than of things essential to the christian character. In the days of the apostles there were some whose hope of justification rested on their orthodoxy of sentiment. What doth it profit my brethren, said the apostle James, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble. It is right and a duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but the most correct views of the doctrines of revelation, if not attended with corresponding feelings of heart, will not secure our salvation.

The passage from which the text has been taken is descriptive of the state and character of the Jewish

church, when our Savior was upon the earth. They thought much of their temple, which Herod the Great, to manifest his zeal for their religion, had made one of the wonders of the world. That every thing pertaining to the worship of Jehovah might be splendid no expense was spared. Our Savior, whose kingdom is not of this world, and who was ready to give his life for his people, deemed it of vast importance to show his people what true religion is and what God can accept. The temple, which they so much regarded, God did not need as a place of rest. His all piercing eye was upon the hearts of those, who met in it for his worship. Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. How sublime is this language! How vast the scene passing before Jehovah! Heaven, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. What then is the most magnificent temple built by men that he should value it except as an expression of respect for his name? Where is the house, saith Jehovah, that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath my hands made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord.

It is no less necessary now than when Isaiah was executing the office of a prophet, and when Christ was instructing and reprovng the Jews, to describe the distinguishing features of true piety. As God is unchangeable in his nature and perfections, so true religion is essentially the same in every age and in every country. The human heart, likewise, in its dispositions is the same in every generation, and in all the posterity of Adam. It is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. True piety may be declining

in a church, while there is an increasing attention to the external duties of religion. The liberality and zeal of the primitive church in promoting missions and in erecting superb buildings for the worship of God, continued when they lost their spirituality. The more Christianity was extended the less of its true spirit was exhibited.

As the present age is distinguished for its spirit of enterprise, and as many important objects are constantly passing before the church, Christians are in danger of losing their sense of dependence on God and that spirituality, which results from the cultivation of piety in their own hearts. Their attention is so constantly directed to things without them as to make them neglect to observe the operations of their own mind. Fidelity, therefore, requires the preacher to direct the thoughts of the professed friends of God to the state of their own hearts that they may grow in grace, and be no less distinguished for piety than for liberality and zeal in the promotion of every object of Christian benevolence.

The three things, which are essential to true godliness, and which distinguish it from all false religions are brought to view in the text. These are the things, which God approves, and which will in the following discourse be separately considered.

1. *Even to him that is poor.* The word *poor* has doubtless the same signification in the text that it has in the following passage. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It is not then to be understood in a literal sense, as relating to those, who are destitute of worldly substance; but it must be understood in a higher sense. Those, who

are in a literal sense poor may be as proud and as wicked as the rich. Give me neither poverty nor riches, was the prayer of Agur; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord! or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain. As many, perhaps, are the temptations to sin of the poor as of the rich. And the former as often yield to them as the latter. The great proportion of Christians are of the class, who are neither rich nor poor.

Those, who are poor in spirit, are poor in the most important sense. They are willing to confess it, and to acknowledge that they are dependent on God for all needed good.

There is a sense, in which all intelligent beings, angels as well as men are poor. Angels as well as men are every moment dependent on God for the continuance of their existence and happiness. There is nothing which they can call their own, or to which they have a higher claim than God, their Creator and rightful sovereign. It is the delight of holy angels to acknowledge their dependence on God for all things. To them God is every thing, and themselves nothing. Such is their deep humility, though perfectly holy, and though great in knowledge, wisdom, and power, when compared with any of the human race, that when God makes some new revelation of his glory to them, they cast their crowns down at his feet, feeling unworthy of the favors God is pleased to confer on them. Though faithful in the discharge of their duty they never feel that they have rendered to God more than he has a right to demand.

But the poverty of man in his fallen state is greater

than that of the angels that never sinned—and the humility of Christians is different from that of holy angels. The latter render to God all he demands of them. They are justified by their works. But while the obligations of man are infinitely great, in his fallen state, till renewed, he disregards all the claims of God. Before he has any knowledge of the true God, derived either from the light of nature, or from the volume of revelation, the feelings of his heart are unholy. This he finds to be the fact and is ready to confess it, when enlightened by the Spirit of God. It is a remarkable fact that the heathens, when able to understand the messages of God, and when divine truth is applied to their consciences by the Holy Spirit, feel condemned for transgressions of the moral law, committed years before they had any knowledge of the true character of their Creator. Just so it is with the deaf and dumb. As soon as they are made acquainted with the law of God, their consciences condemn them for every past act, which the Scriptures disapprove. The higher the standard, to which Christians look, and the greater the progress they make in holiness; the deeper are their views of their poverty, and the deeper is their humility. They feel that they are in debt to a large amount, and that it is impossible for them to discharge it. To Christ they are indebted for the means by which they can satisfy divine justice. He has magnified the divine law and made it honorable. He has become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth in him. Those men are considered poor, who have just enough to satisfy the demands of their creditors. And those are still poorer, whose indebtedness far exceeds the value of all their possessions.

With respect to fallen man, he is poor in two senses. He is not only unable to satisfy the demands of that law, which is holy and just and good, but, till renewed by the Holy Spirit, he has no disposition to do it. Did he possess an honest heart, he might obtain justification at any time through faith in Christ. He is furnished with the means, by which he may satisfy the demands of justice. The language of the gospel is—Come, for all things are ready. Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath nor money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherever the gospel is preached, every one that listens to the sound, may, if disposed to accept the offers freely made, obtain immortal life.

But the sinner is no less dependent on the Holy Spirit for a right heart, or a disposition to accept the offers of salvation than on Christ for a perfect righteousness. This gives us the most affecting view of his poverty. The light that is in him is darkness, his wisdom folly, and his strength weakness. The natural man has no discernment of the moral beauty and excellency of the divine character. How then can he love an object, of which he has no conception; or obey that law the fulfilling of which is, love? Of what value is that choice, or preference of God, which does not proceed from love? Can the choice or preference of a heart still enmity against God be holy, or be acceptable to a holy being? Neither love nor hatred depends on a comparison of one object with another. The instant we behold a beautiful flower, or a beautiful landscape we are pleased. So when God reveals himself by his Spirit to the Christians, the instant he

obtains a glimpse of the glory of God his affections are moved and flow out to this object. And he chooses to serve God because he loves him. The change from hatred to love is effected by the mighty power of God.

Those, who are poor in the sense of the text, understand and feel, that they are wholly indebted to God for the hope of salvation. All that has been done for our redemption has added to our indebtedness to God. The more enlarged and affecting our views of our obligations to God, the more sensible shall we be of our poverty. The more carefully we examine ourselves, and the more thoroughly and impartially we search our own hearts; the more ready we shall be to abase ourselves before God, and the more we shall admire the riches of his grace. The Christian is never so happy, as when he appears to himself to be nothing and vile, and when God appears to him to be infinitely excellent and glorious. To such a man God will look.

2. *And of a contrite heart.* This is another essential characteristic of true godliness. The spirit of a man, it is written, will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear? The loss of property, of friends and of health may be borne with an unbroken spirit. The warrior engaged in the defence of his country may meet death without a murmur, because persuaded that his life is sacrificed in the faithful discharge of his duty. The Christian, condemned to suffer a martyr's death for his unyielding fidelity, may smile when he sees the fires lighted, by which his body is to be reduced to ashes. Consciousness of uprightness sustains him. But consciousness of guilt and of

inexcusable guilt is essential to contrition of heart. Holy angels, however deep their humility, can never experience that contrition of heart, or brokenness of spirit, which is essential to the christian character. We sometimes notice in the awakened sinner that, which to our imperfect vision resembles contrition of heart. It is occasioned by discouragement in seeking relief, and often terminates in increased hardness of heart. The grief we observe does not arise from a view of the injury done to God and to his kingdom. It is wholly selfish, and is attended with hard thoughts of God. The awakened sinner, who has an affecting view of his danger, is anxious to be delivered from the fear of future misery. He may appear to be broken hearted when he is not truly penitent. He may view himself rather as unfortunate than as guilty. He may confine his thoughts to outward acts of transgression, without discovering the depths of human depravity. That contrition of heart mentioned in the text is something deep and permanent. It is most apparent in the most pious. It arises, not only from a clear conviction of the inexcusable sinfulness of the human heart, but a conviction that there is nothing good in it by nature, which by the influence of the most powerful motives can be drawn forth into the service of God. A man may be convinced that his external conduct is sinful and at the same time may believe there is nothing wrong back of action; that he can at any time, without any radical change, commence the service of God. So long as he maintains this opinion his views of human depravity must be very superficial, and he cannot experience that contrition of heart, which is essential to the christian character. In every case of

genuine conversion the hard heart is broken in pieces—no opposition or resistance remains to the most humbling truths of the gospel. Now there may be a very great change in the opinions of an individual, and this may occasion a change in his feelings toward many things, and yet the character and disposition of his heart in every thing essential may continue without any material alteration. It is feared that many in our churches have experienced no other change. Few professing Christians manifest that brokenness of spirit and contrition of heart, which are essential to the christian character. The unrenewed are able to perceive a difference between those, who speak from the deep feelings of their heart, and those who do not. The latter may shed many tears and may be so excited as to be very zealous and earnest, when their hearts are not affected. Contrition of heart results from a deep work of grace in the heart. A mere change of purpose does not produce it. Those, who maintain that there is nothing wrong back of action, and consequently that no change is necessary except in our choices, or preferences, and conduct, can have no conception of that contrition, which is one of the most essential and distinguishing traits of christian character. Here it may be observed, contrition of heart implies true love of God. There must be a discovery of the excellency of the divine character and a love of it, before any one can be grieved and broken-hearted on account of the injury done to God and to his kingdom. Hatred of sin on account of its intrinsic turpitude is the very essence of true repentance, and this is always connected with love of holiness. Those, who are of a broken spirit and a contrite heart, do not

think highly of themselves ; but esteem others better than themselves. It is manifest from their prayers, their conversation and the performance of their religious duties that their hearts are affected. When we discover brokenness of spirit and contrition of heart in any one, we have the most satisfactory evidence of his piety. There may be times, when the heart of the Christian, in consequence of the indulgence of some worldly desire, is insensible. But the heart once broken by the grace of God will never become hard as it once was. The experience of the Christian consists of a series of conversions or revivals of religion. They continue through life. The greater his advancement in holiness the more frequently they occur and the longer they continue. His growth in grace is indicated by the tenderness of his feelings as well as by any other evidence. The indwelling of the spirit always produces tender feelings of heart. When the heart becomes insensible and is not easily moved ; we know that the spirit has been grieved away.

3. *And trembleth at my word.* This is descriptive of a prominent trait in the character of one, who is conscientiously particular in the performance of all those duties, which arise from the different relations he sustains to God and to his fellow creatures. It is not enough to make a profession of religion—zealously to contend for the doctrines of revelation,—to be liberal in the promotion of every benevolent enterprise—to be active in the performance of those duties, the faithful discharge of which is connected with the suppression of vice and the promotion of human happiness. The existence of grace in the heart is always manifested by a sacred regard to every precept of the divine law.

Its growth is indicated by a nice moral sensibility, or an increasing exactness in the fulfilment of every promise. The more deeply the fear of God is impressed upon our heart, the more careful we shall be lest we offend him. And our fear of offending God will always be in exact proportion to the progress we make in grace. Though some allowance may be made for a defective moral education; yet we cannot exercise christian charity toward the man, who disregards his promises, or engagements, and who knowingly takes advantage of his neighbor in his dealings. Their may be a slavish fear, of God, which makes a man exact in the performance of external duties. But this may be connected with a proud, self-righteousness and censorious spirit. Grace in the heart produces a respect for all the institutions of God. To the Christian the Sabbath is a delight, holy of the Lord and honorable. The following passage expresses the feelings of one, who is truly devout.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart, and my flesh crieth out for the living God. For a day spent 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 more eminent any are for piety, the more carefully they observe the Sabbath.

Those, who are remiss in the performance of the duties they owe to God, are seldom very particular in the performance of the duties they owe to their fellow creatures. Christians are not aware, how much their influence might be increased were they more careful in the observance of their promises and engagements,

and were they more correct in all their intercourse with men of the world. They ought to make it manifest that they love their neighbor as themselves. If christians are dead to the world, as they profess to be; how can they be willing to take advantage of their neighbor? Men of the world have a quick discernment of their rights, and they cannot respect the sincerity and piety of any professed Christian, who attempts in any way to wrong them. There may be many defects in the moral conduct of an individual, which do not expose him to civil penalties, but which very materially affect his influence. The principles of action appear in small things as well as in things of great magnitude. The tenderness of conscience, exhibited by some in the lower walks of life has occasioned the conversion of persons, whom learned discourses did not affect. Masters have in some instances been converted by the conscientious and exemplary conduct of their servants. The existence of grace in the heart and its growth will appear, as well in the faithful discharge of every relative duty, as in any other way. There are some professing Christians whom we cannot but believe to be sincere, whose moral education has been defective. The reproach, which falls on them is, no doubt, deserved. It is mortifying to know that men of business, who have never made any profession of religion, can with reason make their boast that they are more exact in their dealings and more faithful in their engagements than some, who occupy conspicuous places in the church, and who are most zealous in their efforts to suppress vice and to effect the deliverance of the oppressed. Christians ought to be as distinguished for their exemplary conduct in every

department of life as for their zeal in the defence of the truth, and in the promotion of every benevolent enterprise. It is consistency of character, which all cannot but respect. This is the only satisfactory proof of sincerity. All hypocrisy is detested.

REFLECTIONS.

From the view, which has been taken of the subject under consideration it is manifest that much, which passes for religion in the world is of no value. It is like the chaff, which the wind driveth away. It will not bear the test of Scripture or of sound Christian experience. It may for a time deceive the ignorant and superficial professors of religion; but must sooner or later sink into contempt. Those, who deny that men are by nature as poor, as the Scriptures represent them to be, make it evident that they are ignorant of their own hearts, and that they are still in their sins. Their hope rests on a false foundation. Not every one, said our Savior, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name,—and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart, and regardeth especially the secret walk which is unobserved by the world.

It is of great importance that professing Christians, review their lives and compare their experience with the word of God. So rapid and powerful are the

movements of the church at the present day, and there is so much in her external state to interest the feelings and engage the attention of Christians that they find but little time for the performance of those secret duties, on the faithful discharge of which their growth in grace depends. It cannot be doubted that many of the unhappy divisions in our churches have been occasioned by a decline of piety. Trials of some kind seem to be necessary to keep Christians in a proper state and to promote their spirituality and growth in grace. Zeal and activity seem to be substituted for deep piety. The text we have reason to fear is descriptive of the character of but few, whose names are most frequently mentioned in our religious publications. Few, certainly, give very satisfactory evidence that they are poor in spirit—that they have experienced contrition of heart, or that they tremble at God's word. The heart of the real Christian becomes hard, when he becomes remiss in the performance of duty. It would be happy for the church and for the cause of religion were the attention of Christians more frequently directed to deep experimental subjects. Genuine Christian experience must be essentially the same in all the truly pious. Some, who plead most earnestly for a high standard of piety give but little evidence that they possess it or that they understand what it is. The day is coming, when those who are most highly esteemed among men, and who share most largely in the friendship of the world will be weighed in an even balance. Some, no doubt will be found wanting. On the other hand, some, who are now hardly noticed, will shine as the brightness of the firmament and as stars forever and ever. The day

is coming, when our hearts as well as our outward conduct will be tried by him, to whom the hearts of all men are fully known. Nothing can escape his notice, nothing will by him be forgotten. The Christian who is poor, of a contrite heart, who trembleth at God's word, and who hardly dares acknowledge that he indulges a hope of salvation will find a mansion prepared for him; but the self-righteous, who is rich and feels that he needeth nothing will be rejected. None but the humble will be permitted to enter heaven. All attempts to prove that mankind are not by nature as poor as they are represented to be in the Scriptures are ruinous in their tendency. The more deeply sensible any are of their poverty, and the more fully they are convinced that they must perish without help, the more anxious they will be to obtain it, and to embrace the first opportunity, which encourages them to hope for success. Again. The more they feel the necessity of relief; the more grateful they will be for it, when it is obtained. Men are unwilling to confess that they are unable to discharge their honest debts till they are compelled to do it. The most faithful preacher, who has the most exalted thoughts of Christ, and who is influenced by the most ardent love of souls, and who would urge successfully immediate repentance; labors to convince the unrenewed, that there is no help in themselves, and that their first duty is to come to him, who alone can save them. Now, as there is no help in any other, the direct tendency of the truth under consideration is to produce immediate repentance. It is the opposite view, a belief of the sinner that he possesses full ability to do what is required of him, which influences him to defer the performance

of a duty, to which his unrenewed heart is opposed, till a convenient opportunity. Let him be convinced and feel that there is no help in himself, and, if anxious to obtain a good hope of salvation, he will fall at the feet of his offended Sovereign and look to him and to him alone for salvation. It is an exhibition of the whole truth, which produces genuine conversions. Unless the whole truth is clearly exhibited, the unrenewed will themselves complete the picture, which instead of appearing beautiful, will rather disgust than please. Many of the errors which have injured the church may be traced to this fault. The truths of christianity when fairly presented to the mind correspond exactly with the wants of the sinner. And the sinner, when convinced that there is no help in himself and that he is justly condemned is ready to acknowledge that Christ is just such a Savior as he needs. His only anxiety is to become interested in him. "The transition from a partial exhibition of the truth to the adoption of positive error is a most natural one;" remarks R. Hall, "and he, who commences with consigning certain important doctrines to oblivion will generally end in perverting or denying them."

