

Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY

From
Samuel Miller's Library
1905

Sam. E. Miller.

\$ 2:12¹/₂ 1826

LECTURES

ON

PORTIONS OF THE PSALMS.

BY

ANDREW THOMSON, D.D.

MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S, EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH:.

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM WHYTE & CO.

13, GEORGE'S STREET;

AND LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, & GREEN,

LONDON.

M.DCCC.XXVI.

PRINTED BY A. BALFOUR & CO.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

	Page
“ Give ear to my words, O Lord ; consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God : for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness ; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight ; thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing ; the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy ; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.” PSALM v. 1.—8....	1

LECTURE II.

“ Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies : make thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth ; their inward part is very wickedness ; their throat is an open sepulchre ; they flatter with their tongue. Destroy thou them, O God ; let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice : let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them : let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.” PSALM v. 8—END.....	28
---	----

LECTURE III.

- “ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? who shall dwell in thy holy hill ? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned ; but he honour-eth them that fear the Lord : he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”—
 PSALM xv. 48

LECTURE IV.

- “ Preserve me, O God ; for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord : my goodness extendeth not to thee ; But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” PSALM xvi. 1—3. 96

LECTURE V.

- “ Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god : their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel ; my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.” PSALM xvi. 4—7. 120

LECTURE VI.

- “ I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest in hope : For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt

CONTENTS.

v

thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are p'asures for evermore."	Page
PSALM xvi. 8—END.....	140

LECTURE VII.

“ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long : For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me ; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found : surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place ; thou shalt preserve me from trouble ; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” PSALM xxxiii. 1—7..... 167

LECTURE VIII.

“ Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation : O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength : why dost thou cast me off ? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ? O send out thy light and thy truth : let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy : yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” PSALM xliii..... 216

LECTURE IX.

“ O Lord of Hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory : no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” PSALM lxxxiv. 8—END. 241

LECTURE X.

“ I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me : I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord : O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous ; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple : I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul : for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” PSALM cxvi. 1—9..... 264

LECTURE XI.

“ I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me ? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am thy

CONTENTS.

vii

Page

servant, and the son of thine handmaid : thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord." PSALM cxvi.
10—END..... 287

LECTURE XII.

“ Lord how are they increased that trouble me ? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me ; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept ; I awaked : for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord ; save me, O my God : for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone ; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord : thy blessing is upon thy people.” PSALM iii..... 307

LECTURES

ON

PORTIONS OF THE PSALMS.

LECTURE I.

PSALM V. 1.—8.

“ Give ear to my words, O Lord ; consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God : for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness ; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight ; thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing ; the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy ; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.”

YOU have been often addressed on the subject of prayer,—on the obligations you are under to engage in it ; on the importance and necessity of attending to it ; and on the encouragement which you have respecting it, from the example and expe-

rience of the people of God in every age. Now, let me ask you, if you really make it a part of your Christian work? Do you ever pray? Are you frequently at a throne of grace? Is it the habit of your life to “make your requests known unto God?” Can you affirm with truth that, regularly, or as often as occasion requires, you ask in order to receive from him the various blessings which are essential to you, both in this life, “and in that which is to come?” Just consider what judgment must be pronounced upon you, on the supposition that conscience commands you to answer these questions with a negative, and that you must be counted among those who “restrain prayer before God.”

In the *first* place you act in opposition to your sense and your confession of what is right. You know that you ought to pray. You are convinced that this is incumbent upon you. You allow that those are far wrong who neglect such an institution. And how then can you repel the charge of inconsistency, when prayer, notwithstanding, is excluded from your practical system? We desire you not to pray, merely in compliance with our earnest exhortation, or in conformity to the

pious example of your brethren. In this, as in all other cases of a similar description, we say, "let every one of you be fully persuaded in his own mind." Take the matter into consideration. Examine it attentively and thoroughly. Try it by the test of reason; weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary; adopt every proper mode of bringing it to a just and conclusive issue. And if the inquiry shall terminate in shewing you, that you are not bound to pray—that there is no propriety in praying—that neither your comfort nor your interest is concerned in it—then, do not pray. We ask you not in any case to act contrary to the serious and decided dictates of your own mind. And, above all, we ask you not to act thus in a case like the present, in which a conscious approval of the exercise is necessary to prevent it from being at once unacceptable and profane. But, on the other hand, if the lesson which you learn from Scripture—if the determination of the question to which you have come—be, that men should, and must pray—and that you can learn any other lesson on this point from Scripture, or that you can come to any other de-

termination of the question respecting it, as professing Christians, may be held impossible—then have we not cause to wonder and to complain that, in spite of what you have learnt and of what you admit to be your duty, you are as negligent of prayer, as if you had learnt, and as if you maintained, that it was *not* your duty? You acknowledge that you *ought* to pray—nevertheless you forget, or you refuse to pray. Is not this a palpable and unworthy contradiction in your character? And why should you permit it to exist? What excuse can you bring forward to justify it? Or how can you account for it, except by tracing it to an ungodliness and a depravity in the heart which overpowers the efforts of your understanding, and proclaims your bondage to that sin from which it is the very province of prayer to seek deliverance? We call upon you to banish this practical solecism. Let your conduct correspond with your real and avowed convictions. And let the first voice of your supplications be for grace to make you love what you know to be dutiful, and to infuse into your soul the spirit, while it guides you to the practice, of true devotion.

But we must remind you, in the *second* place, that by neglecting prayer, you resist the authority of God. Are not you aware, my friends, that God has commanded you to pray?—that he has not left you to discover this by mere inference, but has announced it in terms not more precise than they are emphatic?—and that the injunction holds such a conspicuous place, and is so frequently repeated in his word, as to show the vast importance which he attaches to the manner in which it is treated? And, aware of these things, how can you venture to treat it with contempt, and yet hope to prosper? What title have you to expect that, in this particular, more than in any other, you can disobey God with impunity? Think you that he does not mean what he declares, or that he will not fulfil what he has promised, or that he will not execute what he has threatened? Or can any apology be wisely or successfully pleaded for withholding from him the homage which he demands, and refusing to put up to him those petitions, which are equally called for as tokens of submission to his will, and of respect for his character? No, my friends: it is from the throne of unlimited sovereignty that

he speaks, when he commands you to pray ; and disobedience to this is just as criminal and just as dangerous as disobedience to any other precept of his law. I say that he speaks to you from the throne of unlimited sovereignty, that you may be deterred from trifling with his behests when he exacts from you the tribute of prayer. But I must add that his throne of sovereignty is a throne of grace ; and that if the commandment comes armed with the sanction of stern authority, it also comes recommended by the charms of tender mercy. God is the hearer of prayer, in virtue of his compassion to sinners : and, had he not been a being in whom compassions abound, so far from giving you access to his presence, and laying it upon you as a peremptory obligation and an express duty to make use of that privilege, he would have forbidden you to address him, and shut his ear against your cry, and left you to perish in your apostacy. But, looking upon you with pity, and desirous to extend to you every needful blessing, he is ready to listen to your applications ; and, in order to secure, as it were, your coming to him that you may have your every want supplied and your every evil remedied, he not only

opens up “a new and living way” of approach, but he clothes himself in majesty, and, by issuing his high mandate, shuts you up to the necessity of praying to him, under the penalties of disobedience to the united voice of righteous authority and unmerited love. And I put it to you, my friends, how you can bring yourselves to be guilty of such disobedience, and yet go on to live as if you were submitting to the divine will by being men of piety and prayer. O do not continue any longer in such a delusion as this. Either cease to neglect prayer before God, or cease to think that you are submissive to him. Either be habitually given to this exercise, or acknowledge that you are self-convicted rebels against the government of him who “ruleth over all.” And remember that rebellion here is as fatal to those who are chargeable with it, as if they had violated the most important enactment of the moral law.

And now I have to state, in the *third* place, that without prayer vain will be to you all the provisions that are made in the Gospel for your deliverance and happiness. The Gospel is a dispensation of divine wisdom and goodness. It proposes to bestow upon sinful men the benefits

of salvation. But it proposes to bestow them in a certain way, and according to a certain scheme. And nothing is clearer than that they cannot be received and enjoyed without a humble acquiescence, on the part of those to whom they are communicated, in the method by which it has pleased God to impart them. Now, do you know any ground for thinking that these benefits can ever belong to those who do not pray for them? It is distinctly taught, that if you ask them in prayer, believing, they shall become yours. But where is it taught within the whole compass of the Bible, that the prayerless sinner shall be saved?—that you need not supplicate one of the blessings of redemption, and yet be as sure of obtaining them all as if you had?—that pardon has ever been procured, or that heaven has ever been reached, by a single individual who has not sincerely felt, and cordially put forth the desire for them? There is no such thing taught in the Bible; and you must be sensible that the very contrary of this is what the Bible uniformly maintains and inculcates. You cannot fail to perceive that, agreeably to the constitution of the Gospel, salvation is the end at which you aim, and prayer