All attempts to persuade sinners that they can become Christians without contrition of heart and brokenness of spirit only deceive them and encourage them to indulge false hopes. It seems to be the opinion of some that there is no depravity—nothing sinful back of action or exercises—that regeneration is only a change of purpose, a preference of God to the world. It is then the unrenewed man that puts forth this purpose, choice, or preference, which constitutes him a christian. How does this view correspond with

the Scriptures? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. Our Savior did not hesitate to pronounce the tree corrupt, which produces evil fruit. It is the quality of the tree, which determines the quality of the fruit. It is difficult to see what is gained by those, who deny the doctrine of native depravity, by admitting that all mankind are so constituted that in all the appropriate circumstances of their being, they sin as soon as they begin to act. God orders the circumstances, in which every one is placed at the commencement of his existence and moral agency. Those conversions, which afford no evidence of contrition of heart and brokenness of spirit, cannot be such as the Scriptures require, and as God can approve. They originate in the unrenewed heart—result from purposes—choices, or preferences, the chief element of which is a natural desire of happiness. God is preferred to the world only because he can do more for us. Such conversions do not humble the pride of the human heart, or reconcile it to all the truths peculiar to christianity. Hence we find that those, who have experienced no other change—a change, which consists in a preference of God to the world, are more opposed to some of the essential truths of the gospel than such as have never indulged any hope. Having embraced a system, by which they are fortified, they do not hesitate to oppose those, who differ from them. There are times, however, when their consciences trouble them—especially, when they hear declared the whole counsel of God. But the

reproofs of their consciences only excite their enmity, which is manifested in every way by which the influence of the truth, and those who defend it, can be counteracted.

There is something honorable in making a full confession of our guilt, and in accepting with gratitude and without reserve the offers of salvation. It is reasonable that we should be grieved and broken-hearted on account of our sins. Christians are never more happy, than when they experience such feelings—when they can say, not unto us—shame and confusion of face belong unto us; but unto God belongs all the glory of our salvation. It ought to be the serious inquiry of every professing Christian, have I experienced that contrition of heart and brokenness of spirit, which the Scriptures approve? Have I been brought to see that there was no help in myself, and that my dependence is on the free and sovereign grace of God! Call to recollection, brethren, the time, when you first indulged a hope of salvation. What were your feelings then? When your mind was excited did you by an effort of the powers you possessed give yourselves to God, and as the consequence indulge a hope of salvation? Or, were you convinced that there was no help in yourselves, and that unless God created in you a new heart, you should be lost, and could never be able to do his will and to receive without reserve Jesus Christ as an all sufficient and glorious Savior? When in this state of feeling justly condemned, did you, or did you not, perceive your hard heart become tender—and your spirit, which sustained you so long as you depended on your own ability to do what was required of you, not merely yield, as one conquered by superior power, but broken—and entirely changed.

Have you a new heart and a new spirit? Can you say that old things are passed away and that all things are become new? Are your views and feelings different in kind from any, of which you before had any conception; or are they only different in degree, occasioned by unusual excitement do you tremble at God's word? These are inquiries important for every professing Christian. Those who can answer the inquiries proposed in the affirmative, if not able to confound the subtil philosopher, will reject all such theories as do not correspond with their own experience. And that experience, which in every thing essential, does not correspond with their own they cannot respect. They may pity those, who are deceived and who have indulged a false hope; but an earnest desire of their salvation will not allow an acknowledgment of their piety. The most devoted Christian is more doubtful respecting himself than others are respecting him. To know that those, who give best evidence of their piety, doubt the soundness of our faith or hope, should lead us to the most rigid examination of ourselves.

The day is coming when we shall all be severely tried, and if found deficient in one essential particular, we shall be excluded from heaven. How inconceivably dreadful must be the disappointment of those, who indulge a false hope through life; but, who when expecting to enter the happy mansions prepared for the redeemed, find themselves sinking into the abyss of woe? In view of the deceitfulness of our own hearts we ought all to offer the prayer—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. Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.



THE AGONY OF CHRIST.

And they came to a place, which was named Gethsemane; and he saith to his disciples, sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John and began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.—MARK xiv. 32—36.

THE text is a very brief description of the sufferings our divine Lord and Redeemer endured in the garden of Gethsemane. This garden was not far from the place where he was crucified. It had been to him a delightful retreat, consecrated by his frequent visits and fervent prayers.

“The garden of Gethsemane,” says Mr. Maundrel, a celebrated traveller of the seventeenth century, “is an even plot of ground, not above fifty-seven yards square, lying between the foot of mount Olivet and the brook Cedron. It is well planted with olive trees, and those of so old a growth, that they are believed to be the same that stood there in our Savior’s time.

“ At the upper end of the garden is a flat naked ledge
“ of a rock, supposed to be the place, on which the
“ disciples Peter and James and John fell asleep
“ during our Lord’s agony. A few paces from thence
“ is a grotto, in which he is said to have undergone
“ that bitter part of his passion, and what is very re-
“ markable, in the midst of the garden there is a small
“ slip of ground, twelve yards long and one broad
“ reputed the very path, on which Judas walked up to
“ Christ, when he said, Hail, master and kissed him,
“ which the Turks themselves have never walked in,
“ as accounting the very ground, accursed on which
“ was acted such an infamous tragedy.” To the garden
of Gethsemane, Jesus was wont to retire, that he might
enjoy seasons of meditation and prayer undisturbed, at
a suitable distance from a great busy and noisy city, and
also no doubt that he might have opportunities for
instructing his disciples, and thus preparing them for
their future labors. The circumstances of this last visit
to the garden were peculiar. The scene, which was
passing before the mind of our Lord, when he fell to
the ground was indescribably solemn and affecting. No
finite mind can measure the vast extent of his views,
or the depth of his feelings.

He had just partaken of the passover for the last
time with his disciples, and instituted that ordinance,
which is to commemorate his death till the end of time.
He had chosen an upper room where he could be
separated from the unbelieving Jews, and where he
could be alone with his disciples. This was the more
important as he was about to introduce a Christian
ordinance, which he knew his own people, the Jews,
would despise.

That upper room, where Christ partook of the passover with his disciples for the last time, and where the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered for the first time, and by him, whose death the Christian institution commemorates, must have been filled with the divine presence. With great propriety the disciples could exclaim, How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. The discourse of our Lord with his disciples must have severely tried their feelings, and occasioned great searchings of heart, especially, when he assured them that one of them would betray him. They were all alarmed, and, suspecting themselves, cried, Lord, is it I?

It was on this occasion that Christ delivered his farewell address to his disciples, which includes the xiv, xv, xvi, and xvii chapters of the gospel according to John. In the last of the four chapters we have his intercessory prayer. It must have been good to be there. Had not his divinity been concealed in a good measure, his disciples would have been overpowered. How must their hearts have melted into tenderness, when they listened to his prayer! The Holy Spirit was given to him without measure. What a heavenly solemnity must have come over the minds of his disciples! When they united in singing a hymn, they did not merely utter words, their hearts praised God. Christ himself led in this part of the worship, and every word he uttered called into exercise the noblest and most delightful feelings of their hearts. We may form some feeble conception of the solemnities of the occasion by calling to recollection what we have witnessed and experienced during some powerful revivals of religion.

Christ could not tarry all night with his disciples in that upper chamber, holy and delightful as it was. Another and a very different and distressing scene was about to pass before them. And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended, because of me this night: for it is written I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. These words, uttered so soon after they left the upper chamber, were like daggers to their hearts. It seemed impossible that they could ever be offended because of their adored Lord and Master. But Peter said unto him, and probably he expressed the feelings of all the disciples at that time, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, probably not only because he was the speaker, but because he was the most confident, verily I say unto thee that this day, even this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, if I should die with thee I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also, said they all. Nothing was more abhorrent to their feelings than the thought that they should deny their Lord, or be offended because of him. They did not realize how much they were dependent on perpetual supplies of divine grace for strength to overcome every temptation. Christians are as dependent on divine grace for continued holiness as for the commencement of it. Left to themselves they yield to temptations and bring reproach on the cause of Christ.

When Christ entered the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples, he said to them, Sit ye here, while I shall pray, or, as it is in Matthew, while I go and

pray yonder. And he taketh with him Peter, and James and John, the three disciples, who had been witnesses of his transfiguration, and began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy, And he saith unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup, from me, nevertheless not what I will, but thou wilt. Never was a prayer offered to God with more fervor and more perfect submission. And surely a more acceptable prayer was never offered to God. How could it be otherwise? The Son of God never offended his Father in a single instance, not even in thought. My meat, he said, is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. He was willing to give his life to magnify the divine law and to make it honorable, and that God might be just and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus. In the case of Abraham, God accepted his *willingness* to offer up Isaac instead of the actual sacrifice of his beloved Son. But it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin.

As we are this day, my brethren, to commemorate the dying love of our Redeemer; his agony in the garden of Gethsemane is a proper subject of our meditations this morning. Nothing can be more offensive to him, than to see those, who have been

redeemed by his blood, approach his table with cold insensibility. And how shall we be prepared for the solemn duties of this occasion except by dwelling on those subjects, best suited to move all the tender feelings of our hearts.

1. That we may have a just view of the sufferings of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane we must, first, consider the dignity of his person. It was the union of the divine with the human nature, which gave value to all that he did for our redemption. By him, and for him were all things made. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The angels are required to worship him. And let all the angels of God worship him. All men are required to honor him as they honor the Father. Such questions as the following are sometimes proposed, to which we are not obliged to give direct answers. How could the divine nature suffer? If only the human nature suffered, how could the sufferings of a creature—one creature, make an atonement for millions of the human race? In the work of our redemption—in the obedience and sufferings of Christ the divine and human nature were united and constituted one person. It was this person, whose acts were infinitely valuable in the sight of God, and in the sight of all, who acknowledge his divinity. There are many subjects connected with the work of our redemption, which in this life we cannot fully understand. All things are delivered unto me of my Father, said Christ; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. We may propose many questions, which cannot be answered. Was not the Father

grieved and distressed, when his beloved Son left his bosom to visit this rebellious world, where he knew he would be opposed, insulted, mocked, spit upon, and be put to death ! How could he hide his face from his Son, when upon the cross, and when more than ever he needed some token of his Father's love ? All the facts, which it is important for us to know, are recorded in language easily understood in the volume of revelation. All speculations, which have reference to the plan and work of redemption are unfavorable to a devotional spirit.

The object, which the Son of God had in view, when he left the bosom of his Father, was infinitely great. It was a bright display of his Father's glory manifested in the redemption of lost sinners. It reflects great honor on the character of God—on his justice and benevolence, and has a salutary influence on all parts of his vast empire. God wisely determined to make such an exhibition of his justice in the punishment of sin, as would convince all his subjects that it is that abominable thing, which his soul hateth, and that he would as soon execute the penalty of his law on his beloved Son, if he took the place of sinners, as on any of his most bitter enemies. This object was accomplished by the death of his Son. It pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.

We are accustomed to estimate the value of objects according to the greatness of the persons engaged in the pursuit of them, and the greatness of the sacrifices they make to obtain them. How can we admire the

wisdom of the man, who willingly submits to great hardships and makes great sacrifices to obtain that which is of small value? His wisdom must be accounted folly. We cannot, therefore, admire the wisdom of God, displayed in the plan and work of redemption, if we view sin as a trifle, or make light of the threatenings of the divine law. The price paid for our redemption is of infinite value—it did not consist of silver and gold, but of the labors and sufferings of the Son of God. The more we meditate on the dignity of the Son of God and the excellency of his character; the more clearly shall we discover the real deformity of sin, and the more we shall fear the dreadful consequences. If it were necessary for so great a person as the Son of God to atone for our salvation; how indescribably dreadful must be the condition of all the impenitent!

2 Your attention will be more particularly directed to the sufferings themselves the Son of God endured in effecting the deliverance of sinners from the curse of the divine law.

When meditating on the justice of God, which the penalty of his law is designed to exhibit to our view, we sometimes imagine that he does not manifest those tender feelings to the disobedient, which affectionate parents manifest toward their disobedient children. Transgressors do not approve and love that law, by which they are condemned. The penalty appears to them unnecessarily severe, and even cruel. They overlook the injury done to God and to his kingdom. But when we consider how much God the Father loves his Son, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and how willing he

was to deliver him to suffer a most ignominious and cruel death to redeem us ; we see the most undeniable proof of his tender compassion. What parent has ever done so much for his disobedient children, or given such proofs of his pity ! God is not an indifferent spectator of the sufferings of his creatures, nor is he an unfeeling sovereign. He has appointed the sinner's friend to be the judge of the world.

Go now into the garden of Gethsemane, and meditate on the sufferings the Son of God endured in that place, consecrated by his prayers. Was it not the greatness of his sufferings, which caused him to fall to the ground, and to sweat as it were great drops of blood ? His sufferings were not on account of any fault of his own. They expressed the deep distress he felt for perishing sinners. Now, were not the guilt of men great, and were they not exposed to sufferings indescribably terrible ; would the Son of God have submitted to such pain and agony to effect their salvation ? He was not more than his Father an unfeeling spectator of the sufferings of the human race : His pity did not consist in mere professions. He took our place—stood in the room of sinners as their substitute. I am the good shepherd, he said, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Now, behold the Son of God—who is King of kings and Lord of lords, overpowered by the weight of his distress—prostrate on the ground—in agony, which affected his body as well as his mind. My soul, he said, is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Listen now to his prayer, and he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. From this prayer it is manifest

that Christ had no disposition to suffer, unless necessary. And no doubt the perfection of his nature rendered his suffering peculiarly severe. His prayer was earnest, sincere and humble. Never had there been such an expression of love of God and love of men in any prayer ever before offered. But because he stood in the room of sinners his request was not granted. God could not have appeared just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; had he granted the request of his Son, when he took the sinner's place.

3. The question may here be considered, what was the immediate cause of the agony of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane?

In answer to the inquiry it may be observed.—

The immediate cause of the agony of Christ was, I apprehend, a view of the wrath of God, beginning to fall on the sinner's substitute. It is impossible for us to form any adequate conception of this subject. The wrath of an infinite God began to fall on a divine person, whose views were infinitely extensive, and whose feelings corresponded with them. The sinner, whose convictions are clearest and most extensive, has but a very feeble conception of the wrath of God. Who knoweth, said the Psalmist, the power of thine anger? After suffering the wrath of God for a thousand years the sinner will have a less perfect view of the wrath of God than that, which was presented to the mind of the Son of God in the garden of Gethsemane. It is difficult to persuade the sinner that God is angry with him every day, and that his anger is as terrible as it is represented to be in the Scriptures. Our God, said the Apostle, is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Eye

hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them that hate him, as well as for them that love him. There must have been something indescribably and inconceivably awful in that view, which the Son of God had of his Father's wrath when in the garden of Gethsemane. The time was near at hand in the counsels of eternity, when it must break forth on guilty man, or on a substitute, approved, and able as well as willing to bear it. The wrath of man, when clothed with power, and excited to the highest degree is terrible. But the wrath of God is as much more terrible as God is greater than any earthly potentate. This is too evident to be questioned. As God is infinitely holy and cannot but look upon sin with infinite abhorrence; so his determination to punish it must correspond with his view of its evil nature. When God the Father unveiled the glory of his justice to his beloved Son; no wonder the soul of the latter, when standing in the room of sinners was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

The opinion of some, probably is, that the immediate cause of the agony of Christ was a view of the misery, to which sinners are exposed, or a view of the sufferings, which he was soon to endure. It is manifest from a consideration of the subject that this opinion cannot be correct. For I came down from heaven, he said, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. I can of my own self do nothing; as I hear I judge, and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me. It could not, therefore, be a view of his own sufferings which so greatly affected him. His

mind was fixed on the character and glory of his Father. If we suppose that the immediate and chief cause of his agony was his view of the sufferings, to which guilty men are exposed; we must conclude that he thought more of them than of the interest and glory of his Father. It was the wrath of God, which was unveiled, and which he saw and felt in his sufferings, which made them so distressing and overpowering. Because he stood in the room of sinners, God did not spare him, though his beloved Son, and perfectly holy. Justice must be satisfied, or mercy could not be exercised. It may here be added, great as were the sufferings of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, they were not so great as they were on the cross, when his Father hid his face from him—and he could not as before say, my Father, my Father; but only my God, my God, the language of a malefactor, or of an impenitent, but distressed sinner.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It is meditation on the sufferings of Christ which is suited to give us deep views of the evil nature of sin—our unworthiness of the least of all the mercies of God, and the rich grace, manifested in saving any of the human race from deserved punishment. Christians are too apt to forget the views they had of sin, when subjects of the special operations of the Holy Spirit, before they obtained a hope of salvation. They then were overpowered with a view of their guilt—felt that they deserved death, and were liable every moment to be cut down as cumberers of the ground. And Christians are liable to lose that tenderness of feeling, they experienced at the time of their espousals.

And how can those affecting scenes be made to pass before them in lively recollection except by meditating on those subjects, which then moved all the tender feelings of their heart? Can you, my brethren, directed by the light of sacred history, go into the garden of Gethsemane, and follow the Son of man to that retired spot, where he fell on the ground and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt, and when he sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground, and not be moved? Surely, we have reason to blush and to be ashamed, because our hearts are so unfeeling, especially when about to commemorate the dying love of our Lord. How can God the Father, who has manifested such love and pity for us accept that worship, which does not correspond with the feelings of our heart? We ought never to be satisfied with ourselves, while our hearts remain unmoved, when we are attempting to perform those duties, which ought to engage their noblest feelings. The thought that our sins could not have been pardoned without the shedding of the blood of the son of man is enough to dissolve our hearts in tender repentance. What returns have we made for what has been done for us? How feeble is our love compared with that, which has effected our redemption!

2. By meditating on the agony of Christ, we may learn how wretched and deplorable their condition is, who have no good hope of salvation. If Christ, who was the Son of God as well the son of man, was exceeding sorrowful unto death, when he stood in the room of sinners and had a discovery of his Father's anger toward them; how can any bear the load, which must fall on them, if they continue impenitent?

If any present are still without hope, go, I pray you, directed by the word of God into the garden of Gethsemane, and meditate on the agony of Christ, till you are affected, and till the Holy Spirit makes his word like as a fire, and like a hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces. If you banish from your minds those subjects which are best suited to convince you of your guilt, or if you only attend to them in a superficial manner; how can you expect ever to know your own character or to obtain salvation. You must either reject the volume of revelation, or come to the conclusion, that unless you seek refuge in Christ, the wrath of God will fall on you and abide on you forever. Can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you inhabit everlasting burnings? Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who is himself a consuming fire? Sinner, unrenewed, you are departing every day farther and farther from God—your heart is constantly becoming harder and harder—and your prospect of future happiness is growing darker and darker. You seem by your sins to be collecting fuel for that fire, in which you must suffer forever.

As God the Father did not spare his beloved Son, who never offended him in thought, word, or deed, when he took the place of sinners; be assured he will not spare any of you, my hearers, if you persevere in impenitence. You are unwilling to believe that God will execute his threatenings. But, if he spared not his Son, when he stood in the room of sinners, how can you for a moment indulge the vain hope that God will spare you, if you continue in unbelief. If they do these things in the green tree, said Christ, what shall be done in the dry? Christ compares himself on

account of his perfect holiness to a green tree full of sap—the impenitent sinner to a dry tree. If the fire of divine anger was so powerful as to consume a green tree full of moisture ; how much more readily will it consume a dry tree ?

If the most powerful motives and arguments do not move the sinner, his case must be truly alarming. If the Spirit of God has never been sent to awaken you, sinner, have you not reason to fear that you are one, whom God will leave to fill up the measure of your iniquities and to perish ? If left to yourself you certainly will perish. Are you waiting for some great event to rouse you from your slumbers, and to make it easy for you to become a Christian ? Before that event arrives your days may be ended. Are you waiting for another revival of religion ? Should such a season be enjoyed, you may be in your grave before it arrives. When there is a revival some are taken and others left. If you should live during a revival, you may be left. Are you waiting till some disease removes you from the busy and gay scenes of the world to the chamber of sickness ? God may visit you with such a disease, as shall deprive you of your reason and shall hurry you unprepared into eternity. The duties you owe to God demand the full exercise of all your powers, when your health is most vigorous. The chamber of sickness is not the place to prepare for death. The sick and dying need the consolations of religion—those consolations which result from a life well spent in the service of God. When the body is suffering great pain, the mind cannot be fixed on those subjects, which have never before had possession of it. How great must be the folly of those, who

neglect their immortal souls, when they have the most favorable opportunity to secure their salvation !

Do you ask, what can we do, while unrenewed ? I answer, you can do much. God has given his word, which can do you no good except you read it. Many have been converted by reading the word of God. God has called and sent forth men to preach his gospel. Their labors can do no good, unless you listen to their preaching. Judging from innumerable facts, the more carefully and diligently you attend on the means, which God is using for your salvation, the greater is the probability of your being saved. The Holy Spirit operates with the word and makes it effectual to the salvation of his people.

Finally. I will close this discourse by a short address to the professed friends of Christ. As you are about, my brethren, to renew your covenant engagements to God, and as in testimony of your sincerity you expect to receive the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of Christ ; how important that the feelings of your hearts correspond with your professions and acts ! Are you prepared, every one to say, let me be cut asunder and perish, if I prove again unfaithful ? What has been your conversation since you were last seated at the table of the Lord ? What impression have you made on the minds of those, with whom you have had intercourse ? Many times some of you have renewed your covenant obligations with God. Have you not many times forgotten them ? What confidence can God place in you ? What confidence can you place in yourselves ?

With what feelings must Christ, who gave his life to redeem you, look upon you, if you approach his table

with cold insensibility, and hearts hardened by the indulgence of worldly desires? What would be your feelings, if your professed friends should be unaffected, when beholding you in deep affliction and distress? Would not their indifference give an edge to your suffering? Would you not rather see your enemies around you, than such friends?

Surely we must all feel condemned, when we compare our feelings toward Christ with the feelings he exercises toward us. We ought not to be satisfied with ourselves, or with our hope till our hearts become tender, and till we can have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer we shall also reign with him; if we deny him he will also deny us. Soon we shall stand before his judgment seat. How can we behold him, if we have not honored him in our lives? To him we must now look for grace to be faithful, and to him will belong the praise. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

DISCOURSE IX.



THE UNBOUNDED LIBERALITY OF GOD.

Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it.—PSALM lxxxix, 10.

WHEN meditating on the infinite benevolence of God, the relations we sustain to him, and the vast provision he has made for the redemption of guilty men; the following inquiries are naturally suggested to our mind; why are so many of our fellow creatures left to perish, when God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus? Why are not *revivals* of religion of more frequent occurrence? Why are they not of longer continuence? And why are they of such limited extent? Proper answers to these inquiries if they can be given, must be of great importance to all, who sincerely love God, and desire the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ.

To some it may be satisfactory to reply, God is under no obligation to show mercy to any of the human race, who have broken that law, which is holy, and just, and good; he will gather in his elect, in his own time and in his own way, and all his eternal purposes will be accomplished. The covetous and

slothful have no disposition to make sacrifices for the promotion of the glory of God, in the salvation of men. Though the professed friends of God they seem to aim at nothing higher than to keep alive the hope they indulge. They do not feel their obligation to love him with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. But, if any have not the Spirit of Christ, said the Apostle, they are none of his. Those, who have made the greatest advancement in holiness, and done most to honor their Lord, see most to be done and are most sensible of their deficiency. The law of grace admits of no excuse for inactivity. It greatly increases our obligations to love and serve God. How has the immutable Jehovah made known his will and our duty? Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth *wide* and I will fill it. The means God has appointed for the accomplishment of his purposes must be used or they cannot be executed.

To make it manifest, that God is ready to bestow great blessings on his people, when they seek for them in a proper manner, is the object of this discourse.

The readiness of God to bestow great blessings on his people may be shown from the following considerations.

1. God is *able* to do great things for them. A person of a benevolent disposition may desire to relieve the suffering; but how can his benevolence benefit them, if unable to help them? Many are disposed to

do what they have not power to accomplish. When we need assistance we apply to such, and such only as are able to afford it, and as can grant it with the least inconvenience to themselves. In God are infinite resources. Giving does not in the least degree diminish, nor does withholding increase the treasures of his goodness. He is as able to convert a thousand as a single individual—and to perform this work in one day as well as in any number of years. Is not his power now as great as it was on the day of pentecost? Can he not display it in many places as well as in but one? It is only for him to speak the word—and the blind see—the deaf hear, and the dead awake to life and action. There is room enough in heaven, and grace enough in Christ for the whole human race. Should they all obtain salvation, they would occupy but a small space in the vast empire of Jehovah.

It is not with God as it is with men. However opulent any individual may be; there is a bound to his treasures. But the treasures of divine goodness have no bound. Who can by searching discover their utmost limits? With respect to the ability of God, it can make no difference, whether he bestow great or small favors on his people. Reasoning, therefore, from the ability of God, he must be as ready to bestow great blessings on them, as blessings of small value.

2. *The goodness of God is infinite.* And of all beings in the universe God is the most liberal. Nothing is too great for him to do for his people. Provision is made for them—which is sufficient to satisfy the reasonable desires of the whole human race. God is perpetually giving them proofs of his loving

kindness. How often, when the humble Christian, feeling his unworthiness, and recollecting his sins, when looking for the judgments of God, is favored with mercies, which descend upon him, like gentle dews, or plentiful showers! The goodness of God seems to be like the ocean, constantly struggling to break over its established bounds. Were we prepared for larger communications of divine goodness, we should receive them. Can there be any thing in God mean or contracted? It cannot be doubted, as the church advances in holiness, so God will increase the blessings he bestows on his people. His goodness is directed by infinite wisdom. He knows what is best for us, and ever has in view the highest happiness of his people. What prevents any one from obtaining salvation but his unwillingness to accept the offers freely made to him of life? Men will not have Christ to reign over them, then complain because they are not made partakers of that joy, which is unspeakable and full of glory. When God revives his work, because his people are so unbelieving, and because their motives are so selfish; he has regard rather to his Name's sake than to their labors and prayers. How many times, when they have departed far from him, and have been looking for judgments; have they been surprised by some tokens of *good*! Churches are often reduced to a very low state just before God revives his work. It is his pleasure that his power should be strikingly displayed in the conversion of men. It is our iniquities, which shorten the arm of Jehovah and make his ear heavy. He has no disposition to withhold any good thing from his faithful servants, which in their present imperfect state would

be beneficial to them. We know, as a general fact that prosperity is less productive of good fruits than adversity. Afflictions are the means of mortifying our worldly propensities; but riches, honors, and great success, even in labors for the conversion of men, only strengthen them. How often has the great popularity of a preacher occasioned a decline of religion in his heart, and rendered him liable to be overcome by powerful temptations! Trials are necessary for us. Good men can no more expect to enter heaven without afflictions than without repentance.

“*Affliction* is the good man’s shining scene;

“*Prosperity* conceals his brightest ray;

“*As night* to stars, *woe* lustre gives to man.”

3. The *atonement*, which has been made by the Son of God, for the sins of the world, has removed the great obstacle to the exercise of mercy, or to the display of divine goodness to the human race. Such is the regard, which God has for his authority, and for his violated law, that without an atonement he could not bestow upon us the least favor, much less bestow upon us great blessings. But now God can appear just to the whole universe, and exercise mercy to all, who sincerely repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. The language of the gospel is to every one, who listens to its sound, Come, for all things are ready. The atonement made by Jesus Christ is a broad foundation, on which the church will rest, when all know the Lord from the least to the greatest. What greater gift could God bestow on the world than the gift of his Son? What greater proof could he give of his desire of our salvation? For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. The atonement made by Christ is as sufficient for all mankind as for a single individual. The great number, who have already been converted, have not in the least degree diminished its value. All, who are disposed to satisfy the claims of God, are now furnished with the means. An honest bankrupt is anxious as soon as he is able to satisfy his creditors. Were mankind viewed as unfortunate and not as guilty, they would accept the offers of salvation on hearing the sound of the gospel. But there is another obstacle to their salvation, the depravity of their heart.

4. *The gift of the Holy Spirit* is another proof of the readiness of God to bestow great blessings on his people. That we are as dependent on the Holy Spirit for a new heart, as on Christ for righteousness, is evident from the fact that God has given us his Spirit. Such is the deep depravity of the human heart that no one ever did receive Christ in all his offices without a new heart. God will accept no one, who is not sealed with the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the brightest manifestation of divine goodness. It was bestowed upon men after they had wickedly rejected the Son of God, and thus greatly added to their guilt, resulting from innumerable transgressions of the divine law. When Christ had made an atonement sufficient for all mankind, had nothing more been done, not one soul would have been saved. The exceeding riches of divine grace has been exhibited to the world by the interpositions of the Holy Spirit. Surely, if God were

not desirous of the salvation of men, after the crucifixion of his Son, he would not have done any thing more for them. Who can doubt his readiness to bestow great blessings on his people? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.

5. As the strong man delights in giving proofs of his strength, the rich man in exhibitions of his wealth ; so *God delights in displays of his perfections.* Though God, who is infinitely wise, makes no unnecessary display of his goodness, yet he delights in the exercise of his mercy, and the greater the display the more he is delighted and honored. We cannot, therefore, doubt that it is agreeable to the best feelings of his heart to bestow great blessings on his people. The same principle that moves him to do any thing for them, moves him to do great things for them. Nothing but our iniquities limit the exercise of his benevolence. When Christians become perfect in heaven they will be made as happy as they can be. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him. Why should he withhold any good thing from them, whom he loves, when he possesses infinite resources? The kind parent, who has large possessions, is liberal in proportion to his wealth to his children whom he loves. It is only in regard to their highest respectability, which makes him cautious in the distribution of his favors. Parents sometimes err by an injudicious distribution of their favors. God never errs. He is as prudent as he is benevolent.

6. *The promises of God* afford abundant evidence

of his readiness to bestow great blessings on his people. They are comprehensive, suited to all our real wants—and embracing the whole world. Ask of me, saith God to his Son, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. All the ends of the earth shall remember and return to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's and he is Governor among the nations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. The book of Isaiah abounds with promises of the perpetuity and great enlargement of the church. Now the promises of God express his will, and show us what he is disposed to do, when his people are prepared to receive his favors. Great changes must be effected in the church before the promises which have been mentioned will be fulfilled. But we know there can be no change in God. He can never be any more benevolent than he now is. He never can be more ready than he now is to bestow great blessings on his people. If we compare what has been done by the church with her duty; we must confess that we have been faulty. Those plans which have been devised and adopted for the promotion of noble objects, have been signally blessed. How great and beneficial have been the results of the

operations of those benevolent societies, which have been established since the commencement of the present century? What can be too great for God to do? What can be too great to expect of him? The church appears to have been as yet but half in earnest. One hundred years from this time, what we are now doing will appear to be hardly worthy of recollection. A little one, one scarcely known, will accomplish as much as a thousand have done during some periods. The time will come, when the readiness of God to bestow great blessings on his people will be understood and felt. And it shall come to pass, saith Jehovah, to his church, *before* they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.

II. I proceed, secondly, to consider how we must seek great blessings so as to obtain them.

1. It may be observed *we must have clear, extensive, and affecting views of the perfections of God.* It cannot be denied that Christians have very limited and obscure views of the divine perfections. The present generation, it is believed, do not so thoroughly understand the great truths of revelation as that which preceded it. The reason is obvious. Formerly almost the only books of a religious character read by Christians, were the Scriptures and the works of pious and able divines. But now their tables are so loaded with ephemeral publications, which are almost forced upon them, that the Scriptures and the works of pious and learned men are too much neglected. Deep views of the fullness there is in God can be obtained only by intense meditation on the Scriptures. Those, who have clear and extensive; affecting and transforming views of the Divine perfections, have no

relish for the light works, which occupy the attention of many professing Christians. Constant meditation on divine truth and constant communion with God are necessary in order to give us just and enlarged views of his infinite excellence. And we must not only know God, but there must be that freshness in our knowledge, which is obtained by a close walk with him, which is necessary to move the feelings of our hearts. Such deep views of the boundless goodness of God ought to be sought, as are suited to take possession of our whole soul, and to exercise to the highest degree all its powers. How few are able to wrestle with God as did the patriarchs of old ! Too many approach him and worship him with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. In the most acceptable prayers the heart must speak—and the whole soul must be engaged. Many, when they attempt to approach God have such a sense of their guilt, occasioned by their neglect of known duties, and such obscure and circumscribed views of his character and resources, that they cannot with boldness plead his promises. Strong desires of large communications of divine grace are not excited in their hearts. Opening the mouth wide implies enlarged views of the fullness there is in God, and an earnest desire to obtain what is of great value. Here it must be added—that our desires and prayers may be acceptable, the principle, by which we are influenced must be love of the character of God.

2. In order to seek so as to obtain great blessings—the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and the conversion of many of our fellow creatures ; we must have *such views of the worth of the soul ; as to*

awaken the most ardent desire of its salvation. Objects which appear to us of great value affect us much more than those, which appear to be of small value. Impressions, produced by the most sublime scenes of nature are different from those produced by some very beautiful landscape, confined to very narrow limits. Now as the soul will forever exist, and forever progress, so by meditation on its worth we can never reach its utmost bounds. It is too evident to be denied that the prayers of many are not offered with those views of the worth of the soul which are sufficiently enlarged and affecting. They seem to have but a glimpse of the object they seek and they manifest no great solicitude respecting its accomplishment. It is true, duty is ours and events are the Lord's. This however does by no means excuse inactivity, when something of great value is sought. Those, who offer prayer with indifference and cold insensibility, when the cause of Christ is concerned, manifest the greatest anxiety, when their temporal interest is sought. The more we meditate on the worth of the soul; the more valuable this object will appear to us, and the more shall we feel the importance of laboring for its salvation. It is intense meditation on the worth of the soul, when in retirement, and assisted by the Holy Spirit, which affects our hearts and moves all our powers to action. Guided by the light of revelation we may follow the soul into the invisible world—we may enter the mansions of the blessed, contemplate their employments and enjoyments—or we may go down to the dark prison, where the wicked are confined, and listen to their cries and bitter lamentations. How can we pray with a proper degree of earnestness

for the impenitent, without a knowledge of the happiness of the righteous, and of the misery, to which all the unrenewed are exposed? Who can sincerely love his fellow creatures and feel deeply interested in their welfare; if unwilling to measure by the Scriptures the height and depth, and length and breadth of the misery, which they must forever suffer, if they die in sin? The benevolent man when he hears of a suffering family endeavors to ascertain the extent of their suffering, that his exertions for their relief may bear some proportion to their wants. Those, who are unwilling to give sinners a full view of their guilt and danger, cannot be their warm friends, and cannot have exalted thoughts of the great things Christ has done for the redemption of man.

3. If we would seek great blessings of God so as to obtain them, we must do it with a *proper sense of our dependence on his mere mercy*. It is by no means a proof of humility to seek and expect small things from him, whose liberality is unbounded. It is a proof of humility to feel our unworthiness of the least favor. The ground of our expectation of great blessings is not our own merit but the merits of Christ. We may, therefore, have the most abasing views of ourselves, feel that we deserve nothing but the wrath of God, and yet have such admiring thoughts of his benevolence, especially when manifested to the most unworthy, as to look for the most valuable blessings. Is it not the fact, that when Christians are most deeply humbled, and most sensibly feel their unworthiness that they come to God with the greatest boldness, pray with the greatest fervor, and have the most lively expectation of obtaining the blessings they seek?