the means by which you are to attain it; that the connection which God has established between these is close and inseparable; and that the husbandman may as well expect to reap a harvest where no seed has been sown, and no culture bestowed, as that you can inherit the fruits of Christ's labour, though they have never been to you the object of devout and believing supplication. And, impressed with the truth of these things, on what principle, or with what consistency, can you neglect to pray? Is not such neglect tantamount to a deliberate casting away of every spiritual and every eternal hope? Is it not equivalent to saying that you grudge to pray more than you wish to be redeemed? And, if persisted in, must it not necessarily have the effect of separating you for ever from God, and Christ, and immortality? Yes, brethren; such must be the inevitable and awful consequence of your being strangers to prayer. And what is more, I defy you, by any ingenuity you can employ, to get quit of this alternative, or, continuing to believe in the Bible, to flatter yourselves for a moment, that it is either of trivial importance or of the least uncertainty. I intimate to you a truth

which you cannot gainsay, and which should go home to the heart of every one of you with awakening power, that while God will confer upon those who pray for it as they ought, not only to the half, but even to the whole of his kingdom—not one good thing, as pertaining to salvation, will he convey into your lot, if you persevere in disregarding the instrumentality by which it is his holy and sovereign pleasure that you shall seek for it, and come to the possession of it. Your guilt shall remain uncanceled. Your hearts shall be still under “the bondage of corruption.” The Holy Ghost will remain at a distance from you. Heaven will refuse to unbar its everlasting doors. The terrors of unpropitiated and unrepented wrath will hang over you, and close in upon you, and at last bury you in utter and irretrievable ruin. And all this misery will come upon you with the unspeakable aggravation that you might have escaped it, had not you so “hardened your heart” against God, that you would not even pray to him—that you would not implore from him the deliverance which you needed—that you would not offer up one cordial petition for that which he was willing to grant you,

and which he is now commanding you to ask for, that you may receive it, and be happy for ever. O then be persuaded to go to the throne of grace. Lift up your soul to him who delights in the supplications of the penitent. Join yourselves to them of whom we can say, in the language of mingled admiration and pleasure, “ Behold ! they pray.” And let this exercise be so dear to you, and of so much importance in your regard, that you shall sympathize with the Psalmist, and catch his devout spirit, and enter into his pious resolutions when he thus speaks, “ Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God ; for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

1. It becomes us, my friends, to form and adopt the purpose of the Psalmist. His purpose was to pray ; and that purpose should be ours. We have many motives and inducements to engage in this exercise. And if we consider these aright, and submit to that influence which they are fitted to hold over our feelings, they will

speedily and effectually determine us to address ourselves to God in these words, “Unto thee will I pray.” We will be satisfied that it is our high honour, our distinguished privilege, our bounden duty, our purest comfort, and our truest advantage: and, viewing it in these lights, we cannot but resolve to attend to it, and to give ourselves to it, as an observance of the utmost consequence to our welfare. Even the speculative conviction of its excellence, as thus contemplated, must, if we are actuated by the ordinary principles of a rational nature, constrain us to fix our attachment upon it, and to employ it as the means of improvement and of happiness. But how much more powerful will be our regard for it, and how much more deeply and decidedly will it affect our minds and our practice, if we know from personal experience all the advantages which it confers, and all the joys which it imparts! Having felt what it is to commit ourselves to God in prayer—having received the mercy to pardon, and the grace to help that we implored—having been rescued from dangers, supported under trials, fortified against temptations, strengthened for duties, and comforted amidst sorrows, in answer

to the petitions that we had offered up—this must endear the throne of grace to us, attract our hearts to it, and encourage us to make it our habitual and chosen refuge, amidst all the vicissitudes, and in all the circumstances, of our Christian pilgrimage. And, aware how apt the world is to break in upon our devotional duties; and how much we are in hazard, from that and various other causes, of neglecting to perform these as they ought to be performed, or of postponing them to concerns and occupations of a secular nature, we shall just feel the stronger necessity for “building ourselves up” in this pious resolution, and making a covenant with our own minds, that we will allow nothing to come in between God and our souls, but that, in whatever we are employed, wherever we are placed, and whatever befalls us, “unto him will we pray.”

2. Then it will be with great earnestness that we pray to God. We will not go about the duty in a cold, formal, or perfunctory manner, as if it were a matter of indifference to us, whether we were successful in our application or not. This would be unsuitable to the character of the Being to whom our application is made, and to the impor-

tance of the blessings that we are desirous to obtain. The God whom we address, looks with a jealous eye on the frame of mind in which we approach him, and could not fail to be angry with us, if he saw us careless and unconcerned, either as to the things which we asked from him, or as to the tone of feeling which we cherished, and the mode of supplication which we employed, when bending at his throne. It would be irreverence and mockery, which would have the effect of bringing upon us a curse, instead of a blessing. And then, if we had no vehemence of desire, and no fervour of expression, would it not be a proof that we attached but little importance to the benefits themselves, which yet we professed to seek? And if we attach but little importance to the benefits which Christ has purchased with his blood, which God has commanded us to aspire after with the utmost sincerity and diligence, and which are, in every aspect, indispensable to our present, and our eternal advantage—how can we expect that our prayers will meet with the acceptance that is essential to their success, or be attended with any one of the advantages of which prayer is so productive to the true worshipper? When

we pray to God, therefore, let us be truly anxious that our prayer may experience his favourable regard. Let our hearts be engaged in the exercise, and engaged in it with an ardour and solicitude becoming the case of those who must have from him, what they pray for, or perish. Let us wrestle with the angel of his presence, omitting no opportunity of sentiment or of language which the occasion may justify. Let the words which we utter be the vehicle of that earnestness which we feel, and let us beseech him to hear them as coming from the dependants and pensioners of his bounty. Let us meditate with deepest interest on the extent and urgency of our need, and entreat him to “consider our meditation,” and think of the necessities of our condition, and exert his wisdom as well as his mercy, in giving a supply to all our various wants. Let us cry to him with all the fervour of men who have no other refuge but himself, to whom there is no hope but what is to be found in the riches of his grace, and whose ruin is inevitable, unless he will have pity, and send deliverance; and let us implore him to “hearken to the voice of our cry,” as the cry of guilty, condemned, helpless, and miserable crea-

tures. And, alive to the unspeakable moment of receiving from him an answer in peace, let us not cease to cherish all this intensity of desire; let every dawning day find us in the spirit, and in the attitude, of importunate supplication; let our powers, when invigorated by the refreshments of sleep and rest, be called forth to the performance of this good work; and let our minds be continually and earnestly directed to heaven, as the source from which we are to draw whatever is needful for our pilgrimage through life, and for our felicity in a better world.

3. But we are not to pray, as if God were unwilling to hear us, and to bestow the blessings that we need. He has revealed himself as the hearer of prayer. He has manifested his readiness to give us whatever our situation requires. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up to the death for us, how shall he not with *him*, also freely give us all things?" And having by this wonderful display of love, and by various affectionate declarations of his word, taught and encouraged us to confide in him for the attainment of every thing for which we are either permitted or instructed to pray, it

follows that our prayers should always be accompanied with lively faith, and with humble hope. Considering the representations he has afforded us of his character, and the assurances he has reiterated to us of his mercy, any thing like distrust or despondency is as unbecoming, as the carelessness and indifference against which we have already warned you. You must honour God, as well as consult your own comfort, by giving place to no doubt or disbelief, when you draw near to him in prayer. Rest implicitly on the faithfulness of his promises, which are all “yea and amen in Christ Jesus;” and pleading on the merit of your great High priest and Intercessor, plead with the boldness, and the expectation of those who know that they “have an advocate with the Father,” whom he “heareth always,” and with whom he is ever “well pleased.” But while you “look up” to God with the conviction that he will not turn away your prayer from him, nor his grace from you, let this conviction be mingled with humility, when you recollect your great unworthiness, and the weakness and imperfection of your faith itself. Let it be mingled with submission, that you may not be cast down and disap-

pointed, when he withholds any particular blessing which you had asked with peculiar solicitude, and on which you had counted as at once important to your welfare, and certain in its attainment. And let it be mingled with that patience which shall prevent you from repining at delay in the communication of what you have besought your heavenly Father to send,—which shall make you still trust in him for the accomplishment of all that concerns your well-being, notwithstanding the frustrations of hope which you may have experienced,—and which is not only quite consistent with a continued and unwavering expectation of the gifts that you implore, but imparts such a tone of holy resignation to the petitions in which you supplicate them, as to give additional grace and piety to the sacrifice which you thus lay on the altar of your God.

4. And, finally, you must not forget that the God to whom you pray is a holy God. It is true he allows us to approach Him as sinners; and, as sinners, to ask from him with the hope of receiving all the blessings of salvation. But then, in this act of condescension, he does not, and he cannot renounce that purity and rectitude of

character which belong to him as the infinitely perfect Jehovah. We have access to him by the blood of Christ: But by the shedding of that blood in sacrifice, he has set before us a most emphatic demonstration of the divine holiness, which the sacrifice of Christ was appointed to maintain and vindicate. And though, in virtue of Christ's meritorious sufferings, God is now "reconciling the world to himself," and free to bestow salvation upon our fallen race, yet he has not ceased to be as much distinguished by holiness in his own character, and as peremptory in his exaction of it in the character of his creatures, as he was before the existence of any atonement, or of any satisfaction. Most true is the representation here given of him by the Psalmist; and most necessary is it that we bear it in mind, and be influenced by it, in all our devotional exercises. "He has no pleasure in wickedness. Neither shall evil dwell with him; the foolish shall not stand in his sight; and he hateth the workers of iniquity. He shall destroy them that speak leasing or falsehood; he will abhor the bloody and deceitful man."

Now, this statement,—of which we need not at present give any particular illustration, its general

meaning being quite obvious, and quite sufficient for our purpose,—is not set before us to deter us from praying to God. It would have that effect, indeed, were we to confine our views to the immaculate holiness of God on the one hand, and to our moral depravity and guilt on the other. But we know that God is merciful as well as just ; that while his mercy is displayed, his justice is satisfied ; and that according to the wonderful plan of redemption, even the chief of sinners may return to him through the appointed mediator, and for the sake of that mediator, be pardoned, and accepted, and saved. Still, however, if we thus believe in Jesus Christ, and thus return by him to God, our very faith, and our very return, necessarily direct our views to him as a God, “glorious in holiness,” and requiring holiness in all that draw nigh to him, and are admitted to the enjoyment of his favour. And, accordingly, it is one provision of the gospel, that we be sanctified for his service, while it is one prescribed qualification for engaging in that service, that we have “clean hands and pure hearts.” When we pray to him, we must pray in the spirit of penitence. We must be animated

by a hatred of sin; for, “if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.” We must have a sincere, and decided, and paramount affection for holiness; for without this, we could not fix our minds with comfort, or with hope, on him whom we pretended to worship. If conscious that we were “enemies to God in our minds, and by wicked works,” and that we were persevering in our enmity, notwithstanding all that he had done to subdue it, we could not possibly cherish towards him one devotional sentiment, or utter one sincere supplication. It becomes us, therefore,—it is requisite for us, to be holy, that we may pray to God as we ought. And, for the purpose of impressing us with the importance of having that qualification, and with the necessity of having it in active operation when we address God in prayer, let us always contemplate God as he is here delineated by the Psalmist. And while a sense of our guiltiness before such a holy Being, determines us to seek for acceptance through the sacrifice of Christ, let the purity of him to whom we pray determine us to be earnest in seeking for the renewing and purifying influences of the Divine Spirit, in banishing from our

hearts every sinful affection and every unworthy thought, and in cultivating all those graces and virtues which shall qualify us for holding communion with the "father of our spirits" upon earth, and for enjoying his beatific presence in the kingdom of heaven.

But while the holiness of God is a commanding reason for our praying to him in the spirit of penitence, we may also take encouragement from it to apply to him when men are assailing and persecuting us. This was the particular view of it taken by the Psalmist in the passage we are considering. He knew that the conduct of his enemies could not fail to be most offensive to that Being who ruled the world in righteousness, and who saw in their hostility to his servants, a practical contempt of his law, and a daring opposition to his authority. And, therefore, he concluded, that, however unworthy he was in himself of the divine favour, and however necessary it was to pray in the name of a mediator, the very perfection of God's moral excellence, would justify him for asking his interposition, and for asking it with the assured hope that it would be granted. In like manner, when we suffer from the

malice and injustice of our foes, and apply to God for deliverance or for help, it is a warrant for us to do so that he is infinitely holy and just. Were he “altogether such a one as ourselves,”—were his nature tinged with sin, or were he indifferent to its prevalence among his creatures, we could not expect that he would “give an attentive ear” when we besought him to guard us against the machinations and the malignity of those who, by the commission of it in some of its most obnoxious forms, aimed at our destruction. But, convinced that he is “the Holy One of Israel,” that every species of iniquity is hateful in his sight, that the workers of it are the objects of his displeasure, and that one great purpose of his administration must be to check and to punish them, we feel ourselves constrained to make use of that as an argument for “calling upon him,” when we are treated by our fellow-men with cruelty or injustice. It is appealing to the honour of his character and of his government, and to the pledge which he has given, in all that he has revealed of himself in the law and in the gospel, in the ways of providence, and in the word of truth, to prevent the triumph of ungodli-

ness, when we invoke him, as a God of righteousness, to come between the oppressor and the oppressed, and to save us from our false, deceitful, and blood-thirsty foes. We must never forget that this attribute of God should make us approach at all times with much self-abasement, and with reliance on his mercy through the blood of atonement; but neither should we forget that, in particular circumstances, it furnishes the most animating motive that we can have for fervent supplications; and that, when situated as the Psalmist was, we may freely adopt the language which he employed, when he said, "I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up; *For* thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee."

The Psalmist did not satisfy himself with private prayer; he also resolved to engage in the exercises of public worship. The same feeling of piety which constrained him to do the one, constrained him also to do the other. And then, he did not think himself at liberty to go to the house of God, without a due consideration of the service with which he was to be there occupied, and of the dispositions and views which it re-

quired from him, as both becoming and necessary. "As for me," says he, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple."

The resolution of the Psalmist should be ours. We may be tempted by our natural disinclination to spiritual employment, and by the allurements of a degenerate world, and by the example and counsel of ungodly men, to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together." But, "as for us," if we are actuated by the principles and the spirit of true religion, we will resist all these temptations, and account it our honour, our privilege, and our duty, to "wait on the Lord" in the services of his sanctuary. This we will do, regularly and punctually, in the ordinary circumstances of life. But we will especially have recourse to God in his house of prayer, when we are distressed by the hostility and persecution of our foes, in order that we may derive consolation from the communion which we there hold with our heavenly father, and be instructed by what is there delivered to us, in all that can reconcile us to our troubles, and guide us in our difficulties, and support us under our trials. And, far from rush-

ing into his holy place, as too many do, without any serious thought concerning him to whom we are about to pay our homage, and the manner in which he must be approached, if we would approach him with acceptance,—we will study to have our minds impressed with just conceptions of his character, to bring with us those offerings which the occasion requires, and to present them with suitable affections, and in a suitable manner. Instead of merely going to his tabernacles, we will go to them with the conscious purpose of worshipping him,—of offering to him our prayers and our praises, and of listening to his word. And instead of merely going to worship him, we will go to worship him in that way which is suggested by the nature and circumstances of the duty, or dictated by his own express injunctions. Contemplating the immaculate purity by which he is distinguished, and aware of our own unworthiness and guilt, it will be with the deepest humility that we enter his courts; it will be with dependence on his unmerited mercy; and it will be with a believing reference to that scheme of reconciliation by which his mercy has been manifested to sinful men. And though drawing near

to him in faith, and beholding and trusting in him as a God of mercy, we will feel ourselves encouraged to hope for a favourable reception, yet still thinking of his unspotted holiness, and of our own great depravity, it will be with godly fear that we lift up our eyes to “the place where his honour dwelleth,” whether we give him the tribute of our thanksgiving, or ask from him the blessings that we need. Thus going into the house of God “*in the multitude of his mercy,*” and worshipping towards his holy temple “*in his fear,*” we may cherish the expectation that he will graciously receive us; that he will “cause his face to shine upon us;” that he will listen to the voice of supplication which we lift up to him from amidst “the assembly of the upright;” that he will help us in the performance of our sacred duties; that he will bless them for our comfort and advantage; and that he will make the services of his temple below, a preparation for the purer and more exalted services of his temple above.

LECTURE II.

PSALM V. 8.—END.

“Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies: make thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. Destroy thou them, O God: let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.”

DAVID had addressed himself to God as the hearer of prayer, and he did so, when he was in distress by reason of the opposition and hostility of ungodly men. He took encouragement in praying for help and deliverance, from the consideration that God was a holy being, who had “no pleasure in wickedness,” and who would take part

with his servants when they were persecuted by the workers of iniquity. And he expressed his determination, amidst all his trials and troubles, to adhere closely to the worship of his Maker, to approach him in a dependence upon his mercy, and to “serve him with reverence and godly fear.”

He proceeds thus ; “Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies: make thy way straight before my face.” David’s enemies were numerous, malicious, and inveterate. They watched to spy out his faults ; they waited for his halting ; they were anxious to discover him acting inconsistently with his professions ; they longed for some violation of that law by which he pretended to be guided, for some departure from that character by which he laboured to be distinguished—that they might accuse him before the world, that they might disgrace him in the eye of the church, that they might overwhelm him in infamy and ruin. Now, in this situation of peril, he applied to God. He was sensible that of himself he was not proof against their enmity ; that if left to his own wisdom and strength and resolution, their assaults would be successful and their object accomplished ; that nothing could pre-

serve him but the interposition of divine aid. And, therefore, he trusted in it, and he prayed for it. He prayed that the Almighty would prevent him from committing any sin which would have given his foes an advantage over him, or an occasion against him ; that he might be enabled, at all times, and in all circumstances, to present to them the commanding aspect of a blameless and holy life ; that the way of duty might be made so plain to him, that he could not miss it ; that its ruggedness and its difficulties might be so smoothed down, that he could walk in it easily and surely ; that those who looked on him with the most suspicious and malignant eye, might be unable to detect any fault in his conduct ; that their captiousness might be ungratified, their clamours put to silence, and their expectations disappointed.