Churches in seasons of deep humiliation are most importunate in their prayers, and they are then least disposed to depend on themselves. As God always makes a revelation of his justice before his mercy in the conversion of sinners; so the same order is observed in the church, when God revives his work. Seasons of deep humiliation usually precede seasons of refreshing. Till Christians lose sight of their dependence on God, and become proud of what they have done, or of what he has done for them, the rain of the Spirit continues to descend upon them. But, when churches are greatly blessed, how soon are they elated, either on account of what they have accomplished, or on account of what God has accomplished for them. Pride no sooner springs up in the human heart than the Holy Spirit departs from it. God will not give his glory to another. The praise belongs to him. Paul may plant and Apollos may water; but God giveth the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

4. In seeking great blessings so as to obtain them, we *must seek them by faith*. We must have that faith, which is produced by a correct knowledge of the promises of God and of his ability and readiness to fulfill them. Our faith must be wrought in us by the Spirit of God. The faith, for which some contend, is a strong persuasion that they shall obtain a particular object, which persuasion has no adequate cause, and no solid foundation. The prayer of faith, which is acceptable to God, is occasioned by enlarged views of the fullness there is in him, the most abasing views of ourselves, and such a regard for the glory of God as produces vigorous exertions for its promo-

tion. It proceeds from the heart, when it is moved by the Spirit of God. Strong faith cannot exist without deep piety. In too many instances we do not much expect to obtain the favors for which we ask. How often Christians offer prayer to God without the least apparent solicitude with respect to the result. They enter the house of God on the Sabbath, and spend a portion of time in the performance of religious duties ; but when they return home, how little anxiety do they experience with respect to the answer to their prayers ? It cannot be maintained that prayers offered with such feelings are prayers of faith. Unbelief and faith cannot both reign in our hearts at the same time. Must it not displease God for us to ask for blessings, which we do not expect him to bestow ?

5. In seeking great blessings of God our *chief motive must be the promotion of his glory*. We may be selfish in desiring the conversion of our friends and others. We cannot be indifferent to the happiness of our friends. We may for our own convenience desire the conversion of a troublesome neighbor—we may desire the conversion of a spendthrift, who is indebted to us. We may desire to see the church, with which we are connected, enlarged and flourishing—that our burden may be light, and that we may not suffer reproach. A great variety of selfish motives may operate on the minds of Christians, when they do not perceive their influence. But, if we love God supremely, we shall be grieved when we see men break his law, and we shall earnestly desire their conversion that they may glorify him, and labor for the advancement of his kingdom. If we feel our obligation to him, who gave himself to redeem us, we shall

earnestly desire the conversion of sinners that they may serve him. Good men are not sensible how much they are influenced by selfish considerations, when in the pursuit of objects of a religious character. Should they impartially examine themselves, they would be surprised to find how small attainments they have made in holiness. Ye ask and ye receive not, said the Apostle James, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lusts. When we seek for great blessings with proper views of the fullness there is in God, with a sacred regard to his cause, with a just sense of our dependence on him and of our unworthiness, and with humble faith in Christ as the surety of the covenant of grace, we may hope to obtain what we seek.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The tendency of the light, which is now shining upon the church, is to enlarge her desires, and to increase her operations. God in his providence is opening wide and promising fields for the labors of faithful missionaries. The enemies of the truth, which might have been expected, are awaking from their long slumbers. God is now thus addressing his people—Arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. She is becoming more and more separated from all worldly connexions, and depending more and more on the word and Spirit of God. The more she depends on him, and the more steadfastly she walks in his covenant; the more abundantly he will bless her. This country is a country of revivals. Here there is no established religion, no connexion between the church and the

state. Deep personal holiness is the main spring, which must move all the wheels in that moral machinery, by which the gospel will be published in all nations. The benevolence, which is now so honorable to the church, and which distinguishes this period from those, which have preceded it, consists very much of those sacrifices, which are easily made. Christians are more ready to perform external duties, than such as are known only to themselves and to God. Many are more ready to engage in duties with their fellow men, than to commune with God alone. There is something solemn in being with God alone—laying open to him our whole heart and pleading with him for great blessings. Such motives must operate here as are not felt in other places.

2. A leading object of every faithful preacher should be, to direct the minds of professed believers to those subjects, which are best suited to give them the most enlarged views of the fulness there is in God—the deep depravity of the human heart—the infinite worth of the soul, and the richness of the blessings included in the covenant of grace. These are not the subjects presented to their minds by the numerous publications of the present day. It is not sufficient to become acquainted with every religious denomination, and with the state of religion in every country. The heart must not be neglected; for out of it are the issues of life. Drawing near to God is in some respects like ascending a lofty mountain, which greatly enlarges our views. The more closely we walk with him, the more our minds will be expanded, the more our feelings will be excited, and the stronger will be

our faith. It is not enough to be correct in our sentiments and conduct. Christians of deep experimental piety are needed for the accomplishment of the most important objects. Much more depends on them than on those, who are most celebrated in the world. It will, I am persuaded, appear at the great day that many of the revivals of religion, which have resulted in the conversion of a multitude of our fellow creatures, were in answer to the prayers and in connexion with the labors of persons, scarcely known in the world. Those, who occupy the most conspicuous stations, and who are most applauded, are not the persons, on whom the advancement of holiness in the church chiefly depends. The most devout are often found among those, who are least esteemed by such as are apparently most zealous and active in the promotion of important objects. There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. It may be admitted that the church is at present increasing in a knowledge of her external state and prospects; but, it may be a question, whether she is increasing in holiness, whether she is as distinguished for spirituality, as she was 200 years ago. The great prosperity of the church and the liberty she has enjoyed in this country, and for which we ought to be thankful, have not been so well suited as afflictions to humble her, and to promote a spirit of devotion. We glory in tribulations, said the great Apostle in his epistle to the Romans; knowing that

tribulation worketh patience ; and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed : because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. Could I persuade the professed friends of God to meditate constantly and intensely on his perfections and gracious purposes—on the infinite fullness there is in him, and his readiness to bestow on his people great blessings—and could I persuade them to humble themselves before him on account of their sins—and to wrestle with him as the patriarch of old did ; I should expect that revivals of religion would be enjoyed, wherever there is a true church, and that they would be extensive and lasting. Amen.

DISCOURSE X.



THE STRAIT GATE AND BROAD WAY.

Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.—*MATH.* vii. 13, 14.

The opinions, which are most agreeable to the feelings of the unrenewed heart, and which are most popular with worldly men, are such as are most at variance with the plain declaration of scripture. Not a few have risen up of late years, who boldly and without a blush contradict our divine Lord, and virtually charge him with falsehood. They maintain that the gate by which men enter heaven is not strait—that the way which leadeth to destruction is not broad—that the way which leadeth to life is not narrow—that many are not lost, and that it is not true that few only are saved.

Now, whom shall we believe. Shall we receive the testimony of him, who came down from heaven to save sinners, and who gave the most abundant evidence of his divine mission; or shall we believe

those, who have no knowledge of what takes place in heaven, and who are approved and applauded by the most irreligious? The Son of God could not be deceived, and could have no motive to deceive those, for whom he was willing to give his life. He certainly knew how many had believed in him and how many of the human family had entered heaven. The same love, which brought him from heaven and sustained him on the cross, must have influenced him to declare nothing but the truth. One object of his divine mission was to make known to men their condition, their need of a Savior; and another object was to save all, disposed to receive him. His object in declaring the most painful truths was to persuade sinners in season, to make sure of salvation. Few, he assures us, have found the way of life—and few have entered the strait gate, by which there is access to the enjoyments of heaven; but many have entered the wide gate and pursued the broad way, which leadeth to destruction. These are declarations, which all may understand. Those opinions, which differ from them are false, and ruinous to the souls of men. They are not from Him, who is full of grace and truth; but from the father of lies, and the great enemy of God and men.

The benevolence and wisdom of our divine Lord are discoverable in the text. So important are the truths, it contains, that they are expressed in different forms, that they may be understood, and that there may be no possibility of a mistake. Because the way of life is difficult, and the way to destruction easy; few are saved and many lost.

But why, you may inquire, or in what sense is the

way of life difficult, and in what sense is the way, which leadeth to destruction easy? These inquiries are so intimately connected that they need not be separately considered.

1. The way of life is difficult, because it requires those, who walk in it to deny themselves. The way which leadeth to destruction is easy, because it allows men to act agreeably to their natural feelings. To deny ourselves in the most important sense is a painful duty. But we must submit to this, or we cannot be saved. If any man come to me, said our divine Lord, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. We are not so to understand this passage, that in a literal sense we are to hate any that sustain a near relation to us; but our love of Christ must be so great that in comparison with it our love of our dearest connexions must be as hatred. This is reasonable. We must love Christ infinitely more than any mere creature. The love our friends exercise toward us, compared with that he has manifested, is but hatred. How much more has he done than they have done for us!

Christianity, the only true religion, is more opposed to the unsanctified feelings of the human heart than any other religion ever known in the world. The reasons are obvious, if we admit the scripture doctrine of human depravity. God has given us a much clearer view of his holiness, his justice, his hatred of sin, and his determination to punish it in the crucifixion of his Son, than in his law, or the events of his providence. Here we discover the height and depth, the length and breadth of sin—the object it aims to

destroy, and the misery, to which it exposes the impenitent. The tendency of sin is to subvert the throne of God, and to ruin the souls of men. As God is able and determined to defend his throne, the impenitent only destroy themselves by perseverance in impenitence.

Self-denial to be of any value must commence in our hearts. It is extremely difficult to persuade any one to cease to depend on himself—on his works and on his power to work, and to look to Christ alone for justification and salvation. There is in all men, who regard any kind of religion, a self-righteous spirit. They are willing to work, if they can receive full credit for what they do. Pagans, Mahometans, and Papists are very exact in observing rites, to which great merit is attached. We know that as soon as any one is awakened, his self-righteous spirit is excited, and he hopes by external reformation to obtain peace. The struggle is sometimes long and severe before he is convinced that there is no help in himself and that his heart is entirely depraved. Self-loathing always accompanies unreserved submission to Christ the Lord our righteousness. Many, there is reason to fear, have indulged hopes of salvation, without having experienced any true self-denial. It would be wonderful should all, or a very great proportion of professing Christians be found to be the real friends of God. Guilty men love darkness rather than light. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. The unrenewed are opposed to those precepts of the divine law, which condemn them. They contend against the truths peculiar to Christianity, till a saving

change is wrought in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christianity is a system, not discoverable by the light of nature or of reason. It accomplishes by faith without works great objects. But the light of reason teaches us that the accomplishment of great objects demands corresponding works. The conscience, when properly enlightened, approves the precepts of the divine law, and condemns every transgressor. This law is written in the hearts of all men. But Christianity is not written in the hearts of any, who have not been renewed by the Holy Spirit. It is then one thing to respect the precepts of the moral law, which the conscience of the unrenewed approves, and another thing to be a Christian. No man, however, who does not respect the moral law can be a Christian.

Some public teachers, it must be confessed, to avoid giving offence to their hearers, never expose the depths of human depravity. They encourage men to hope for future happiness, who have never experienced any radical change. The anxious sinner watches every sentence and every word of the preacher, and if he can be encouraged to hope for salvation without receiving truths, which occasion pain and distress; he will reject them, and rest on a false foundation. The whole truth must be received without any reserve, or we cannot be saved. What can be more painful and mortifying to the sinner than to be forced to admit that he deserves death, even everlasting death? What efforts are made by the man guilty of a capital offence to counteract the testimony brought against him? To have such a view of our guilt as to be convinced and to feel that we deserve everlasting

death we must have deep discoveries of the depravity of our hearts. Without being convinced of our guilt and ill desert, we cannot receive him, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth in him. The hard heart must be broken in pieces and a new heart must be given, or the soul cannot be saved. The spirit of a man may appear to be humble without being broken.

It is much less difficult to persuade a man to submit to great hardships, and to make great sacrifices than to deny himself. Those, who know how difficult it is to persuade men of property to give much for the promotion of charitable objects; and that it is easier to persuade them to bestow all their goods to feed the poor, than to repent of their sins, and to exercise true love to God, must be convinced that the gate is strait, through which they must enter heaven. A man may even give his body to be burned and not have that self-denial, which is essential to the Christian character. And a real Christian will sooner submit to be burned at the stake than to deny his Lord. It is not strange then that few only obtain salvation.

II. God, who is perfectly acquainted with the depravity of the human heart, has adopted and revealed such a system of truth, as is exactly fitted to mortify its pride, and to prepare it to receive him, who alone can save from sin. Christianity is just such a religion as we need. The sinner when properly enlightened by the Spirit of God, feels his need of just such a Savior as God has provided for this lost world. When he arrives at this point, all he needs is a change of his heart to enable him to receive Christ in all his offices. The great Apostle was so

delighted with christianity in all its parts that he, without reserve, declared the whole council of God. It is believed that but few present a full and fair view of Christianity to those, who hear them preach, or read their writings. Many, very many of the objections to Christianity, we know are not made to a consistent view of it, but to partial and distorted views. The human heart in its natural state, we know, would not be pleased with a perfect view of Christianity. But such a view would be better suited to produce genuine conversions than a partial or distorted view. If but a partial view be exhibited to an audience; they feel that they are at liberty to complete the picture; which they often so do as to make Christianity appear to be different from what it really is. Very much of the apparent opposition to Christianity is not opposition to a perfect and justly proportioned exhibition of the system. Declare the whole council of God, give every doctrine its proper place, and conversions will correspond with a true standard, and be genuine. Much of the labor, and many of the trials of ministers, are occasioned by a timid and an imperfect exhibition of the essential features of Christianity. It is a fact well kown to many pastors of churches that reputed converts, who in some particulars appear well, in other particulars, not less important, appear deficient. They indulge a hope without any good foundation. They may be outwardly moral, and may be zealous in the promotion of useful objects; and yet may not be reconciled to the whole character of God. Hence, we find many, who give no evidence of deep feelings of heart. Where there is a saving change the precepts and truths of Christianity will produce contrition

of heart, which cannot be concealed. Here the question may be proposed, why is it, one inquires, that the most solemn discourses make me feel doubtful respecting my hope, and unhappy, and discourses of a different character afford me pleasure? It may be answered, where the heart is unsound, serious experimental discourses sweep away false hopes and shake false confidence. If these things be so, the professing Christian is forced to inquire, what ground have I to expect salvation? But when those truths best suited to try the feelings of the human heart are withheld, or modified to correspond with prevailing opinions, then the hopes of the professing Christian are bright, and he rejoices in his prospects of future happiness. In view of such results, it is easy to see why the most faithful are condemned and the most unfaithful applauded. Now, as the unrenewed heart is opposed to all the truths of Christianity they must be plainly declared, and the cordial belief of them must be urged, as of essential importance. The struggle of every one who becomes a Christian is severe. He resists the truth, till convinced that resistance is useless, and that he must submit or perish. It may be added, the more faithfully the truth is declared, the greater reason have we to hope that God will bless it.

III. As the natural heart is opposed to all the truths peculiar to Christianity, so the system which is most defective, must be most agreeable to the most immoral. Such has been the happy influence of Christianity in this country, that few are disposed openly to confess that they are infidels. We seldom see any one, who is an avowed atheist. Man is a religious being, and cannot but feel that he is account-

able to a superior for his conduct. And it is too manifest to be denied that Christianity, as understood by us in this country, has produced better fruits than any other religion.

Those, who are seeking happiness from the possession of worldly objects—riches, honor, or pleasure, prefer that system which promises salvation to all mankind. They exclude from their system an essential doctrine, without a belief of which few if any ever become true converts. It is a remarkable fact that the admirers of this system are the most immoral and wicked. There is another class of persons, who are very exact in the observance of outward rites and forms. They are self-righteous and often superstitious. They have a form of godliness but deny the power. Justification by works, which can be performed without any radical change, is the doctrine which is agreeable to not a few that dwell in protestant countries. They have their different systems, but depend on their works, as the ground of their hope of future happiness. The Jews were careful to observe the ceremonies of their law, when very few among them gave any evidence of piety. As religion declined in the Christian church, its members continued to be particular in the performance of external duties. They submitted to penances, no where required in the word of God.

There is a third class of persons, who, not satisfied with cold morality, aim to be distinguished for their piety by their zeal. But of what value is that zeal, which is not according to knowledge? The Jews in the time of the apostles had a zeal of God, which was not according to knowledge—being ignorant of God's

righteousness, they went about to establish their own righteousness and refused to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. So long as the heart remains unrenewed, zeal does not change the nature of its exercises. There is no class of persons in a more dangerous state than those, who on account of their zeal persuade themselves that they shall certainly reach heaven. The natural unsanctified feelings of men, and the opinions which prevail, keep multitudes in the broad way, which we are assured leadeth to destruction. The most faithful servants of God, who declare the whole truth and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, are often accused of bigotry. The very men, who point out the direct and sure way to heaven are rejected, while those, who withhold important truths, suited to mortify the pride of the human heart, and to produce genuine conversions, are received, liberally rewarded, and highly applauded.