Now, my friends, we are in one sense, situated like the Psalmist, and we must act like him. We have all of us enemies to encounter, whose aim is deadly, whose vigilance is ceaseless, whose attacks are unremitting, whose numbers, and power, and devices are formidable. And what have we wherewith to resist them? Nothing

that is adequate to the arduous task. Unskilful, ignorant, and weak; apt to slumber at our post; easily tempted, or easily frightened into dangerous concessions; unwilling to undergo the toils, or to submit to the sacrifices which our warfare demands,—we have scarcely begun the contest, when we lose the victory, and fall a prey to those who have nothing else at heart than our everlasting destruction. But though such is our condition, is it quite helpless and irremediable? No, brethren: the God whom we serve is for us, and he is mightier by far than all that can be against us. He has promised guidance, and protection, and assistance; he has promised to give courage to our hearts, and wisdom to our counsels, and vigour to our arm; he has promised to be himself our leader and commander, to support us through the perils of the combat, and to conduct us to conquest and to triumph. What then should we do, but confide in these promises, and pray for their fulfilment? Let it be our fixed purpose to oppose a firm and unyielding front to our adversaries. Let us be resolved, that in spite of all their efforts, we will “hold fast our righteousness, and never let it

go;" that nothing they can say or do shall prevail upon us to surrender one iota of our principles or our purity; that we will wage interminable war with them, rather than suffer them in a single point to acquire the mastery over us. And let all the means which we possess of repelling their assaults, of counteracting their stratagems, and of defeating their attempts, be employed with every degree of care and energy. But still, with all this, let us never forget that there is no hope for us, if we rely on our own independent resources; that we must be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" and that his all-sufficient help must be obtained by prayer and supplication. Let us, therefore, beseech him "to lead us in his righteousness, because of our enemies, and to make his way straight before our face." Let us not only ask him to be thus mindful of us, and thus assisting to us, in the extreme or more trying exigencies of our lot; but let us habitually apply to him for the wisdom that is necessary to direct, and the strength that is necessary to resist, and let us be specially careful to implore grace to prevent us from doing any thing, which, though apparently or comparatively insignificant, may yet pave

the way for a succession of evil works, which would gradually undermine the foundations of our Christian character, and finally involve us in the moral desolation which our enemies are seeking to accomplish. And let us thus labour, and thus pray, not merely because it is requisite for working out our own personal salvation, by keeping us steadfast in the path of God's righteousness, but also because it contributes to the honour, and the influence, and the prosperity of that great cause which we have espoused, as believers in the Gospel, by depriving our foes of that handle with which our misconduct would furnish them for "blaspheming the holy name by which we are called," and by exhibiting to them the virtuous and irreproachable deportment which is formed, and nurtured, and matured by the religion of Jesus Christ.

The Psalmist next gives an account of his enemies, and petitions for their destruction. "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness: their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of

their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee." They had no regard to truth, and scrupled not to invent and propagate deliberate falsehoods, if they could thereby injure the interest, the reputation, or the comfort of the king of Israel. And this they did under the influence and by the impulse of inherent depravity,—of an inborn enmity against God and the people of God, which neither kindness nor virtue could subdue, and which startled at no lie and at no malignity, by which its feelings might be gratified and its purposes gained. Nay, they carried this odious and reckless passion so far, that they thirsted for David's blood; they were ready to devour him; and insatiable as the grave, which never says "it is enough," they longed to swallow up not him only, but all who were embarked in the same holy cause, and distinguished by the same devotedness to the King of Heaven. And so far did they carry their diabolical practices, that they put on the mask of friendship, and spoke in the accents of applause, that thereby they might more easily lull the suspicions, and effectuate the ruin, of all who were the objects of their hatred.

Such were the Psalmist's enemies; and he

prayed for their destruction. He prayed that they might be subjected to the punishment which they had so justly merited; he prayed that the counsels which they took, and the measures which they devised against others, might be so overruled as to turn to their own overthrow; he prayed that in the midst, and on account of, their multiplied offences, they might be cast out from the land of the living, and the place of hope. These were dreadful imprecations, and could only be justified on peculiar grounds,—in explanation of which, we would offer these two short remarks. In the *first* place, David did not pray for the destruction of his enemies, from any feelings of personal resentment. They had, indeed, given him every provocation that insult and persecution could furnish. But he did not yield to it; he took higher and more important views. His own wrongs were forgotten amidst the affronts that were offered to the majesty of heaven. It was upon this ground that he pleaded for the divine vengeance to fall upon his enemies. In aiming a blow at him, they were opposing the appointments of Jehovah, and they were doing so by means which implied a violation of the most important and sacred enact-

ments of the moral law ; and hence, he urges his suit against them with this argument, “ for they have rebelled against thee.” And in the *second* place, when interpreting this and similar passages, we must never forget that David sustained a particular character, and was the champion of a particular dispensation. He was the anointed King of Israel ; he was inspired, and invested with the prophetic office ; and he was ordained to act a most important part in carrying forward the arrangements of God, not merely for the immediate safety and prosperity of the Jewish state, but also and chiefly for the coming of the Messiah, and the ultimate salvation of the world. When praying, therefore, for the destruction of his enemies, he was not an unguided, unauthorised individual, praying for ruin to the common enemies of his person, or of his country. But he was an individual, specially gifted and called of God, and “ moved in what he spoke by the Holy Ghost,” praying for the destruction of those who “ set themselves” obstinately and malevolently “ against the Lord and his anointed,” who were levelling the shafts of their malice against the cause both of God and man, and doing what they could

to frustrate the counsels of heaven concerning the advent of the Saviour, and the redemption of the human race.

But while these extraordinary circumstances fully justified the Psalmist in imprecating destruction upon his enemies, there is nothing in our situation by which we can be justified in following his example. Evil men may calumniate us, and do us all manner of injury; and in afflicting *us* they may—they must, be offending God; but we have no more warrant to pray for divine wrath to consume them, than we have warrant to cherish personal revenge against them. We are under the law of Christian charity; and that law forbids undue resentment,—it requires us to “love our enemies, and to pray for them.” We must be regulated by the example of Jesus; and from the cross of his agony, he lifted up the voice of intertreaty in behalf of his murderers, and said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” We must be “followers of God as dear children;” and we know that he “has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but is willing that all men should come to repentance,” and therefore it becomes us to pray that even those who, in the

wantonness or the wickedness of their hearts, have done us most evil, may be “converted from the error of their ways,” and made partakers of that grace in which we ourselves rejoice, and which teaches us to remember the very worst of them in our supplications at the throne of mercy.

When we come, however, to consider our spiritual enemies, the case is altered, and in so far as we exclude from our regard whatever is at once an object of pity and capable of change, it is not only allowable but dutiful in us to pray for their destruction. With that limitation, it is impossible for us to be on any terms with them, and not endanger our well-being. And as we should use every method in our power, for breaking down their dominion and annihilating their very existence, seeing that their hostility is equally directed against us, and against God, and against all that is good and holy, we must not omit the instrument of prayer, which, when employed in sincerity, and in faith, and with perseverance, is not less availing than it is necessary. It is right for us to pray that the kingdom of Satan may be overturned, that he may be seen as “lightning falling from heaven,” that he may be banished

from the hearts and the habitations of all men, and driven away, baffled and defeated, “into his own place.” It is right for us to pray that the spirit which “worketh in us as the children of disobedience,” may be crushed and subdued—that “the old man with his corrupt deeds and deceitful lusts” may fall down and die—that every vestige of that authority which sin has established in our fallen nature, may perish and become as if it had never been. It is right for us to pray, that the world may be divested of its charms to seduce, and of its terrors to frighten us, from the paths of virtue; that it may fall prostrate and without strength at the feet of a triumphant faith; that it may be hurled from its proud pre-eminence among men; and that on its ruins may be erected the bright and purifying hope of that “new heaven and that new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness.” And if among our fellow-men, there are those who by their counsel, their example, or their ridicule, are trying to wound our conscience, to shake our confidence, and ruin our souls, and thus proving themselves to be the worst enemies with whom we have to struggle,—it is right also to pray with respect to them, that the character in which they

appear as foes to the followers of Jesus Christ may be utterly extinguished; that the very devices which they have contrived and are executing against us, may be made the instruments of their discomfiture ; that, whether by mercy or by judgment, the Lord may be pleased to break their stubborn wills, and bring them into subjection to himself and into captivity to Christ; and that the enmity of their minds being thus conquered, and all the strong holds of unbelief taken from them, and their souls spoiled of every carnal affection and every hostile feeling, they may be so effectually converted as to become “ lovers of God,” the friends of his people, and the supporters of his cause throughout the world. It is right for us to pray in this manner and to this extent for the destruction of our spiritual enemies: and if we thus “pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” He to whom our petitions are addressed will answer us in mercy, taking to him his great power, and thereby accomplishing our deliverance, securing us equally against the wiles and the violence of our foes, and giving us that victory over them all, which shall terminate in “ glory, honour, and immortality.”

Having described the enemies of God and prayed against them, the Psalmist next describes the people of God, and prays for them. “ But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice ; let them ever shout for joy ; because thou defendest them : let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.”

God’s people are described as *putting their trust in him*. Their confidence is withdrawn from the creature, and reposed in the Creator. They contemplate his perfections ; and in them, they behold every thing which can render God worthy of their affiance as a guide, a protector, and a friend. They read his promises ; and these, while they come from him who is faithful and almighty, apply so kindly and minutely to all their circumstances, as to invite and secure their unsuspecting reliance upon him for all that they need. And the experience they have had of his gracious and providential treatment of them during what is past, teaches them to look up to him, with an unwavering conviction, that he will not forsake them during all that yet remains of their earthly

pilgrimage. They “trust in him at all times:” they trust in him with their whole heart: they trust in him for present safety: they trust in him for support at death: they trust in him for the happiness of eternity.

God’s people are also described as *loving his name*. He is the object of their devout and grateful attachment. Their understandings have been enlightened to see, and their hearts have been purified to relish, the transcendent excellence which resides in his character. And the forbearance, the mercy, and the kindness which he has shown them, and which run through all their temporal, and all their spiritual lot, have drawn their hearts to him in delighted admiration, and everlasting gratitude. So that they think of him with complacency. They take pleasure in every thing by which he condescends to make himself known. They are gladdened by every token of his bounty which they themselves receive, and by every demonstration of grace and power which he gives in the world around them. And they long for the period, when from that clearer view of his character, and from that more enlarged experience of his mercy, and from that more

sainted capacity of appreciating “ the beauties of holiness,” which they shall attain in heaven, they shall be enabled to love him with boundless, uninterrupted, and never ending affection.

God’s people are also described as *righteous*. To confidence in his attributes and administration, and sentiments of devoted attachment to him as their heavenly Father, their almighty friend, their eternal portion, they add the substantial and practical attainment of conformity to his will. They do not rest satisfied with honouring him by the mere feelings of dependence and affection: they honour him also by the obedience which he requires, and which it is at once their privilege and their duty to render to his holy law. They are righteous in their principles: they are righteous in their tempers: they are righteous in their conduct. Righteousness is their grand distinction. It adorns them wherever they are, and points them out as children of the most High, and as heirs of immortality; and following after it with unremitting zeal, and willingly subjecting themselves to “ the sanctification of the Spirit,” their “ path is like the shining light which shineth more and more until the perfect day.”

Such are God's people according to the description given of them by the Psalmist. And, judging of yourselves by this test, are you, my friends, among the number of God's people? If you are not, I need not tell you how much you are lost to all that is greatest and happiest and best. There is but one other alternative; and if you have chosen it; if you are indeed the enemies of God; if, instead of "trusting in *him*," you are trusting in "refuges of lies;" if, instead of "loving his name," you are hating, and blaspheming, and turning away from it; if, instead of being "righteous," you are living in sin, eager in its pursuits, and contented with its pleasures; then, what can you expect, or what can we hold out to you, but the destruction for which David prayed, and which the Almighty has threatened, and with which he will assuredly visit all those who will not "repent and be converted" that they may be saved? O be persuaded to forsake your evil ways, and to return to the Lord. Abandon the ranks of his foes. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." And join yourselves to them who love God and keep his commandments. He will "receive you graciously." He will pardon

you freely for the sake of his dear Son. He will treat you with every mark of affection that may be hoped for from a tender parent—from a reconciled God. He will put it into the hearts of his saints to pray for you, as David prayed for the righteous. He will teach them the supplications they are to prefer in your behalf. And, among all the various blessings that, under his guidance, will be the subject of their petitions, this will be none of the least fervent nor least effectual, that you may be “comforted concerning all that has befallen you;” that you may be enabled to rejoice in God, to whose friendship you have been restored, and “under the shadow of whose wings” you have taken refuge from the guilt and the calamities of an unholy life; that you may even “shout for joy”—the joy of perfect security from all that once harassed your mind and robbed it of its peace—the joy of complete triumph over the foes under whose cruel power you were fast “filling up the measure of your iniquities,” and fast sinking into the “perdition of ungodly men,”—the joy of unwavering faith in the merit and intercession of him who redeemed you, and opened up the way of return to your offend-

ed Maker—the joy of assured hope that the time is not far distant when you shall be rescued from every remaining evil, be admitted into the celestial presence of your redeeming God, and there rejoice for ever with “a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.”—And most unquestionably this prayer will be heard and answered. God is already pledged by his character and by his promises to grant what is thus implored. “For he will bless the righteous; and with favour will he compass him as with a shield.” You need his blessing, and you shall have it; and you shall find that it is “a blessing which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow.” You need his favour, and you shall have it; and you shall find that his “favour is life, and his loving kindness better than life.” You need his defence, and you shall have it; and you shall find that they whom the Lord defends have a shield which compasses them about on every side, and keeps them in perfect safety. And, amidst all your difficulties and all your dangers, this will be your song, till you reach the temple out of which you shall no more go out, and the kingdom that shall never be moved; “The Lord is my light, and my salva-

tion, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me in this will I be confident. One thing 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 inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing—yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.”

LECTURE III.

PSALM XV.

“ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”

PART I.

NOTHING can be more important than the inquiry with which this Psalm commences. It refers not to a subject of idle or useless curiosity; nor to a subject involving some merely temporary interest; nor to a subject about which we may be indifferent, and at the same time neither compromise our wisdom, nor endanger our safety.

It refers to a subject which comprehends at once our prospects of eternal felicity, and the practical concern that we must necessarily feel, and the practical efforts that we must necessarily make, in order that these prospects may be certainly realised. And, therefore, it is infinitely more deserving of our regard than the most momentous of all the various inquiries that were ever engaged in by men of science, or by men of the world, whose views were confined to the circumstances and the comforts of a present state.

And yet how little of the patient attention of most men, and how little of their serious meditation, does it occupy! To every thing else, whether grave or trifling, they are more than sufficiently alive. They are eager in asking, and they spare no trouble in ascertaining, by what means their “knowledge, which puffeth up,” may be enlarged, or their worldly advantages secured, or their personal gratifications promoted, or their animal life prolonged, or their passing amusements varied, and multiplied, and heightened. Listen to their conversation, and you will hear how much they are in earnest about these objects of pursuit. Look to their conduct, and you will

see what sacrifices they are ready to make, in order to attain what they thus so vehemently desire. Examine their whole system of life, and you will find them giving their days and their nights, their warmest affections and their most vigorous efforts, to the engagements and the pleasures of a present world; seeking after these with insatiable curiosity, and unwearied activity; and as intent upon them as if they comprised all that is alluring to human ambition, and all that is requisite to human happiness. As they do not deny that they have immortal souls, and that there is a coming retribution from which they cannot escape, one might expect that the thought of this would exact from them some consideration, even in their busiest hours, and that now and then they would devote to it their solemn and exclusive regard. But no: they speak and act as if they had no real or thorough belief that there is a hereafter, or as if they judged themselves to have no individual concern in it. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Where-withal shall we be clothed?" How shall we get honour? How shall we acquire wealth? How shall our time pass most pleasantly away? How

must we be qualified for this scene of business? And how shall we be arrayed for that scene of gaiety?—These are the questions, and the only questions which they are at pains either to put or to answer; and their spiritual and everlasting condition is as much unheeded, as if they had no eternity before them, and had no account to render.

The folly of all this is so obvious, that we could scarcely believe it possible, were not the fact presented every day and every hour to our observation. O if there be any now hearing me to whom the description applies, let me beseech you, were it but for one moment, to reflect on the infatuation which besets you. Suppose that within that range to which you limit your concern, you possessed and enjoyed every thing that your hearts desired; that you had no want unsupplied, and no wish unfulfilled; that every species of evil were a stranger to your lot, and every species of good familiar to your feelings and your experience; that, in short, the whole “world, and the fulness thereof” were yours at will;—what in truth have you obtained? Why, it is not too strong language to say, that you have

obtained nothing. You and the world, closely as you are now linked with it, and cordially as you are now attached to it, and little as you now think of leaving it,—you and the world must part. You must die, and go into another world—a world in which a righteous judgment shall pass upon you, and in which you shall have an endless, unchangeable existence either of happiness or woe. Are you prepared for that world? Have you provided for the dread alternative which there awaits you? And have you any good ground to hope that you shall “escape the wrath to come,” and be admitted into heaven? The case supposes that you have no such prospect, and no such meetness; and on that supposition, what are all the honours, and all the treasures, and all the joys of “the life that now is?” We repeat it, and you cannot in your conscience gainsay it, that they are nothing,—lost and forgotten amidst the realities of that eternal state of being, in which they cannot secure for you one gleam of comfort, or one ray of hope. Nay, they are worse than nothing; for though they pleased, and even enraptured you during the short and fleeting hours of your mortal career, they were all the while

concealing from you the glories of immortality, chaining down your ambition to the pursuits of sense and sin, and deluding you to your everlasting ruin. What infatuation, then, to be taking no heed to your future well-being, and lavishing all your care and all your anxiety on “the things that are seen and temporal!”

Take the converse of the supposition we have made, and observe how it brings you to the same conclusion. Suppose that you had the most moderate portion of worldly prosperity and indulgence that ever fell to the share of the unfortunate; suppose that all the possessions of which you are taking such a fast hold, and all the gratifications to which you are so much devoted, were to vanish from your grasp for ever; suppose that your cup of terrestrial bliss were dashed to the ground, and there were put into your hand, and pressed to your lips, a cup overflowing with the bitter waters of sorrow and adversity, which you were compelled to drink to its very dregs;—what of all this, if you were “rich towards God;” if you were travelling to the “kingdom that cannot be moved;” if you were heirs of the “inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth

not away?" Your sorrows in the one case would as quickly pass away, as must your joys in the other case; and as the departure of your joys in the other case was but the prelude of ceaseless and unmingled misery, so the termination of your sorrows in this case would be succeeded by a felicity, perfect in its nature, boundless in its extent, and endless in its duration. Only lay up for yourselves an interest in the substantial and undecaying blessedness of the celestial paradise; and all that this transitory scene can visit you with, either of pleasure or of pain, will be "as the small dust of the balance, without weight and without regard." And the very privations and afflictions, by which, as worldlings, you would be bowed down to the dust, and amidst the severest of which you could have no support and no consolation, would not only be borne by you, as Christians, with patience and resignation, but would serve by elevating your hearts, and purifying your characters, to give you a larger capacity, and a diviner relish, for "the glory that is to be hereafter revealed." O how foolish, then, to be eager in every inquiry, and intent upon every employment that has a reference, however remote,

to your connection with the things of time ; and never once, or seriously, or fervently, to “ lift up your souls” to him “ who inhabiteth eternity,” and say in the language of the Psalmist, “ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?”