IV. To the sinner, who is a subject of the mighty operations of the Holy Spirit, no discourses appear to be too alarming. He persuades himself that if excited to a high degree, he may himself effect his own salvation. He depends on the power of motives. Such expectations prove that he is ignorant of the deep depravity of his heart. Should God make as perfect a revelation of his justice and power as the human mind can bear, nothing truly excellent could be drawn from the human heart. The awakened sinner does not at first discover the entire depravity of his heart. He admits and feels that he is a condemned sinner, and that he is exposed to endless misery. His first endeavor is by reformation of conduct to recommend

himself to the favor of God. But when he has a view of the entire depravity of his heart; his distress is unutterable. Before the sinner discovers that his heart is wholly depraved—and that all his thoughts, purposes and feelings are sinful, he persuades himself that he can do something to secure the favor of God. In this state any modification or withholding of the most painful truths may be ruinous to the soul, that is anxious to obtain relief. Any encouragement to hope, while the heart of the sinner remains unrenewed seems to be shutting the door of heaven against him, when he is about to enter. Tenderness of feeling prevents some, when they see the sinner in distress from declaring the whole truth. They sympathize with the transgressor and feel more compassion for him than regard for the honor of God. Such are not persons of deep piety. Their views of the character of God are obscure and very imperfect. Great firmness and decision are necessary in giving instruction, or direction to an awakened sinner. It is feared that many have been encouraged to indulge a hope of salvation, who have never experienced a saving change. It is extremely difficult for a sinner to renounce all dependence on his works, and on himself, and to cast himself at the feet of his offended Sovereign, and to look to him alone for salvation. But he must strive to enter the strait gate, or he must perish.

In view of the subject under consideration, I must urge all, who are without any good hope of salvation, to attend without delay to the interests of their souls. The soul is immortal, but its continuance in the body

is of short duration. Life we know is frail, and time is short. What are the possessions of this world compared with that inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away? An object is presented to the view of every impenitent sinner of inestimable value, compared with which all the treasures of this world are but vanity. This object may be obtained without money and without price. It cannot, however, be obtained without repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. No one can exercise repentance without a knowledge of the divine law. A man must be made conscious of his guilt before he can exercise true repentance, the essence of which is hatred of sin. Now the deformity of sin must be discovered before it can be hated; and by the law is the knowledge of sin. How, it may be asked, is a knowledge of the law of God to be obtained except by searching the scriptures and meditating on them? Religion is not the offspring of ignorance. How do we obtain a knowledge of the laws of our own country except by reading them with care, and by endeavoring to understand them? We cannot expect that the law of God which has been published will again be revealed to any who have the scriptures, and refuse to study them. The teaching of the Spirit is enjoyed by those, who are serious inquirers for the truth. The more diligently they search the scriptures the more the Holy Spirit assists them to understand the divine law. The same remarks may be made with reference to christianity. How can we believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, without a knowledge of that testimony? How can we unreservedly trust in Christ without a knowledge of his holy

character and true divinity? The doctrines peculiar to christianity, it has been observed, are not discoverable by the light of nature or of reason. They are made known to us by revelation. A knowledge of the doctrines peculiar to christianity is necessary to the exercise of true faith in its author. This knowledge must be acquired, as we acquire any other knowledge—with this difference, the Holy Spirit assists every serious inquirer for the truth. Now, where we have in view an object of immense value, we ought to be very cautious lest we embrace any dangerous error.

Those, who acknowledge and feel that they are not secure without religion, ought to place themselves in circumstances favorable to the acquisition of the knowledge of the truth. Now we know that the company we keep and the books we read have a transforming influence. Many, who have received serious impressions, when listening to a solemn discourse, have lost them by being associated with the thoughtless and gay. We know that every awakened sinner, who is deeply impressed, avoids as much as possible the company of the irreligious. All such lay aside those books, which are suited to divert their minds from those subjects, which most deeply concern them. Those discourses, which contain anecdotes or illustrations, which awaken associations, which are not of a serious character, are by them rendered powerless. When any are anxious, Christians ought to be careful not to say any thing, by which the mind can be drawn from serious considerations. If all the circumstances, which have been mentioned are regarded; there is still work to be done, which none

but God can accomplish. This ought to be understood that none may depend on what they do, and imagine as a matter of course they will become Christians if they pursue a particular course. They must at last depend on *his* power, who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. There is no merit—nothing holy and truly excellent in what is done by the unrenewed. But we find that none do become pious, who do not direct their attention to the subject of religion. I do not hesitate to say that God is pleased to see any degree of success attend the means he is using for the conversion of sinners. How can it be then, as some assert, that the awakened sinner is more guilty in the sight of God, than the person, who wholly neglects religion? Why are the most devoted preachers pleased, when they see the house of God filled with attentive hearers? Do not the warm feelings of their hearts flow out to them? Is not Christ himself ready to embrace them? Many when listening attentively to the preached word, or when meditating on divine truth have experienced that change, which has encouraged them to hope for future life and happiness.

Since life is uncertain delay not, I pray you, sinner, to strive to secure a good title to an inheritance in heaven. This secured, you will be happy; for you will have in this world an earnest of that which will be unspeakably excellent and everlasting in duration. The irreligious are not happy however large their possessions. They are afraid of death. The pleasures of the world are hardly tasted before they are forgotten. But the Christian has a constant source of happiness. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, said our Savior, shall never thirst; but the water

that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Seek, ye, then, my hearers the Lord, while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Amen.

DISCOURSE XI.



GLORYING IN TRIBULATION.

But we glory in tribulations also.—ROM. v. 2.

How excellent must be the *nature*, and how mighty the *power* of that religion, which enables those, who have cordially embraced it, not only to endure without a complaint, or a tear, but with satisfaction and joy the most painful sufferings; but to meet without fear the most dreadful death.

Christianity prepares its subjects, and especially its ministers, to labor with untiring perseverance for the salvation of their fellow creatures, among the most ungrateful and the most bitter enemies, and in the faithful discharge of their duties to submit with cheerfulness to the greatest privations and the most insupportable hardships.

Being justified by faith, said the Apostle, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace,

wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so but we glory in tribulations also.

That the Apostle of the Gentiles, who had been educated in the best manner for the office, for which he was intended, and that those, whom he addressed, could when cruelly persecuted glory in tribulations appears to many Christians at the present day to be unaccountable, because, contrary to all their experience and their views of duty. When Peter and the other Apostles (with him) were beaten and commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Beloved, said this Apostle in one of his epistles, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. My beloved, said the Apostle James, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations and trials; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Can it be that Christianity, is now the same as it was in the days of the Apostles? Does it produce the same fruits? Where shall we find in our churches Christians or Christian ministers; who in the cause of their Lord and Redeemer glory in tribulations? How few, are willing to expose themselves to reproach for his sake? How few, when falsely accused, bear it patiently? How many, are unwilling in defence of the

truth to meet opposition? By some, whose convictions appear to be correct, the most distinguishing truths of Christianity, are so explained or modified as to make the impression on the minds of their hearers that the preacher does not himself believe the doctrines, he professes to believe. There have in different ages been learned divines, who to avoid giving offence, have adopted philosophical theories, by which Christianity has been so modified and made so to harmonize with human reason, as to be received not on the testimony of God; but because it appeared to be agreeable to human reason. They deny the necessity of a radical change, and maintain that Christianity may be so presented to the human mind that it cannot but be received.

What complaints we often hear from those, who experience any fatigue or inconvenience in the discharge of their duty? Do they not appear to think more of their reward in this than in the future state? Is it not the constant aim of some to avoid as much as possible those evils, to which strict fidelity would expose them? If any do suffer on account of their faithfulness in the service of their Lord and Master, it is usually attributed to some fault of their own. They are accused of ignorance of the best mode of exhibiting the truth. But the Apostle in his epistle to Timothy, said—All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. If the world hate you, said Christ to his disciples, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. Was Christ, or his apostles persecuted on account of any defect in their ministry? Did they not know the best manner of exhibiting the truth?

It is the opinion of many that the doctrines peculiar to Christianity, may be so presented to the minds of intelligent men, as to be cordially received. Hence it is, that those preachers, who are most careful not to wound the feelings of their hearers, are most admired—and are thought best fitted for the most conspicuous places, and most worthy of a liberal support. As they meet with no opposition, and receive the praise of all classes; they persuade themselves that they have adopted a happy method of presenting the truth to the minds of their hearers. But, can the truth be faithfully preached without wounding the feelings of the unrenewed? Were not the hearers of Peter on the day of Pentecost pricked in their heart? If Christianity be so presented to the minds of men as to harmonize with human reason, and as to be agreeable to the feelings of the unrenewed; no radical change can be effected. Nothing more can be accomplished than outward reformation, the consequence of a change of purpose.

It ought to be the inquiry of every Christian and especially of every Christian minister, who receives the praise of men, whether he receive it for his faithfulness or his unfaithfulness. Some no doubt so exhibit the doctrines of Christianity as to confirm the unrenewed in their unbelief, and in their opposition to the most distinguishing truths of revelation. A man of popular talents may select a great variety of subjects from the Scriptures and from the New Testament; to which the serious infidel can have no objection. He may make his discourses entertaining and become the favorite of a congregation, without preaching the truths peculiar to Christianity. The serious infidel

can have no objections to the precepts of the moral law, which are interwoven with the truths of the gospel. The chief cause of the errors, which have appeared in the Christian church from the earliest periods down to the present time, and which had been most pernicious and destructive in their influence, has been the desire to avoid the evils, which have in a greater or less degree been experienced by the most faithful and self-denying Christians. Some *good men*, influenced by an ardent desire of the salvation of their fellow men, have indulged the belief that they could remove all objections to the truths of Christianity; and by the force of argument could persuade men to become Christians. The most successful corrupters of Christianity have been men distinguished for their learning or their zeal. What immense injury was done to the church as early as the third century by Origin, who, that he might the more rapidly increase the number of converts, united the Platonic philosophy with Christianity. He was a man of learning and zeal. How few at the present day, who are founders of sects, are disposed to preach the gospel in its simplicity. Some theory is adopted by which it is hoped the approbation of intelligent men may be obtained. And the difficulty of understanding it is considered by many a proof that its author is a man of deep research and profound knowledge.

Now no man, we know, can desire tribulation for its own sake. No man loves reproach, opposition, or persecution. And no man ought to glory in tribulation occasioned by his own faults. Let none of you, said the Apostle Peter, suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's

matters. Yet if any man suffer, as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this behalf. The most zealous propagators of error glory in opposition, because they believe this will increase their influence. Because the ill-treatment the most faithful servants of God received from their fellow creatures was called persecution, they contend that the opposition they meet is persecution, and appeal to it as a proof of their piety and the justice of their cause.

The tribulations, in which the Apostle gloried, were not occasioned by any defect in his life or ministry; but by his unyielding faithfulness in the service of his Lord and Redeemer. Before his conversion he was a favorite of the Jews, who were violently opposed to Christianity, and who depended probably more on him than on any other person, as an instrument, by which they hoped to destroy the infant church of Him, whom they had crucified. Though the change he had experienced, which induced him to oppose Judaism and to defend the cause of his crucified Lord, exposed him to strong opposition from his former friends and raised up against him a host of enemies, who sought to destroy his life; yet he gloried in the change by which he had been delivered from the bondage, and darkness of sin, and the curse of the divine law, and by which he had been reconciled to his offended Sovereign, and made a partaker of his rich grace. The fact that he had been delivered from the danger of losing his soul forever, and that he had obtained an earnest of the happiness and glory of heaven; made the loss of his temporal life appear to him to be a mere trifle compared with the loss of eternal life. When he compared his situation with that of his most cruel

and successful persecutors, he considered himself a happy man, and would not for a thousand worlds, had they been offered him, returned to his former state. His persecutors gloried in their unbelief, ignorant of the dreadful consequences; the Apostle gloried in his faith, which, though for a short time it exposed him to severe sufferings, was connected with unspeakable happiness and unfading glory.

I will endeavor to show, in what sense the Apostle gloried in tribulation.

1. The nature of tribulation was not changed by the change the Apostle experienced. In itself it was an evil to be deprecated. But in the age of the apostles the inevitable consequence of conversion to Christianity was exposure to persecution. Though the present is not an age of persecution, yet, were Christians more faithful they would not escape censure. The human heart in its natural state is the same in every age and in every country, though there may be much variety in the expression of its feelings. But the trials, through which Christians are now called to pass, are not to be mentioned, when compared with the trials of the Apostles. Christians, have no excuse for unfaithfulness. Were their trials far more severe, and far more to be dreaded, the true convert would glory in them, if the unavoidable consequence of his becoming a sincere Christian. Every true believer is satisfied with the change he has experienced, even if treated with contempt in consequence of it. God forbid, said the Apostle, that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. When he became a Christian the world became dead or crucified

to him—he sought no longer its treasures, honor or pleasures; and he became dead to the world—worldly men no longer desired his company, or looked to him for aid in the accomplishment of their purposes. If our gospel be hid, he said, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. The Christian recollects that he once was blind and had no correct understanding of the nature and value of true religion—and that his views and feelings were not unlike the views and feelings of those, who now oppose him—and that should they experience what he has experienced they would glory in tribulation, if a consequence of their conversion. The man, who has purchased a field, containing a valuable treasure, will not be ashamed of the transaction, if those, who know nothing of the treasure pronounce him foolish. Such are the feelings of every true convert, that he glories in the change wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, however severe the trials it may occasion. His suffering he knows will be of short duration; but the sufferings of all, who persevere in unbelief will be intolerable and everlasting.

The more eminent any are for piety the greater support they experience during their trials. Such is the weakness of human nature that Christians need and do receive supernatural aid, when cruelly persecuted. In the history of the martyrs we find a variety of cases. Some were manifestly desirous of suffering death for the sake of Christ and his cause, that they might add their dying testimony to the truth. There

were some, who like Peter and Cranmer, when overcome by fear denied their Lord; but afterwards repented, and with great firmness openly confessed Christ, and with joy submitted to a martyr's death. Men may, it is admitted, submit to great privations and sacrifices, when they have in view some great temporal object. They may do this, when influenced by a love of fame. No doubt some from a self-righteous spirit have with feelings of triumph gone to the stake. Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, said the Apostle, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity it profiteth me nothing. The motives, which govern us determine the character of our conduct. The promised Comforter is sent to sustain all, who suffer for the sake of Christ. When their outward circumstances are most distressing, they experience that inward peace which passeth understanding, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. The trials of the Apostle were peculiar. His life was sought by those very persons, whose salvation he was constantly laboring to effect. But the darker and more tempestuous his worldly prospects; the brighter were his views of heavenly things. The most distinguished Christians, have assured us that when they have suffered most on account of their fidelity the consolations of the Spirit have been most precious, and more than sufficient to counterbalance all sufferings. If, therefore, we would obtain the clearest views of spiritual things, we must read the works of men, who were called to endure great trials. Were Christians to appear disappointed and discouraged, when opposed and persecuted the impressions would be made on the minds of

many, that had they counted the cost they never would have embraced Christianity. Well may Christians, who have made great attainments in holiness glory in tribulations, which are attended with unspeakable inward joys.

2. Christians glory in tribulations, because they give them an opportunity to manifest their love of Him, who gave his life to redeem them. What is more natural, when we have received some great favor from another—some valuable gift, or deliverance from impending destruction than a desire to make some return—and to embrace the first opportunity to give proof of our sense of obligation? What can be more acceptable to our divine Lord than undeviating fidelity in his service and a readiness to submit to privations and sufferings in labors for the spread of the gospel among the destitute? What proof do those give of their love of Christ, who are unwilling to submit to any inconvenience in his service? They will not labor where they cannot enjoy every worldly comfort. If their duties at any time become numerous; what complaints we hear to awaken sympathy? The tribulations, in which Paul gloried, might have been avoided, had he been willing to accommodate Christianity to the taste of the people, whom he addressed; or had he so explained Christianity as to make its principles harmonize with human reason. His love of Christ and of the souls of men would not allow him to do this. His heart so overflowed with love and gratitude to Him, who had done great things for him, that he rejoiced to have an opportunity, to give strong proofs of his sense of obligation to his beloved and adored Redeemer. Should some kind friend at

the hazard of his life save one of you from drowning, or from devouring fire ; would you not, should he be exposed to the same danger, seize the occasion to express your gratitude by attempting his rescue? There are places, where Christ is not known—there are places where his people are few and feeble, and where error abounds ; there you may give proofs of your love of Christ. The apostle well knew that faithfully preaching the doctrines, peculiar to Christianity which were totally different from the doctrines of pagan philosophers, would make him many enemies. But he would not conceal or disguise the truth by any display of learning or rhetorical flourishes. He chose to exhibit the truth to the minds of his hearers in its simplicity that it might produce its legitimate effects. And I, brethren, he said to the Corinthians, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power ; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The Apostle was satisfied that the plan, God had devised and adopted for the redemption of man, was the result of infinite wisdom and benevolence. He had no desire to add any thing to it, or to take any thing from it. Though condemned by the wise and prudent of this world, he gloried in it. Recollecting what his views and feelings once were, the hostility of the Jews did not disappoint him. Truly penitent on account of his past conduct, and deeply feeling his obligation to his Redeemer for his forgiving mercy, he cheerfully endured persecution for his sake. The

more severe the trials, to which the fidelity of the Apostle exposed him, the stronger were the proofs he was able to give of his love of Christ, and of his conviction that the gospel is worthy of all acceptation.

Here an inquiry may be suggested to your minds, why were so many of the faithful servants of God permitted to suffer a martyr's death? It surely was not because God could not deliver them from their enemies—nor because he did not love them and approve their conduct—and it could not be because he took any pleasure in their sufferings. The object God doubtless had in view, was the permanent establishment of the true religion in the world—that religion which is finally to become universal and to bless all nations. The testimony of those, who suffered martyrdom for the sake of their crucified Lord and his cause is of great value, because of all persons they were the best qualified witnesses, as they lived at the time when Christianity was introduced and overcome all opposition—producing the most precious fruits wherever it was embraced. It does not appear that they were influenced by any selfish motive. It was love of Christ and their cordial belief in the truth of Christianity, which enabled them to endure without murmuring the afflictions to which they were exposed. Though the ways of God for a time seemed to them mysterious, yet, when they understood the end to be accomplished they admired his wisdom, and benevolence, and rejoiced to be accounted worthy to be witnesses for the truth. Even at the present day, their influence is most salutary, who give the most decisive proof that they are not influenced by selfish motives. They are the brightest lights in the church. Pure

were the motives, honorable the purposes, deep the piety and great the sufferings of our pilgrim fathers, who first landed on the shores of this western wilderness. We cannot read their history at this late period without the most exalted thoughts of the power of that religion, which sustained them and produced such excellent fruits. Those, who are instrumental in establishing churches, where they did not before exist, and where they may continue for many generations, may glory in their privations and afflictions, which give them an opportunity to manifest their love of Christ and of the souls men. How delightful must be their recollections in heaven! How delightful the recollections of the puritans, who first planted churches in this country, when they see the vast multitude, who are now members of them, and who from them have already united with them in the praise and worship of God and of the Lamb! What happy effects would be produced in the church, and how greatly would her influence be increased should christian ministers with decision and firmness, declare the whole counsel of God without any modification and without the aid of any system of philosophy; and should they fearlessly and manfully oppose every error of faith and of practice. They would no doubt be censured for their fidelity, but would give such proof of their sincerity and of the power of religion, and would produce a movement among the unrenewed. It is to be deeply lamented that some, who have been educated for the ministry by charitable institutions, are unwilling to go where they are most wanted. Unless they can obtain some desirable situation, they leave the ministry for some other employment, different

from that of a settled pastor. The man, who is willing to make no sacrifices for his Lord is not worthy of him. Difficulties, privations and sacrifices try the sincerity of professed christians. Prosperity we know makes friends; but adversity tries them. Ye did run well, said Paul to the Galatians, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth. When God revives his work, how many appear to receive the word with joy and to indulge a hope of salvation; who, when the excitement subsides give no evidence of piety.

3. Christians glory in tribulations, because they make them acquainted with their true character and call into exercise all their graces. How many, who appeared well, when they entered the church, and perhaps maintained for several years a fair character, have either departed from the faith they once professed, or have become immoral in their practice. Their faith did not stand in the power of God, and their corrupt inclinations were not mortified. Christians are tried every day. And there is great variety in the nature of their trials. Though in very many cases they may be victorious; yet they know not whether they will be able to endure to the end till the end actually arrives. Of the six hundred thousand men of the Hebrew nation; who left Egypt, only two of them entered the land of promise. The greater the number of our trials and the more severe they are, the more vigorous is our faith and the more vivid is our hope. If we have never experienced any severe trials, we know not how they that are future may affect us. Men of real piety, most distinguished for their powers of mind and their knowledge, when called to take the charge of a Christian congregation, always experience

much anxiety, till they ascertain, whether they can successfully discharge its duties. Tried men are those, on whom we can best depend for any office. Our confidence in ourselves increases just in proportion to our success in the discharge of the duties assigned us. Every true convert is at first afraid of being deceived, and is afraid of dishonoring the cause of his Lord and Redeemer. When tried, and he finds his strength equal to his day, then he glories in the trials, which produced such salutary effects.

Tribulation gives exercise to all the christian graces. Tribulation, said the apostle in connexion with the text, worketh patience, and patience, experience: and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. It checks the excited feelings in the new convert, which if not restrained and subjected to the rules of the gospel, would lead him to acts, which would destroy his influence and dishonor the cause of Christ. It is difficult for him at first to bear with patience and a proper spirit disappointments and opposition. Nothing is more common than for new converts to think that religion must appear as reasonable to others as it does to them. But they soon find that their strength is but weakness and their wisdom but folly in the view of unbelievers. While they faithfully discharge their duty they become convinced that dependence for success must be on the power of God. When their heart is overflowing with the love of souls; it seems to them, had they the power that they should immediately convert every sinner. But when they calmly meditate on the character and government of God;

they are forced to acknowledge that God is infinitely more wise and benevolent than they are, and they rejoice that all events are under his direction. Patience give beauty and excellence to the character of him, who has passed through many trials. How sensitive and irritable are those, who have been borne along on the tide of prosperity, when they meet with any, who have the boldness to call in question the correctness of their opinions. The fruit of patience is consistency of Christian character. That patience, which results from a view of our own insufficiency and of the fullness there is in God is essential to a complete exhibition of all the christian graces. So long as a restless spirit is indulged, so long we are unhappy and unfit for duty. When the mind is tranquil and all its powers subject to Christian discipline, such confidence in God and such delight in his service are experienced as afford the most satisfactory evidence that a work of grace has been wrought in the heart. The Spirit then beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. When God reveals himself to his people in their afflictions they have such views of his glory and of the richness of his grace as make them happy. Then may they glory in such outward trials, which are attended with inward joys.

4. Christians glory in tribulations, because they are one means of sanctification. Before I was afflicted, said the psalmist, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous said the apostle, nevertheless it afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them, which are exercised

thereby. Again. For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things, which are seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things, which are not seen are eternal. God often takes from his people those objects, which make them forgetful of the duties they owe him. Property is often taken from those, who abuse it. When churches become remiss in duty and too much conformed to the world, the most pernicious errors are permitted to spring up to try the real friends of the truth and to separate them from their enemies.

Tribulations soften the feelings of Christians, prepare them and dispose them to pray to God, and to offer to him the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Hold not thy peace, said the Psalmist, O God of my praise ; For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me ; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred ; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries : but I give myself unto prayer. Who were those, whom John in vision, saw, arrayed in white robes ? One of the elders, whom he saw, said unto him—These are they, which came out of great tribulation ; and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Why some suffer so much more than others, and why some are prospered so much more than others we know not. God will give us no account of his matters. None suffer more than they deserve. That variety in the condition of Christians, which is under the direction of infinite wisdom and benevolence, is designed to

exhibit to the world all the fruits of the Spirit. The severe afflictions of some are, no doubt, intended to qualify them to be bright lights in the church, which may show what may be done, and how duties may be performed. Why should Christians complain, when they have the promise that soon all their tears will be wiped away, and all their sorrows will cease? And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them, who are called according to his purpose.

5. Those, who from love of their Savior, glory in tribulations, experience in this world the most exalted happiness, and have the most lively hope of future life and glory. The earth with its beautiful fields and splendid cities has no charms for them. Their conversation is in heaven. Their hope is as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for them entered, even Jesus our High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Clear is their title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. The more tribulations wean them from the world; the brighter are their views of heaven, and the more ready are they to leave all temporal things. It is conformity to the world, which darkens the understanding and spreads a vail over the visible kingdom of Christ, and conceals from view its glory. In this life the Christian is permitted to have a foretaste and an earnest of the inheritance prepared for him. His hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him. He is an heir to a great inheritance—being the son of a great King, and is abundantly sup-

plied with every needed good during his minority. The Christian, in the midst of the most severe trials, would not exchange his title to his heavenly inheritance for all the treasures of the world. Well may the Christian glory in those tribulations, which are manifestly occasioned by his fidelity, and which enable him to see more clearly the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, which give him a knowledge of himself—promote his sanctification—give him an opportunity to express his sense of obligation to his adored Redeemer—enable him to overcome this world and to anticipate the joys of the future world.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

In view of the subject under consideration it is evident, that the more intense our love of Christ, the more we shall love the distinguishing truths of the gospel—the more ready we shall be to defend them—and the more willing we shall be to submit to hardships and sufferings—and if necessary to make ourselves of no reputation in his service. The faithful Christian and Christian minister must constantly struggle against counteracting influences. The Christian minister must constantly advance and draw his people after him. The state of the church in the world is militant. Churches are in some particulars like armies. As soldiers are most willing to follow a bold and decided commander, so Christians are most willing to follow a bold preacher and defender of the truth. If a preacher for any length of time omit to preach and to defend the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, his people will refuse to hear them. There is a constant tendency in churches to

depart from God and to become conformed to the world. It is the duty of the Christian minister to endeavor to keep them in the right way. That young man is not worthy of the ministerial office, whose inquiries, when about to commence his labors are the following—Where can I find the most agreeable situation?—Where can I receive the most liberal support? And where shall I have the most help and leisure? Though we do not hear these inquiries made; yet it is too evident to be denied that they do secretly influence not a few. The following are the inquiries of the most ardent lovers of Christ. Where does his cause need the most immediate attention and the most self-denying labors?

Those, who succeed in obtaining the most important situations and have the best opportunity to make known extensively and to defend the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, in too many instances are most disposed to accommodate their preaching to the taste of intelligent, but unrenewed men. The corruptions of the church have usually been first noticed in wealthy societies in opulent cities, where religious teachers have been enabled to live in comparative affluence—and whose popularity has been just in proportion to their departure from a high standard of piety. Were those, who occupy the high places of Zion to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, their influence would be extensively felt and they would accomplish much good. There are many, who would more boldly preach and defend the distinguishing truths of Christianity, could they be sustained and encouraged by those, who occupy the most conspicuous places. But did they possess the

spirit of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and could they glory in tribulation; they would experience that inward joy and peace, which would sustain them. If Christian ministers were distinguished for piety and sound orthodoxy; and if they were more determined to maintain strict discipline in the church; they might meet with more opposition from some; but would be more esteemed by others and would be more successful. It is in vain to expect that, the gospel can be so preached as to be agreeable to the feelings of the human heart, in its natural state. Those, who meet no opposition, cannot faithfully discharge their duty. There would be no need of any radical change, could the truth be so presented as to be agreeable to the feelings of the unrenewed. No saving change can be wrought without producing pain; for the unrenewed heart is opposed to the character of a Holy God.

The church at this time, seems to demand such preachers, as have the spirit of the Puritans, who were willing to submit to great sufferings that they might establish churches on a firm foundation. Such men are demanded, who will not yield to the influence of any of the errors of the present day. Are there not some present, who have such a sense of their obligation to their Redeemer, that they are willing to be placed in situations where they will have opportunities to express their love and gratitude to Him, who has done great things for them? Should Christians, faithfully discharge their duty the world would not remain at rest around them. Should they meet opposition; this would only humble them and make them mighty in prayer. Without trials they cannot expect to make great advancement in holiness. It is a faithful saying,

if we be dead with Him (i. e. with Christ,) we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, he will also deny us. Unto Him, then, that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE XII.



THE SABBATH.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.—EXODUS xx, 8.

THE extensive and daring profanation of the Christian Sabbath in these United States, cannot be observed with cold indifference by the real friends of God. The more perfectly they understand his will and the more intensely they love his character, the more deeply their feelings are wounded, when any of his institutions are neglected, or disregarded. His interest and honor are dear to their hearts. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, said the Psalmist, because they keep not thy law. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law. Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them. As Christians advance in holiness, so they will increase in zeal, in boldness and in their

endeavors to defend the claims of God. And it may also be remarked, as they advance in holiness, so they will themselves be more and more exact in keeping his commands.

Not a few who occupy the highest places in this nation, and who ought to be examples of moral virtue, treat the Lord's day, themselves, with open contempt, and compel those, who are dependent on them, to profane it. Their opinions must be changed and their lives must be reformed, before we can expect them to make an effort to prevent the desecration of an institution they have not been accustomed to respect

The time has come, when religious institutions must be defended by an exhibition of arguments, drawn from the volume of revelation and the resources of human reason, made effectual by the operations of the Holy Spirit. In most countries the church is connected with the state, and depends on it for support. The consequence is, the church is subject to the civil power, and by it is, and has been corrupted. We have reason to rejoice that in this country, the church and the state are not united. The church is independent and free. She is dependent for support and success, not on the power of the state, but on the Word and Spirit of God. The law of God is the rule, by which his friends must be governed. He seems now to be thus addressing his church. Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee, the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,

O captive daughter of Zion. All alliances of the church with the state are degrading, polluting, and injurious. The kingdom of Christ, though apparently poor and feeble, is in reality rich in resources and mighty in power. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge. Under the former dispensation, when the people of God trusted in him, however few they were in number, they were delivered from their enemies. But, when they trusted in an arm of flesh, forgetful of God, they were overcome and wasted.

Christians now support the gospel, not because they are required to do this by the laws of their country, but because they believe the ministry of the word to be an institution of God, and intimately connected with that plan God has adopted for the salvation of men. They observe the Sabbath, not because the sword of the civil magistrate is stretched over all, who profane it, but because God has said. *Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.*

In every thing pertaining to religion we acknowledge no sovereign but God, no code of laws but the Scriptures. Must not that obedience be most pure, and most acceptable to a holy being, which proceeds from love of his character and respect for his authority? Men have an opportunity to act freely. Desecration of the Sabbath does not expose them to the penalty of the civil law. But human institutions and laws cannot free them from their obligations to obey the divine law. Nothing now appears too great for Christians to attempt, who depend on God for success, and adopt plans, worthy of the approbation of Him, who is the most liberal being in the universe. When they put forth, concentrate, wisely direct, and vigorously

exercise all their powers in the pursuit of an important object; they seldom fail of obtaining it. The greater the advancement of the church in holiness; the more glorious will be the objects of her pursuit, and the greater will be the displays of God's power for her assistance.

In no part of the world, does the maintainance of Christian institutions depend less than in this country on the state. In no part of the world, is the church better instructed, and more free from superstition and gross errors. The church and the state are viewed as independent bodies, not united, but not hostile to each other. It is best that it should be so, that neither should intermeddle with the affairs of the other. Men have an opportunity to express their feelings and opinions with the most perfect freedom, and without fear of being called to account, and of being punished by the civil magistrate. The more perfect the developement of the character of man, the brighter will be the display of the glory of God, when every one is rewarded according to his deeds.

When Christ sent out his disciples to preach the gospel, he did not clothe them with civil or military power. He gave them his word, and it was his Spirit which gave them success. Had men been compelled to submit to the precepts of the gospel, of what value would have been their obedience? Had they been compelled to believe the doctrines of Christianity, of what value would have been their faith? It is the will of God that men should act freely, whether they accept or reject the offers of salvation. Love is the fulfilling of the law. No action can possess any moral excellence, which does not proceed from love of God. Those,

who would now see the institutions of God respected, must boldly and manfully defend them, and rely for success on the invisible operations of the Spirit of God. Christians are the light of the world. It is their indispensable duty to honor God. They can do much by a consistent life, and by an exhibition of proper arguments. God looks to them to defend his cause. They must act. A great weight of responsibility rests on them. There is no neutral ground. He that is not for me, said Christ, is against me. God speaks to his church, and through them to the potentates of the earth and the people, over whom they exercise authority.

Now the Sabbath is that institution, on the right observance of which depend the perpetuity and prosperity of the visible church in the world. What we can do must be done to prevent its desecration. Several inquiries demand particular consideration.

1. When was the Sabbath instituted?

2. How does it appear that we are now bound to observe the first day of the week?

3. How does God regard its desecration?

1. The inquiry, *when was the Sabbath instituted*, will first be considered.

The Scriptures teach us that the Sabbath was instituted immediately after the work of creation was completed. Moses, who wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, having described the works performed during the first six day of the week, particularly noticed the rest of the seventh day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made; and he rested on the

seventh day from all his work, which he made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he rested from all his work, which God created and made. No honest inquirer after truth, who desires to know the will of God that he may do it, can for a moment doubt that the Sabbath was sanctified and blessed immediately after the work of creation was finished. It cannot be questioned that Moses, an inspired historian, intended to make this impression on the minds of all, who read the Scriptures. It is the impression made on the minds of the greater portion of readers of the sacred volume. Why, it may be asked, unless God had in view the division of time into weeks, to be observed by man, the lord of the lower world, was he just six days in completing the works of creation? Why did he rest on the seventh day, more than afterward, unless he intended that men should suspend all labor on that day and spend it in communion with him? In what sense, it may be asked, was the seventh day sanctified and blessed, except by the special presence of God with his people on that day? This is the day, when God has engaged to meet those, disposed to worship him. When God had finished the work of creation he rested, and has continued to rest from that work till this day. One day in seven is a token of a covenant between God and his people, which he himself specially regards, and requires them to observe.

He might, we know, have made the world in one day as well as in six. But his object seems to have been to teach man that he might labor six days every week, and that the seventh must be spent in the worship of God. Was it not an expression of divine

benevolence, when he had created man, made him lord of this lower world, and accountable to him for all his conduct as a moral being, to spend one day in seven in making known to him by his servants his duty, and in receiving his petitions and his homage? Many overlook one very important consideration. God obligates himself by the Sabbath, as a token of his covenant, to meet his people in a special manner, when they are disposed by the faithful discharge of their duty to meet him.

As God had the highest claim to the service of man, whom he had created, and who was dependent on him for all things ; it was perfectly reasonable that he should require him to spend the first day of his life in communion with him, and especially as abundant provision had been made for his support. What could be more natural for man, while the clear light of innocence shone in his soul, and he saw God in the works of creation, than to be affected with a view of the beauties of nature, the displays of the power, wisdom and goodness of his Creator, and to adore and worship him? The feelings excited by the great and marvelous works of God could not be restrained, and to use the language of the prince of the English poets, might thus be expressed :

“ These are thy glorious works, Parent of good

“ Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,

“ Thus wondrous fair ; Thyself how wondrous then !

“ Unspeakable, who sittest above the heavens

“ To us invisible, or dimly seen

“ In these thy lowest works, yet these declare

“ Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

Man was created capable of worshipping and enjoying his Creator. His duty was connected with his highest happiness. Who so well understood as our Maker, our nature and constitution, the structure of our mind and our body, as well as our various wants?

The Sabbath by some has been distinguished from the other commandments of the moral law, and has been called a *positive* institution. But it has been found by innumerable experiments to be as agreeable to our nature as any other command. Both man and beast have better health, live longer, and accomplish more by resting on the Sabbath than by laboring on that day. Though God might teach our first parents their duty by revelation; yet the light of nature made clear by various experiments, requires us to rest from our labors one day in seven. The Sabbath distinguishes man from all other animals. On this day he is permitted with the most perfect freedom to hold communion with God. This privilege may be enjoyed by the humblest person, who is hardly allowed to enter the presence of the haughty potentates of this world—much less to cultivate an intimacy with them. The inquiry is sometimes made, was the same day of the week observed, both, before and after the giving of the law at mount Sinai?