But there are some who often think of heaven, and often speak of heaven, and often direct their face towards heaven, and who notwithstanding do not attend to the meaning of the Psalmist’s question, or do not properly apply it, or do not sufficiently act upon it. They seem to be quite convinced that there is such a place as heaven, and that every wise man will be desirous to reach it : and they seem not only to partake of that desire, but to be satisfied that, with respect to them, it will be ultimately and certainly realised. And all this, although they do not spend one serious thought on the qualifications which heaven requires of every one who would inhabit its holy and happy mansions. They have inquired about the reality of these mansions, and have no doubt of being at last admitted into them : but they never put the question, “ Lord, *who* shall abide in thy tabernacle, *who* shall dwell in thy holy hill?”—Or they put

this question, and they get it answered, and they entertain correct and scriptural notions concerning it, and are just as orthodox on the subject as you could desire them to be. But then their knowledge of it is altogether speculative, or if practically used, is made to refer to every human being but themselves. They look around them, and they decide with great readiness on the future fate of others—determining who shall finally be introduced into heaven, and who shall finally be excluded from it : and if they refrain from passing such specific sentences on their fellow creatures, they also refrain most carefully from considering how far they, for their own part, can look forward with hope and confidence, as those in whom there is a personal meetness for the kingdom of God, by their possessing those qualities to which the promise of that kingdom is annexed, and satisfy their minds with having an accurate acquaintance with the doctrine, and an unwavering belief in the doctrine, that they who go to heaven must be distinguished by that character which is delineated and prescribed in the sacred scriptures.—Or if they do make this self-application of the great and important truth that admis-

sion into heaven is a privilege necessarily, authoritatively, and exclusively bestowed upon a particular class or description of men ; if they are persuaded that it is indispensibly requisite for them to belong to this class, if they would enjoy that privilege ; and if, under the influence of this persuasion, they set themselves to the work of preparation, and seek to be adorned with that excellence which shall constitute their fitness for eternal life,—still they allow their proud reason, their corrupt passions, their worldly interests, so to interfere with what divine authority requires them to do and to be, that there are some duties which they will not perform, some vices which they will not abandon, some sacrifices which they will not make, though hell be the penalty, and heaven the reward.

Now these are all wrong ; and their errors must prove fatal. Nobody surely can get to heaven merely by believing that there is such a state, and desiring to be there, however firm the belief, and however intense the desire may be. There must be at least superadded to this, some knowledge of that character which those must possess who shall be admitted into it ; some concern felt

upon that subject; some endeavours made to acquire distinct apprehensions of it; and some measure of success in obtaining the requisite instruction. Nor is this by any means sufficient. To our belief in heaven and our ambition to enter it, we may add the most minute inquiries into the character which fits for the enjoyment of it, and the most correct acquaintance with all the qualities of which that character is composed,—still that can do us no good so long as we make use of it for no other purpose than that of judging of the future condition of other men, and think not of its just and individual application to ourselves. And though we should apply it to ourselves, and be satisfied not only that a particular and specified preparation is indispensable, but that *we* must have that preparation, still, if in making it, we leave out what the word of God declares to be essential to its completeness and its acceptance, and do nothing more than aim at those attainments which suit our own depraved or fanciful views, there is no ground on which we can consistently lay claim to heaven, or rationally expect to be its inhabitants at last. “Eternal life is altogether the gift of God;” he has intimated that

it is the portion of none but those who are qualified for its exercises and its pleasures; he has fixed what these qualifications are, and has plainly revealed, and authoritatively prescribed them; and it is beyond all controversy that we must inquire about them, that we must become acquainted with them, that we must labour to be invested with them, that we must actually have them, in order that we may be among the number of those “who shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, and dwell in his holy hill,”—of those who shall be the real members of his church upon earth, and shall finally ascend to the place of sublime and everlasting recompense.

PART II.

Having said this much on the question here put by the Psalmist, let us now attend to the answer that he gives. “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not

with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned ; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord ; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not ; he that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.”

We are evidently not to regard this as a complete enumeration of the virtues which constitute a meetness for heaven. A complete enumeration can only be made by travelling through the whole sacred volume, and collecting all the principles that are laid down in its pages, and all the precepts that there are enjoined for the regulation of human conduct. It is not from detached passages of revelation that we learn particularly and fully what the Christian character is, but from its various truths, and maxims, and commandments gathered together, and combined into one practical system. “ *All* scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” That we may be “ perfect, and throughly furnished unto all

good works," we must study the whole of the inspired record, and make ourselves minutely acquainted with its contents. But the Divine Spirit has seen proper, in describing those who shall "enter into life," to mention sometimes one part of their character, and sometimes another, to the apparent exclusion of the rest. Thus, in the twenty-fourth psalm, when it is asked, "who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?"—this answer is subjoined, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully:"—in which words the acquirements of a successful candidate for heaven, are limited to freedom from gross outward sins, and from sensual desires—from undue attachment to "the things of the world," and from false and fraudulent oaths. In our Saviour's account of the general judgment, the sentence of approbation which he will pronounce upon the righteous, who are to go "away into life eternal," recognises no other Christian grace in them as authorising this glorious destination, than the exercise of charity,—of charity too, in its most ordinary form,—as directed not to the welfare of

the soul, but to the comfort of the body, and to that comfort as promoted and cared for by the cheapest, and most common-place offices of humanity. “ I was hungry, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Christ also, in his sermon on the Mount, ascribes salvation to the possession of one particular excellence, without even glancing at its connection with any other, and without speaking of it as forming a portion only of a great and comprehensive whole. Thus he says, “ Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God : Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted : Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The same great reward is annexed to the principle of faith, without any express notice of those acts of moral obedience which are yet affirmed to be necessary for proving our faith to be a faith of saving operation ; “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ;”—And to the sentiment of love to God, without any detail of those deeds of

piety and goodness by which it is at once evinced and perfected—thus the things are unimagined, which God “hath prepared for them that love him;”—And even to the verbal confession of Christ in the world, without any allusion to that practical submission to his will, and humble imitation of his example, by which all his disciples must necessarily be distinguished; as, “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;” and “whoso confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven.” And in the passage before us, though in it a greater number of virtues are particularised than in most other passages of scripture, where holy character is stated in connection with its heavenly reward, yet it is obvious that many are altogether omitted, and that of those which are specified, there are some less valuable in comparison than others which might have been introduced into the catalogue. This, however, is quite according to the analogy of scripture; and we shall endeavour to show, in a few particulars, that it is rational, consistent, and useful.

1. In the *first* place, as we have already hinted, it is not intended that one part of the scripture

should be understood and acted upon independently of the rest. Its great object is to tell us how we are to prepare for heaven; and surely it is both wise and requisite, that we learn this lesson in its full meaning and extent; that we direct our attention to all the dispositions we must cherish, and to all the habits we must cultivate, in order to be ripe for glory; that we neglect nothing, however inconsiderable, which the wisdom or the holiness of God has demanded of us for that purpose. Even though all the virtues required of us were brought into one list, and presented to us at one view, with a single solitary exception, and that this single virtue were to be found in the least interesting, and most neglected corner of the Bible, to that corner we must go for it, and bring it into its natural and appointed fellowship with the rest, and give it as firm a hold of our heart, and as fixed a place in our deportment as any of them. And why? For this simple reason, that it stands within the precincts of revelation; that it is recommended, sanctioned, and enforced by an authority, which it is not competent for us either to question or disobey; that it constitutes one of the features of that character, which every obli-

gation of gratitude, and every prospect of futurity teach us to maintain; and that if we continue destitute of it, especially when warned of its necessity, we are worse than unprepared for the regions of immortality.