It has been maintained by some that the Sabbath was not instituted till the law was given at Sinai, because it is not so much as once mentioned by the inspired historian from the ii. chapter of Genesis to the xvi. of Exodus. That argument appears to be of little weight, when we consider the brevity of the history, which relates to this period; that the publication of the law at Sinai, was intended to be a more

perfect expression of the divine will than had before been made. The law, (the written law) said the Apostle, was added, because of transgression. How could there have been any transgression had there been no law given? For where no law is there is no transgression. The giving of the law at Sinai must, therefore, be considered as the solemn republication of the law, already made known, but neglected, and perhaps by some wholly disregarded. The law given to our first parents, when innocent, and written in their hearts only, by degrees, after their apostacy, ceased to be carefully obeyed. If the silence of the Scriptures in the case already noticed prove any thing, it proves too much. For the Sabbath is not mentioned from the time of Joshua to the time of David. Can any one suppose that it was not observed during this long period? Can we for a moment admit that from the creation of the world to the time, when the children of Israel entered the wilderness, a space of about two thousand and five hundred years, there were no stated times for public worship? Except by divine appointment, how could there have been any agreement with respect to the time employed in public worship? And except by divine appointment how could there have been any thing morally excellent, in the observance of one day in seven, in the performance of religious duties? Reasoning from the wisdom and goodness of God, the conclusion seems to be irresistible, that the Sabbath was appointed immediately after the creation of our first parents, was written in their hearts, and was intended as a permanent law for them, and their posterity. The division of time into weeks, was well understood

by Noah. After the return of the dove, which he sent out the first time, he waited other seven days, and after her return the second time, he waited other seven days. In the days of the Patriarchs, the division of time into weeks was known and observed. Fulfill her week, said Laban to Jacob, and I will give thee this also for the service, which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. "According to the tradition of the ancients," observed a learned writer, "Abraham and his posterity having preserved the memory of the creation, observed the Sabbath also." Philo, a learned Jew, makes the following remark. "The Sabbath is not a festival peculiar to any country or people, but is common to the whole world, and that it may be named the general and public festival, and that of the nativity of the world." Josephus assures us that, in his time there was no city, Greek or Barbarian, where the religion of the Sabbath was not known. Hesiod and Homer speak of the seventh day, as of a day sacred and venerable. Other writers testify to the same things. If the Sabbath were made for man, as declared by our Savior, then it was designed for the whole human race. If it were reasonable and proper, for the Jews to observe one day in seven for the worship of God; it was no less reasonable and proper, for all other nations to do the same.

It is not improbable that the children of Israel, while dwelling among Pagans in Egypt, and greatly oppressed, became remiss in the observance of the Sabbath. It can hardly be supposed that they lost the knowledge of the seventh day. There were, no doubt, some pious ones among them. It is, highly probable, that they were acquainted with the art of

writing, when they sojourned in Egypt. As God could not, himself, have forgotten, which day was the Sabbath; so He, clearly made known his will respecting it before the Hebrews reached mount Sinai. The manna was not given on the Sabbath. This distinguished the day of rest from all other days. Six days, said Moses to the Hebrews, before they came to Sinai, ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. Twice as much fell on the sixth day, as on any other day. And none fell on the seventh. See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days. Abide, ye, every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.

The law of the ten commandments, written on the tables of stone, and republished at mount Sinai, is the moral law—the law of nature, written in the hearts of all mankind, and which their consciences, when properly enlightened approve. The Hebrews were commanded to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Had it not been known, they could not have forgotten it. If they had not forgotten the seventh day, they had probably neglected to perform the duties required of them, and which are mentioned in the written law. A man may be said not to remember a day, in the most important sense, when he neglects to perform the duty, required on that day. The day the Hebrews were commanded to remember to keep holy, was doubtless the day originally sanctified and blessed, when God rested from the work of creation.

The deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptian

bondage, was urged as a proof of the goodness of Him, who gave them his law, and as a motive to obey all his commands, but it was not the foundation of their obligation. All the favors God bestows upon us are so many proofs of his goodness and so many motives to do his will.

2. How does it appear that we are now bound to observe the first day of the week as holy time?

It may first be remarked in answer to this inquiry, the *repeal* of all those laws, which had special reference to the Hebrews, could not affect the moral law, which is equally obligatory on all mankind. Nothing can be more absurd and revolting to the feelings of every Christian than the supposition that the moral law has been swept away with the ritual of the Mosaic dispensation. The moral law is as necessary now as at any former period. Christianity contains it, magnifies it, and makes it appear honorable. The moral law is founded on the unchangeable relation man sustains to God. It will continue in full force till the end of time. That man, from the beginning, has been required to keep one day in seven is too evident to be questioned. No one can believe that, the increase of light and privileges under the present dispensation has diminished our obligation to worship God. The abolition of Jewish festivals, called Sabbaths, because the people rested from their labors, did not affect that institution, not intended for the Jews only but for all mankind. The indifference, which Paul manifested with respect to subjects, which were not essential, was by no means an expression of his feelings with regard to subjects of vital importance.

But if the seventh day under the former dispensa-

tion were kept as holy time, *how does it appear, you may inquire, that under this dispensation we are bound to keep the first day?*

That the change from the seventh to the first day, took place at the time of the resurrection of Christ is generally admitted. Had the change taken place at a subsequent period, would it not have been considered an innovation, which would have been noticed by all ecclesiastical writers? Who, but inspired men would have ventured to make such a change? And would not these be the last men to make it, without authority from their Lord?

That this was the practice of the apostles, who spake and acted as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is abundantly evident from the New Testament. The first day of the week was distinguished by the special presence of their risen Lord. When the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, peace be unto you. And after eight days, again his disciples were within and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you.

Fifty days after the Passover, it being the first day of the week, they were all with one accord in one place. This day was honored by the mighty operations of the Holy Spirit. When Paul was at Troas, and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples were come together to break bread he preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight. Collections were made for

indigent saints on the first day of the week, according to apostolic direction. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come. The most ancient writers in the Christian church, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Melito, expressly mention the observance of the first day of the week as holy time. Pliny speaks of it as the sacred day of Christians, a very few years after the death of John. Now, if we admit that the apostles were inspired, and acted, as well as spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; why are we not bound to respect their practice as well as their instructions? They met together the first day of the week for religious worship, and this day has been observed ever since as holy time by the Christian church.

The change from the seventh to the first day of the week was not made without good reason.

The first day of the week, has the same relation to the work performed by the second person in the ever blessed Trinity as the seventh to the first person. As God rested on the seventh day, when he had finished the work of creation, so Christ rested on the first day after he had finished his part in the work of redemption. As the work of redemption is more important than the work of creation; so it is more important to observe the rest of the first day than that of the seventh. The seventh day was the first day of man's life, the first day is the day when the Christian and spiritual dispensation commenced, and the first day of the Christian church. I was in the Spirit, said John,

on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am alpha and omega, the first and the last. On the first day the Lord of the Sabbath delivered his messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor.

It cannot be said that God has not made known his will with sufficient clearness to obligate us to remember the first day of the week to keep it holy. Those, who object to the observance of the first day of the week instead of the seventh, or who contend that we have not sufficient proof that the change has been effected by divine authority, it is believed keep no day as holy time. Though it is important that all should keep the same day; yet the proportion of time to be devoted to the service of God is especially to be regarded. Those, who are willing to spend one day in seven in religious exercises, are not disposed to question the propriety of keeping the day, which is kept by the church of God. The change of dispensation and of the day of sacred rest did not change the nature of man. He needs one day in seven as a day of rest as much as ever. And he needs one day in seven for public worship. It is said by some, who are unwilling to contribute any thing for the support of the ministry, we can worship God as well in private as in the great congregation. Their own practice proves that this opinion is not correct. Why do the young and gay assemble in great numbers and at great expense, when they expect to experience an unusual degree of enjoyment? Is it not the design of great mass meetings to produce a high degree of excitement, which individuals feel long after they are dissolved? A fire kindled in a great collection of fuel will be

more powerful and produce more intense heat ; than if the fuel should be divided into a hundred little parcels and the fire should be kindled in each. Public worship gives an impulse to private worship ; they mutually aid each other. Man possesses a variety of capacities. Secret, social, and public worship are all agreeable to his nature. They are all agreeable to the feelings of the true Christian.

3. How God regards the profanation of the Sabbath will next be considered.

The increase of light under the present dispensation has not diminished, but rather increased the guilt of those, who profane the Sabbath. If then we can ascertain how God regarded the profanation of the Sabbath under the former dispensation, we may determine how he regards it now. One case is mentioned, Numbers xv, 32—36. And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man, that gathered sticks on the Sabbath day.—And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall surely be put to death ; all the congregation shall stone him without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses. Thus God interpreted his own law. Some of late have noticed this case as an objection to the moral law. But must not that man be very guilty, who for a mere trifle ventures to rebel against God, and to treat his authority with contempt ? How are robbers and pirates viewed, who to obtain small sums as well as large, and when they are not in distress, murder their fellow creatures ? Are not such men considered the most hardened and most deserving of punishment ? How do we view the

man, who murders his neighbor for a small offence?

The Sabbath is the token of a covenant between God and this nation, which is favored with a more perfect revelation of his will than was enjoyed by the Jews. His will is expressed in the following passage. I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them; and hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Because the Jewish nation profaned the Sabbath God said, I will pour out my fury upon them, and accomplish my anger against them. National desecration of the Sabbath may be expected to occasion national calamities. Ezek. xx, 19—21. The following passage shows the connexion between the observance of the Sabbath and national prosperity. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thy 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. Isaiah lviii, 13, 14. How can earthly potentates expect to be obeyed; if they do not respect the laws of him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords? Their responsibility is in proportion to their rank in the community over which their authority extends. Neglect of the duties we owe to God on the Sabbath is a profanation of holy time. It is a profanation of the day to compel any, who are employed by us, to perform work, not of

necessity or mercy. Worldly conversation and reading books, which are not religious—also travelling, except in extreme cases, are all violations of the sanctity of the Sabbath.

Though there are few, if any countries where the Sabbath is better observed than in the United States; yet its desecration by men, who occupy the most important offices should alarm us. But as the church is not connected with the state, should Christians do their duty, we should have reason to hope for the continued smiles of Providence. They are allowed to defend the Sabbath by the most forcible arguments, and by respectful petitions to persuade the rulers of the nation to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. The church is the light of the world and the salt of the earth. A great weight of responsibility rests on the professed friends of God. Should the church do her duty, God may raise to the highest offices men of piety, who will respect the Sabbath themselves, and whose influence will be extensively felt. Neither individuals, nor communities can expect to prosper, if they provoke him to anger, on whom they are dependent for life, and breath, and all things. The curse of God seems to rest on all, who profane that day, they are required to keep holy. There may be individuals, who are atheistic in their practice, and who for a time prosper. But their children experience the bitter consequences of their guilt. I have seen the wicked, said the Psalmist, in great power 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. Innumerable facts may be adduced to show that God maintains a controversy with such as

refuse to worship him. Though he may bear long with them, yet surely they cannot escape punishment.

It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that no part of the world enjoys such perfect security, so many privileges, and such a degree of freedom, as that where the Sabbath is most carefully observed. Poor as is the soil, and cold as is the climate of New England, there is less ignorance, less immorality, and less poverty in that part of our country than in any other equal portion. There, for more than two hundred years the experiment has been fairly tried; and what has been the effect of remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy? The Puritans of New England revered the Sabbath—the ministry of the word, and treated with respect every thing pertaining to the worship of God. That there has been a gradual departure from the holy practice of our fathers cannot be denied. Abolish the Sabbath and we must look for the judgments of God—such as occasioned the seventy years captivity of the Jews, and more than one hundred and seventy years captivity of the ten tribes of Israel. The wrath of God has rested on them for more than eighteen hundred years on account of their rejection of Christ. And are not those guilty of rejecting him, who profane the Lord's day? What then may we, on whom the light of Christianity shines with unclouded splendor, expect if we refuse to remember the Lord's day to keep it holy? The watchmen begin to be alarmed now, they see the man of sin in the midst of us endeavoring to gain the ascendancy in this country.

As there is now a movement among Christians for the better observance of the Lord's day, it is of vast importance that, every Christian minister and every

church co-operate in this work. In many of our towns, perhaps in most of them there are families, which never visit the house of God, and are almost as ignorant as heathen of the leading truths of the gospel. They must be visited and must be taught their duty. Their ignorance exposes them to the vilest fanaticism. The church occupies a place between God and the nation at large. Had ten righteous persons been found in Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities would not have been destroyed. It depends very much, therefore, under God on the character and conduct of the church, whether we shall continue as a nation to enjoy peace and prosperity, or whether we shall be visited with desolating and distressing calamities. Let the church fearlessly declare the great truths of Christianity taught by our Puritan fathers—let her boldly defend the institutions of God; and she may hope in answer to her fervent prayers that the clouds, which now hang over us will be scattered. The kindness and respect she has long received from worldly men has induced her to make too many concessions to them. In many instances very little difference can be discovered between those, who are members of the church and those, who are not. Errors have sprung up in the church and wholesome discipline has been neglected. It is time for ministers depending on the word and Spirit of God to advance, boldly contending for the truth, and urging with powerful arguments to strict observance of the institutions of God. It is their timidity which exposes them to disrespect, and which in a great measure destroys their influence. What would Luther or Knox have effected had they not possessed great moral courage? They

made the impression on the minds of all, who heard them, that they believed the truths they preached. Courage, whether natural or moral, is always admired. If Christians advance, their enemies will be put to flight. They are the light of the world, and as the light progresses the darkness is gradually diminished. Onward, let the movements of the church be onward and powerful, and multitudes will follow her steps. Amen.

DISCOURSE XIII.



THE FINAL SEPARATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS FROM THE WICKED.

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats.—MATH. xxv, 32.

THE descriptions of the scenes of the future judgment and its consequences, which we find in the discourses of our Savior, as we know they will correspond with solemn realities, which we must all witness, and in which we must ourselves be interested, are suited to operate powerfully on our minds and to move us to make seasonable preparations for the day of final

retribution. We are persuaded, that he who came down from heaven to be our teacher, and who gave his life for our redemption, could not himself be deceived, and could have no desire to awaken in us unnecessary alarm. In all his addresses to his disciples he was influenced by the most expanded benevolence. He perfectly understood his Father's will and the purposes of his grace before he visited the habitations of rebellious men. He had a correct knowledge of the places, to which the righteous and the wicked are hastening. It was his knowledge of facts as they exist and will exist in the invisible world which affected his heart, and made him willing to labor and suffer for our salvation. He saw numbers dropping daily into the abyss of woe from which there is no deliverance. He saw multitudes in this world under sentence of death, and wholly inattentive to the concerns of their souls. He understood the connexion between the conduct of men in time and their condition in eternity. Time appeared to him to be short, though long enough to afford us an opportunity to make sure of heaven. Men are constantly acting for eternity, though they seem not to be aware of it. The righteous are constantly laying up treasures and making provisions for their future state; and the wicked are fitting themselves for endless misery. When Christ was on earth the visible and invisible worlds were equally well known to him. He did not see things as we do through a glass, darkly. All things in heaven, on earth, and in the regions of darkness—all things past, present and future were constantly before him. He could estimate the value of things, and measure the magnitude of objects with the most

perfect accuracy. In these particulars he was superior to all other teachers. His views were always clear, comprehensive and affecting; and the feelings of his heart were always susceptible of being moved. In his instructions we may place entire confidence. And we may with the powers we possess, assisted by the light of revelation, contemplate the scenes, which will be disclosed when we enter the invisible world. The Scriptures help us to understand what will be the condition, both of the righteous and the wicked, after the present life. It is by dwelling on future realities, which makes us anxious to secure an incorruptible inheritance. Men of the world that they may not be disturbed, while engaged in their various pursuits, seldom, if ever, meditate on those subjects, which most deeply concern them, and which are best suited to fit them for the enjoyment of heaven.

The text leads us to meditate on the final separation, which will hereafter be made between the righteous and the wicked. That there will be such a separation the text explicitly declares.

In the following discourse our attention will be directed to the person by whom, to the principles on which, the separation will be made, and also to the consequences.

1. The person by whom the separation will be made.

The Scriptures assure us that the separation will be made by Christ, the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, whom God has appointed to be the judge of the world. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not

the Father, which hath sent him. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And the times of this ignorance God winketh at, but commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereby he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. The wisdom of God is manifested in the appointment of Jesus Christ, the sinner's friend, to be the judge of the world. Those, who are condemned will not be condemned by one, who never gave proofs of his compassion. It will not appear to the universe that the impenitent are punished by one destitute of tender sensibility, but by Him, who was in the most important sense, the sinner's friend. This will give lustre to the divine character, and make it appear glorious even in the punishment of the wicked.

When meditating on the divine law and especially on its penalty, the sinner without due consideration sometimes views God as an unfeeling sovereign and judge. God appears to him unnecessarily strict and severe in punishing the least guilty of the human race with everlasting destruction. But he can never contemplate the cross of Christ, call to recollection the many proofs he has given of his love, the many offers of pardon he has made without money and without price, the many opportunities he has given him for obtaining salvation, without being compelled to

acknowledge that God is *merciful* as well as *just*. And how can he call to remembrance his treatment of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit without feeling that he is justly condemned? Nothing will distress him so much as a knowledge of the fact that his punishment is inflicted by him, who gave his life to redeem him and whose offers he rejected.