It is in vain to say, that as you find the promise of eternal felicity appended to the exercise of a single virtue, your exercise of that one is perfectly sufficient, and all others are but works of supererogation. We shall immediately show you, that when you speak thus, you mistake the import of Christian virtue. But, in the mean time, we may observe, that so long as you admit the Bible to be the directory of your faith, and hope, and conduct, it is quite impossible for you to limit your regard to any single virtue whatever, or to any circumscribed number of virtues that you may choose to bring together. The authority which enjoins, the love which constrains, the hope which animates to the practice of one, enjoins, and constrains, and animates to the practice of them all. The moment that you make a selection in this respect,—however few, and however unimportant those may be which you exclude,—that moment you cease to pursue hea-

ven in the way that God has instituted; and surely you cannot be so bold as to presume that you shall be able to attain it in some other way. It is very true, the scripture says, as you have heard, that charity shall prepare you for heaven; but does not the scripture say also, that justice, temperance, humility, and patience are as much connected with that destination as charity is? If you dwell on those passages which speak with commendation of visible and active performances of duty, I would remind you of the passage which affirms, that “the pure in heart are blessed, for they shall see God.” You may quote to me the declarations which bear, that they who “keep the commandments,” and “abound in good works,” shall “enter into life;” but I must also quote the declarations which affirm, that “without faith it is impossible to please God,”—that “by grace are ye saved through faith,”—and that “whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” And to those who take the opposite view, and refer to the statements in scripture, which trace our title to the unfading inheritance to a simple belief in the Saviour, I must proclaim the language, and the

doctrine of this Psalm, which most distinctly represent that inheritance as reserved for those who “walk uprightly, and work righteousness, and speak the truth in their heart; who backbite not with their tongue, nor do evil to their neighbour, nor take up a reproach against their neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but who honour them that fear the Lord; who swear to their own hurt, and change not; who put not out their money to usury, nor take reward against the innocent.” Thus, though the happiness of heaven is connected with the possession of a particular grace, yet being connected with the possession of every other particular grace, they must all be considered as equally essential, and none of them can possibly be excluded from the character of meetness, or the work of preparation, for that happiness, without opposing the authority of God, and breaking in upon the harmony of the Christian scheme.

2. But in the *second* place, independently of the explanation now given, the propriety of annexing the promise of heaven, to a certain portion of the Christian character, may be illustrated by considering what that portion of it truly and

necessarily implies. It is nominally, but not really insulated. It stands by itself in the enunciation; but it does not stand by itself, when traced to its origin, and to its genuine effects. It has a natural or an instituted relation to every other religious and moral excellence in the Christian life; and whatever portion it be, if it belongs to pure, personal, practical Christianity, the individual to whom it adheres, possesses every other portion which can be required to constitute the sum total of Christian deportment.

Take the principle of faith for example. If your faith be genuine, it is the consequence of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." But the change which that produces, affects the whole man, and leaves no part of him under the reigning power of sin, but brings along with it a universal conformity to the law of God. So that possessing genuine faith, you of course possess every other good principle by which the heart ought to be pervaded. And then looking to the effects of this faith, it "purifies the heart," and as necessarily gives birth, and nourishment, and permanency to practical holiness in him whom it actuates, as "a

good tree bringeth forth good fruit." So that when heaven is promised to you who *believe*, it is promised to you as having been "born again," and as being "holy in all manner of conversation," as well as relying on the atonement and righteousness of Christ, the former constituting your *meetness* for heaven, as the latter realises your *title* to it.

Again take the example of love to God. This affection is "shed abroad in your hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost given unto you." But surely it cannot be that the Holy Ghost should kindle up this affection in your souls, and not kindle up every other affection which might render them a temple fit for his inhabitation. And then, loving God, it follows by necessary consequence, that you "keep his commandments," that you submit to his will, that you seek to promote his glory. So that the hope of seeing him, and enjoying his presence in heaven, though warranted and cherished by conscious love to him, is connected with that love as implanted by the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and as constraining you in whom it dwells, to lead a life of universal and cheerful devoted-

ness to the work of moral obedience, and of unfeigned piety.

Take now an example or two from outward conduct. It is common to speak with confidence of a man's future fate, if he was a man of strict and sterling honesty. And we have no objections to join in expressing that confidence, provided you give to honesty its real and scriptural import. A man of strict and sterling honesty does not merely signify a man who does not steal, and does not break his bargains, and does not violate his promises. He does not receive, and he does not deserve the title, if he refrains from these things for no other reason than that he is afraid of detection and punishment, of losing his worldly reputation, and of injuring his secular interest. Were this all that could be affirmed of him, you might call him, in common phraseology, an honest man, but all your charitable indulgence, and all your recklessness of speech would not allow you to say, that such honesty will carry him to heaven. And why? Because such honesty is mean and selfish in the considerations which give rise to it, and is quite consistent with a character, in all other respects, base and unworthy. What

we desiderate in this case is, that the honesty be practised from right principles and motives. Then we may safely connect it with eternal life, because then it forms a part of the spiritual life, and there can be no doubt of its being associated in the individual, with all the other duties of Christianity; for if a man be honest, because he fears God, and loves the Saviour, he must, from the operation of these powerful and permanent springs of holy living, be distinguished also by personal purity, and relative fidelity, and social benevolence, and divine piety. Hence it is, that in scripture, justice stands for the whole of practical religion and moral obligation. The true Christian is denominated the *just* man. The *just* are said to “live by faith;” and when we go to heaven, we go to “the spirits of the *just* made perfect.”

Take another example from the passage before us. There are various excellent qualities here enumerated, of which we shall afterwards give an exposition. But let us select the least significant of them; that which says, that he who is to dwell in God’s holy hill, “doeth no evil to his neighbour.” This is a very negative virtue, and one to which you would not readily attach

the greatest value ; and yet that he who doeth no evil to his neighbour, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, is a scriptural proposition, and indubitably true. And why ? Because, doing no ill to our neighbour is not a mere passive goodness, proceeding from constitutional indolence, or natural softness, or fear of giving offence, or want of opportunities and temptations to mischief. But it is a branch of Christian love, for “love worketh no evil to his neighbour ;” and love, with which this is inseparably united, and from which it directly flows, is a “fruit of the Spirit,” whose “fruit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth ;” and it stands united with love to God, for “he that loveth God, loveth his brother also ;” and loving God, he will not only love his brother, but he will study to do all those things which please God ; and so extensive are the connections and dependencies of this sentiment, and such an all governing influence does it exercise, that it is declared to be “the bond of perfectness, and the fulfilling of the law.”

We shall just give one instance more. Our Lord has told us, that if we “confess him before

men, he will confess us before his Father in heaven." Now nobody can suppose that any sort of confession will answer the purpose; that we may confess what we do not feel; and that a mere verbal and public testimony to Christ will come up to the meaning of his requisition, and secure his open testimony to us at the last day. This would be promising reward to that very hypocrisy against which he uttered so many dreadful denunciations. No: the confession to which such a glorious and encouraging promise is annexed, necessarily implies sincerity in him who makes it, and is to be recompensed for it. It implies that Christ, whom he confesses, is the object of his faith, and of his gratitude, and of his reverence, and that he confesses Christ, just because these regards for him are animating his heart, and influencing his deportment. And then it is evident, that a true confession of Christ carries along with it, and cannot be separated from, the various other excellencies which make up the aggregate of Christian character, and form the qualification for eternal life; for not to speak of the renewing of the mind in which the whole originates, and which brings the individual who has experienced

it under total and willing subjection to the Saviour, we may easily see that since confession of Christ is produced by faith in Christ, this faith will not merely produce that declaratory effect, but, being genuine, will produce all the other sanctifying effects on the mind, and temper, and deportment of the believer, which are its native operation, and which constitute a life of faith upon earth, and a meetness for glory in heaven.

3. We observe in the *third* place, that this method of stating the doctrine is attended with some important advantages. The scripture is intended for habitual perusal. If we would derive from it all the practical benefit which it is designed or calculated to impart, we must read it through, and we must read it again and again. It must be our regular and unceasing study. Now, had it contained only one detailed enumeration of the Christian virtues, and had it been only with that one that the prospect of future happiness was connected, and had there been nothing in the rest of scripture, but general statements of the Christian character, or general allusions to it, accompanied with reference to the final recompense, we might indeed have become

acquainted, both with the recompense and the character, and with the essential bearing of the one upon the other, but the impression could neither have been so lively, nor so forcible as it is by the mode of teaching and inculcating this branch of the Gospel system, which the Spirit of God has actually adopted. According to this mode, the specific virtues of which the Christian character is composed, are continually recurring to our observation. They are presented to us in every variety of form and aspect which can be given to them by precept, and by fact, and by parable; and in this way, not only do we get a more perfect illustration of their meaning and their application, but they are more closely interwoven with all our other knowledge and sentiments respecting sacred subjects, and acquire a firmer hold both of our memories and our affections. And then, by being individually associated with anticipations of future and eternal reward, they assume a character of infinitely greater moment than they could otherwise do. Taken in a state of separation from their appropriate recompense hereafter, or taken collectively in a state of union with that recompense, our feeling of their import-

ance and their obligation, would be comparatively vague, and indistinct, and feeble. But coming in reiterated statement before us ; pressed upon our attention one by one, as well as again and again ; and each of them having the weighty sanction and recommendation of a blessed immortality attached to it,—they enforce upon our minds the impression of their unspeakable consequence to every candidate for heaven, and constrain us to an assiduous and faithful cultivation of every single virtue which can adorn our character, or prepare us for mingling with the inhabitants of heaven. They secure infinitely better than any other arrangement could do, our being “ holy in all manner of conversation ;” our being “ fruitful in every good word and work ;” our “ standing perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

Having made these observations on the propriety and usefulness of that mode of connecting the promise of eternal life with single virtues, and with partial delineations of character, which is adopted by the sacred writers,—we would shortly apply them for your “ correction and instruction.” We apply them to you who “ are afar off ;” and we beseech you to con-

sider the Christian character, not in that loose, and distant, and indefinite way in which you have been accustomed to regard it, but in that spiritual sense, and connected view, in which it is represented to you in scripture. Do not content yourselves with the semblance of any particular virtue on which you may have chosen to fix your peculiar attachment; but attend to its true intrinsic meaning, look to its necessary union with all the other duties of religion and morality, and examine yourselves by this broad, and legitimate, and searching standard, that you may see how far short you are of what God requires of those who shall be saved, and that you may be led to the blood of atonement for pardon and acceptance, and to the Holy Spirit for the transformation of your moral nature, and to the word of God for that system of faith and conduct to which every expectant of immortality must conform, if he would not be disappointed on the great day of the Lord. And we apply them to such of you as have been "brought nigh by the blood of the cross," exhorting and beseeching you, in your life of faith, and godliness, and good works, to guard against all partial contemplations of

Christian character. Let your studies be directed to all that is revealed for your guidance and your government as followers of Christ. Meditate deeply and habitually on the spiritual import, and relative bearings, of every precept that is given you, and of every grace that you are required to cultivate. Beware of letting any one virtue stand as a substitute or compensation for another. Look well to the state of your hearts; to your principles and motives; to the uniformity and unreservedness of your obedience. And while you have continual recourse to the atonement of Christ for the "remission of your sins," have continual recourse also by prayer to that Spirit, who will make you meet for "abiding in the tabernacle, and dwelling in the holy hill of God."