The Son of man, when he sits to judge the world, will appear in his glory. And though he will appear in human form—in the body he had when he left the world; yet it will be clothed in such splendor as mortals never beheld. The prayer he offered just before his crucifixion, when he was with his disciples, no doubt has been answered. And now, O Father, he said, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was. It is impossible for us in the present state to have any conception of the glorious majesty of the Son of man, when he is seated on his throne to judge the world. We have beheld nothing in this visible world, which can be compared with the awful grandeur of the scene, which will then pass before us. And I saw a great white throne, said John, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. How terrible must be his countenance, whose eyes are as a flame of fire. The natural sun, shining with dazzling brightness at noon day, is but a feeble emblem of the Son of righteousness, when revealed as the judge of the world.

A vast company of holy angels, high in dignity, great in knowledge, and of unspotted purity, will surround the judge to hear and approve his decisions. How vast and how solemn must be the assembly,

when all the angels of heaven—the spirits of darkness—and the generations of men come together to be judged! The secrets of all hearts will be fully known, and the real characters of all intelligent beings will be fairly exhibited. Then the wisdom and benevolence of God displayed in the plan and work of redemption will be understood by the wicked, as well, as by the righteous. God will appear glorious, not only, in rewarding all, who repented of their sins and received his offers of mercy through faith in Christ, but in excluding from heaven all, who rejected his Son.

II. The principles, according to which the righteous will be separated from the wicked, will next be considered.

1. The law of God, which is holy, and just, and good, which is written in the hearts of all men, and which is the result of infinite wisdom and benevolence, will be one of the rules by which all mankind will be judged. Those, who are without the written law, will be judged without it. Multitudes of the human race, a very large proportion of mankind have never been favored with the written law. They will be judged by the law written in their hearts. Those, who have been favored with the written law and have not obeyed it, will be more severely punished than those, who never received it. The law of God will be applied to the hearts of men as well as to their outward conduct. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart. The impenitent are those, who never in a single instance obeyed from the heart, the precepts of the divine law. The language of their hearts is, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have,

if we pray unto him? Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Could such persons with such feelings be admitted into heaven; they could not be happy among those, who delight to serve and worship God. How can God be pleased to have such near Him in heaven, who constantly rebel against him, or who are in their hearts his enemies? He will most assuredly banish from his presence all, who persevere in disobedience to his commands.

2. If it be said, we were born with depraved hearts, and it is impossible for us to attain the sinless perfection demanded of us by the divine law; it may be replied, God is willing to accept the obedience of faith. And this is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 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. Those, who have the Scriptures in their own language and a faithful ministry and who persevere in unbelief, will be condemned not only for their transgressions of the written law, but for their rejection of a crucified Savior. The sin of unbelief is more displeasing to God than transgressions of the moral law. Unbelief is a denial of the veracity of God and a contempt of his wonderful mercy, manifested in the plan and work of redemption. The law of God is an exhibition of his justice and benevolence to his obedient subjects; but Christianity offers pardon and salvation to transgressors, who repent and return to him through faith in Jesus Christ. The moral law, by which many seem willing to be judged, who reject the peculiar doctrines of

Christianity, contains no intimation of mercy, and allows of no excuse for any transgression. It demands sinless perfection in thought and feeling as well as in outward conduct. Did those, who continue in unbelief, properly understand the extent of the divine law, they would be convinced that no transgressor can be justified by its deeds. They do not pretend to be perfect and yet hope to be justified by that law, which demands sinless perfection as the only ground of justification. They persuade themselves that allowance will be made for their acknowledged imperfections by that law, which cannot make any allowance for sin—the language of which is, the soul that sinneth it shall die. The law of faith affords to the transgressor the only ground, on which he can expect future happiness. Those, therefore, who refuse to receive the offers of salvation through faith in the Son of God, will certainly fail of entering heaven.

The love, which God has expressed toward his enemies, has filled the habitation of holy angels with wonder. To reject his beloved Son, whom he gave to be a sacrifice for us must highly offend him. The Scriptures make it evident that the guilt of those, who refuse to embrace the offers of pardon through faith in Jesus Christ, is much greater than that of those, who never heard of a Savior. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? It will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for those

who are favored with the gospel and die in unbelief. The principles according to which the righteous will be separated from the wicked will be perfectly just and equitable. They will be approved by all holy beings. Even those, who perish will be made to feel that they are justly condemned. Every mouth will be stopped. In the present world many separations take place, which alarm sinners, and sometimes produce the most happy results. When some of the members of a family become the subjects of renewing grace, they forsake the amusements, which once delighted them—go with cheerful feet to the place where prayer is wont to be made, and choose for their companions the truly pious. Their change of conduct condemns, not only their former practices, but also the favorite practices of their former companions. But the separation of the righteous from the wicked in this life is not perfect. They dwell together and are members of the same community. They are seen together in the house of God, and unite in the support of religious institutions. It may be added, some, who make a profession of religion, and who act with the people of God will at last be classed with the impenitent. The separation mentioned in the text has particular reference to the church. The sheep represent true Christians—the goats false professors. God will not spare hypocrites, more than those who never made any profession of religion. He that searcheth the heart cannot be deceived. How can he be pleased with the professions, which only conceal from men unholy affections? In the final separation of the righteous from the wicked, there will be no mistake. There will be a visible distinction. The countenances

of the righteous will express the holy and happy feelings of their heart—but the countenances of the wicked will express the deep distress, and agony they will experience. It will appear that the righteous only are fitted for mansions in heaven, and that the wicked could not be happy if admitted to that holy place.

III. I must now proceed to mention some of the consequences of the separation, which is the subject of this discourse.

1. The righteous will be far and forever removed from the wicked—the secret as well as the open enemies of God—from all temptations to sin. In this world they are often closely connected with the wicked—by the ties of nature—and by business. They naturally influence each other. The influence of Christians is felt and is salutary wherever they are. On the other hand, the influence of the wicked, in a greater or less degree counteracts that of the righteous. The company we keep and the subjects on which we converse always have a transforming influence. In heaven the righteous will be constantly associated with holy beings, and will be constantly in the presence of their beloved and adored Redeemer. They will meet such as have made great attainments in holiness—they will meet the patriarchs—the prophets—the apostles—the martyrs—and saints of every nation. To be with such as delight in the service of God must powerfully stimulate them to worship him with all their powers. In this life, how much one, who is eminently pious can affect others, in whose hearts a work of grace has been wrought! As one sinner is capable of destroying much good, so one Christian may accomplish much

good. We are all susceptible of being affected. Who is not sensible of this, who has visited a place, where God was reviving his work and where Christians were more than ordinarily engaged in the discharge of religious duties? As it is the grief of all the true friends of God in the present state to see his laws transgressed, so in heaven it will increase their happiness to see him honored and to hear his name praised, by the great congregation of the redeemed. This world is but a dark prison compared with heaven. Here the adversary has great power—and the great majority of the human race are his willing servants. The true church is a feeble light shining in a dark place. There will be the most perfect agreement among the righteous, when separated from the wicked. Purified from sin, their views of doctrine and of practice will perfectly harmonize. So much sin remains in the best of men in the present world, as to prevent a perfect agreement with respect to many subjects, connected with the interests of religion. Where they agree in their views of doctrine, they often disagree in regard to things not essential to salvation. Sometimes warm controversies, and lasting alienations of feeling, may be traced to a difference of opinions respecting outward ordinances or ecclesiastical polity. In heaven nothing but the truth, clearly seen and understood will be approved. Perfect love of God, will unite all hearts, and be the fulfilling of the divine law.

2. How keen must be the sorrow of the wicked, when they see the righteous separated from them, and to be far removed from them forever! And what distress must they experience, when they hear the Judge say to those, whom they once despised—Come, ye

blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world! The recollection that they made light of the offers of mercy, which the righteous accepted will give a poignancy to their sufferings, which cannot be described. Much as Christians are despised by the proud and ambitious; it must be admitted that they are most ready to relieve the suffering. Charitable institutions abound where Christian churches are prosperous. To men devoted to worldly pursuits, the most pious are viewed as unworthy of their notice and unfit for their society. They choose the way they pursue. Had they sincerely repented, which they were required to do, and believed, in the Lord Jesus Christ they might have been saved. But they would not come to Christ that they might have life. They neglected the means of grace, or treated them with indifference—they disregarded the most solemn and affectionate admonitions, and resisted, and grieved the Holy Spirit. Heaven is now the home of the righteous and God is their portion; but the wicked must be shut up in prison from which there can be no escape, and the wrath of their offended Sovereign must be their portion forever. Cut off from all their worldly possessions and pleasures as well as from the favor of God, and the friendship of the righteous, and associated with the most vile, they will never cease to weep, and wail, and to blaspheme the name of their Creator. There will be no possibility of their enjoying another opportunity of their making their peace with God. And there will be no possibility of the least mitigation of their pain. On the other hand it will constantly increase. The worm will never die and the fire will never be

quenched. Eternity, O eternity!—There is something unutterably dreadful in the thought of enduring the wrath of God forever!

3. Observe now, my hearers, the separations already made among those whom you know. The church is in the minority. It is a little flock compared with the world. But it would be much less should all those members be excluded, who give no satisfactory evidence of piety. There are but few, whose piety is universally acknowledged. And none but the truly pious will be saved. How many still remain unrenewed! Christ who cannot deceive or be deceived, has assured us that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Very few really believe that they have been born of the Spirit. Can you, my hearers, remain at ease—sleep quietly, when you have no reason to believe that your peace has been made with God—when you have more reason to fear that you will be lost, than to hope that you will be saved? You have cause, great cause for alarm. It surely is time to awake, and to commence that work, without the accomplishment of which none will be saved. Should you die impenitent, what must be your feelings when you recollect the times, when you were almost persuaded to forsake your sins and to become disciples of Christ? No excuse will be admitted even by yourselves for your folly and wickedness. How indescribable must be your grief, when you find that your probationary state is ended, and that your Savior has become your implacable enemy?

Why will you not now bring before you and contemplate those scenes, described in the word of God, which must hereafter become present, and in which

you must be interested? You are accustomed to contemplate worldly scenes as presented to your imagination and to make preparations to meet apprehended evils, and also to secure the possession of desirable objects. The Scriptures describe only such scenes as have been, or will certainly be witnessed. Why must the soul, which is capable of enjoying everlasting life, or of suffering everlasting pain be neglected?

4. With the volume of revelation, as a bright light, let me lead you to the place of Judgment. Suppose you stand before the awful tribunal of God, just as you now are—without any essential change of character; you must be separated from the righteous and must be cast into that prison, from which there can be no escape. Eternal scenes now burst on your view—and the world once your home is but a mass of burning and smoking ruins. What must be your reflections! Thus will the sinner commune with himself. O that I had improved the opportunities, which were in mercy given me, and by which I was distinguished from hundreds of millions of the human race! The angels that sinned never had any offer of pardon. But God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. The light of the gospel shone on me from my earliest years till my death. I had innumerable admonitions and exhortations. How foolish and wicked to make light of the great things done for the redemption of men? Many times I resolved that I would attend to the concerns of my soul, but my resolutions were scarcely

made before they were broken by some trifling diversion. Now I am ruined, and ruined forever. I must be banished forever from the presence of God and from the society of the holy and happy. I must have my portion with the devil and his angels. The wrath of man, when clothed with power is terrible; but the wrath of God is as much more terrible than the wrath of man as God is greater than man. O that I had made religion my chief concern when there was a space for repentance! Now the door of heaven is forever shut against me. There will never be any change in my character or condition. But the day of judgment has not yet arrived. You now have an opportunity to make your peace with God and to obtain a good hope of heaven. Be persuaded without delay to make religion your chief concern till prepared to meet your Lord, when he comes to judge the world.

5. As particular views are more affecting than those, which are general, let us contemplate the separations of those, nearly related to each other, or in various ways connected with others in the present life.

The separations between faithful ministers and those, who were not benefitted by their ministry must be indescribably painful. When the impenitent meet for the last time him, who for years labored for their salvation, and whose labors were the means of converting others—they will recollect every discourse that was delivered—all the arguments used to persuade them to embrace the truth and to accept the offers of salvation. They will recollect all the objections they made to the truth—all their excuses for their impenitence—all their fault-finding with the sacred ministry. They will remember the earnest prayers they heard

in the house of God—the impressions occasionally made on their minds, which were obliterated by worldly amusements—they will recollect the many fair promises they made, how near they once were to the kingdom of God, and how they grieved away the Holy Spirit. These recollections must pierce the heart of every impenitent sinner. When the eye of him, to whose discourses they once listened with cold indifference, is fastened on them, their heart will die within them, and they will feel that they are justly condemned. What remorse must they experience, when they recollect that they voluntarily sacrificed their immortal interests for the momentary joys of this world! Now, sinner, you are listening to the messages of God—now is an acceptable time and a day of salvation—now you may obtain pardon and a good hope of eternal life. Awake, I pray you from the slumbers produced by worldly pursuits and enjoyments—burst the fetters, which bind you to this earth and make sure of offered good.

The impenitent will recollect the lives of Christians, which were illustrations of the principles of Christianity. Though imperfect, yet they made sufficiently plain the path of duty. The Scriptures never authorized them to look for perfection in the church, or in any individual of it. There is a difference between the life of a real Christian and an unbeliever, though not as strikingly manifest as it ought to be. The truth is, the impenitent take pains to counteract the influence of the evidence, which attends the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. All their powers are employed in the destruction of themselves. This they will understand, and this will cut them off from every

source of relief, and render their misery indescribable.

The separation of children, who die impenitent, from pious parents, will be inconceivably painful. Where parents are pious and exemplary we seldom see all their children pious. Sometimes the wickedness of children is in proportion to the piety of their parents. The constant influence of the light shining on them hardens their heart, and excites its enmity. Without the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, neither the instructions, nor the example of pious parents can effect any radical change in the hearts of their children. What can be more affecting than the recollections of parents and children when they meet for the last time before the judgment-seat of Christ? How very different the recollections of the penitent and the impenitent—who enjoyed the same instructions, and had before them the same holy examples! As the impenitent were favored with the same instructions and examples as the penitent; they must blame themselves for their continued unbelief. Children are accustomed to imitate their parents in many things; why should they not imitate them in becoming the followers of Christ? The happy changes witnessed in the lives of their nearest friends must convince them of the necessity and importance of a change in their own hearts. The impenitent can never forget how a brother or a sister became hopefully pious, while they remained unmoved. Nothing will be more heart-rending than to be condemned by pious parents—and pious brothers and sisters, who must unite with the Judge, and approve all his decisions. Let me now urge the impenitent children of pious parents to think seriously of these things till their hearts

are affected, and till they become anxious to obtain a good hope of salvation. Those, who are really anxious to obtain salvation will improve every circumstance, which will increase their solicitude to secure the object of their pursuit. Bring future scenes before you, sinner, as they are described in the word of God, and dwell on them for a long time till they become fixed in your mind, and they will assuredly affect you. Many endeavor to extinguish the light, designed to show them their danger and to direct them to heaven. If they perish, they will perish by their own hands.

In not a few cases husbands and wives are not united in the Lord. They dwell together for years—the light of the one is constantly shining on the other—but without producing the desired effect. When they meet for the last time and recognize each other, the scenes of life will be recollected and reviewed. The example, though imperfect, and conversation of the believer will be remembered with painful interest. Now those, who were happily united and who dwelt together for many years—partook together of the bounties of Providence, went together to the house of God—heard the same discourses—enjoyed the same means of grace—now they must be separated forever—one to dwell forever with the redeemed in heaven, the other to inhabit everlasting burnings. How, let me now ask, how must you feel, whether husband or wife, if impenitent; when you see your once dear and beloved companion join the company of the holy, while you are banished from the presence of God, to be an object of his everlasting displeasure. Let me now in the most affectionate manner urge the impenitent husband or wife to walk in the light, while it is

shining on your path and directing you to heaven, where you may be reunited with one whom you love—and join in the celebration of the praise of God and the Lamb.

As I now look round upon this congregation I see here and there one—who has a good hope of future life ; but very many, who are still unreconciled to the holy character of God. I look forward to the day, the solemn day, when we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and witness such separations as have been described. Can you, who have a good hope, that you have been chosen to eternal life—and have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ ; Can you realize that you belong to that company, to whom the Judge will say, Come, ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ! Great are your obligations to love and honor God—and to labor for the advancement of his kingdom, who hath given his life to redeem you. Whatever your sufferings in this life, what are they compared with the sufferings of many, no more guilty and deserving of punishment than yourselves ? Your sufferings will be but for a short time—theirs forever. You can recollect the time, when you were as much devoted to the world as others—the time when you first discovered your danger, and were first made sensible of your guilt. Then the world appeared to be of but small value, and religion to be the one thing needful. Can you recollect your situation at that awful crisis, and not feel anxious for others, who are still under sentence of death ? Remember, it was grace, distinguishing grace, which made you to differ from others, no greater sin-

ners than yourselves. This you will understand, when you reach heaven. When you see the smoke of the torment of the wicked ascending up forever and ever; you will feel that you are indebted to the rich grace of God for a place in heaven. Why this is taken and that left—the Holy Spirit sent to renew one and not another we know not. This we know, without a work of grace, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, none will be saved.

Whatever the relations you sustain in life, my brethren, you cannot do too much to express your gratitude and love to him who has done such great things for you. Love of God should move you to employ all your powers for the promotion of his glory. What we do we must do soon, or it will be forever too late. As God works by means, what we do may be attended with a blessing. He has never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. He is ready to bestow his Holy Spirit on those that ask him for this great blessing. Whether immediately successful or not, let us work while the day lasts, knowing that the night cometh, wherein no man can work. Duty is ours—events are the Lord's. Not a prayer will be offered—not an exhortation given, and not a tear shed in vain. How can we fasten our eyes on the Son of God, when he sits to judge the world and to separate the righteous from the wicked, if we have done nothing to honor him and advance his kingdom? Let me in conclusion say to every one of you, Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor devise, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest. Amen.

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