PART III.

Let us now turn our attention for a little to the character, as here portrayed, of those "who shall abide in the tabernacle, and dwell in the holy hill of God."—You will observe, that it does

not consist in mere profession of religion, however orthodox and however flaming that profession of religion may be. It is moral practice that is insisted on;—not that profession is either improper or useless; it is dutiful and indispensable; but it is of so little value, comparatively speaking, that it is not once mentioned or hinted at, while all the stress is laid on the maintenance of holy conduct. You will also observe, that the mere outward acts of virtue are not rested in, as if they were sufficient: its internal principles and operations are also brought forward as no less important and necessary. You will observe still farther, that the account is not confined to that mere negative worth or harmlessness on which so many plume themselves, as entitling them to the reputation and the hope of Christians. That indeed is a requisite attainment, and, considering the many temptations to active and mischievous sinfulness with which we are beset, is an attainment of no inconsiderable difficulty, and no inconsiderable value. But still it is not so valuable as to supersede the pursuit of positive excellence, the discharge of substantial duty; and in the passage before us, we are taught that while

we “do the one,” we must “not leave the other undone.” And you will observe, finally, that the catalogue of graces here given is not limited to those that are of a more showy and striking kind. With these we are extremely apt to be satisfied, or at least to be so much enamoured as to neglect the humbler and less significant virtues. But it is plain from this, as well as many other passages of scripture, that there is no moral quality so humble or so common-place as not to merit and demand our practical regard; and that while we should make the highest efforts of integrity and generosity which fall within the compass of our power, there is no species of good conduct so obscure, and so little noticed, as to be unworthy of our cordial attachment, and our diligent endeavours.

1. The man who shall abide in God’s tabernacle, and dwell in his holy hill, is said to “walk uprightly.” He is not a man of mere outward or literal obedience; he obeys with the heart. Whatever he does in conformity to the enactments of the law, he does “out of a good conscience.” He acts from principle; from respect for God’s authority; from faith in the Redeemer, and love

to him ; from all those pure motives with which religion furnishes its votaries, for giving real excellence and undeviating uniformity to their conduct. He may often and greatly come short of the holiness to which he aspires ; but still he aims at it really, cordially, and steadily. Sincerity pervades the whole of his deportment. And whether he is seen by men or not, he lives as “ an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile ;” he “ walks before God with a perfect heart ;” and amidst his manifold failings and transgressions, studies at least to maintain purity in all his intentions, and integrity in all his ways.

2. Again he cultivates righteousness and truth. He is just and honest in all his dealings with his fellow creatures ; he respects all their rights and privileges ; gives to every one of them his due ; withholds nothing that they can equitably claim from him ; and would feel unhappy if he had been instrumental in inflicting upon them the most inconsiderable wrong. The most tempting opportunities of fraud may occur ; interest may prompt him to commit it ; superior skill and ingenuity may insure success in the gainful attempt ; detection may be difficult, and punish-

ment impossible. But he finds his way through all these snares and allurements, and walks firmly and perseveringly on the plain onward path of justice; and shows that he would scorn dishonesty, though bribed to practise it by the wealth of a world. And the same regard to righteousness that he manifests in his actions, he also manifests in his words. He “ speaketh the truth in his heart;” he thinks what he says; he believes what he affirms; he intends what he promises. He not only shrinks back with horror from the crime of perjury, but disdains to have recourse to falsehood and equivocation, even when not restrained by the awfulness of an oath. A lie may be the means of saving him from many a pang; or of concealing the certain cause of much worldly shame; or of procuring for him many desirable advantages. But he abhors the lie; and rather than be guilty of the meanness and the sin which it implies, he will endure any suffering, he will expose himself to every degree of obloquy, and will forego the richest earthly blessings, without one feeling of regret. The God whom he serves is “ a just God,” and the God of truth; and in preparing for the enjoyment of communion

with him in heaven, he “worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.”

3. Another feature in the character of those who are to dwell in the holy hill of God is the tenderness with which they treat the reputation and well being of their neighbour. They may be powerfully tempted to do him injury in these respects. But these temptations they resist; and in the spirit of love they refrain from every thing that may unnecessarily subject him to loss or suffering. They “backbite him not with their tongue.” They take no pleasure like malicious men, or like envious men, or like revengeful men, in imputing to him faults which he never committed, or in proclaiming and exaggerating the errors into which he has fallen, or in giving such representations of him as to mar his promotion in the world, to cool the affection of his friends, to embitter the resentment of his enemies, or to hurl him from the place which he occupied in the estimation of his brethren and of society. And as they will invent nothing, so they will do nothing to his prejudice; nothing wilfully or intentionally to work him mischief; nothing to thwart his laudable ambition; nothing to in-

jure his person or his property; nothing to offend and harass his feelings; nothing to prevent or mislead him, or in any way to hurt his spiritual interests. All these things they are careful to avoid, so that neither with design nor through heedlessness they may do harm to the least or the lowest of their kind. And they will not even help to propagate the slander which others have created. They might, according to the spirit and custom of the world, take up and circulate the "reproach against their neighbour," without feeling any remorse, or being accounted calumniators, merely because they had not originated it. But the people of God act not, in this any more than in other respects, according to the spirit and custom of the world. They are actuated by the charity which has this among its other excellent properties, that it "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, and hopeth all things." And under the influence of this divine principle, they will not retail what is calculated to blast the good name of another, and shelter themselves under the plea that they were only giving currency to the fame which was already "running to and fro." They will rather suppress

or contradict the reproach which has met their ear, and thus prevent it from accomplishing the wicked errand on which it has been sent abroad. They will recollect that “charity abideth” after faith is turned into vision, and hope into enjoyment; that its exercise will be one principal source of their happiness in the holy hill of God; and that they will be but ill prepared for practising and relishing it in heaven, if they meet there with those to whom they had denied it upon earth. And, therefore, in the hope of dwelling in that region of love, and mingling with its affectionate inhabitants, they will, in the course of their preparation for it, not only abound in good works, but be especially careful to do evil to no man, and not to “take up a reproach against their neighbour.”

4. But farther, those who are to enter heaven are here distinguished by this—that “in their eyes a vile person is contemned, while they honour them that fear the Lord.” Very different is the manner in which irreligious and worldly men bestow their regards. They look chiefly, if not solely, to external circumstances and adventitious distinctions, and are determined by these

in the judgments which they form, and the sentiments which they cherish concerning their fellow-men. If, on the one hand, a man be humble in station; if he be poor in his outward estate; if he be meanly fed, and clothed, and lodged; if he be without learning and without influence,—he is the object of their contempt, whatever be the height of his religious and moral attainments. And, on the other hand, if a man be of high birth; if he be opulent; if he be invested with temporal grandeur; if he inhabit a palace, and be “clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;” or if he be remarkable for his science and his scholarship, and his literary fame,—they show him every mark of deference and respect, even though he is infidel in his principles, profligate in his morals, and living “without God in the world.”

But it is the very reverse of this with such as have set their faces Zionward, and in their journey thither are enlightened and guided by the Spirit of truth. A man may have all the personal accomplishments, and all the exterior greatness that human wisdom can acquire, or that human ambition can point to, yet they esteem him not on these accounts. They know

that these by themselves are of no value in the sight of God, and that they cannot accompany their possessor to the eternal state. They, therefore, look for the more substantial and acceptable and precious attainments of piety and holiness; and not finding these, but discovering in their place a moral vileness, alienation from the love of God, unbelief of the Saviour, attachment to sin, base affections, worldly dispositions, and licentious habits, they condemn the person to whom such unworthiness cleaves, and by whom it is cherished. They do not refuse him the civil honour and external respect to which his situation in society may entitle him; but they give him not the homage of the heart; and, surrounded as he is by all that is fitted to captivate and dazzle the worldly eye, they cannot lose sight of his corruption and wickedness; and thinking of that as determining his claim to their deference, they pity him, they look down upon him, they despise his character, they testify against his evil deeds, and will not allow their soul to “come into his secrets,” or their honour to be “united to his assembly.” But let a man be as destitute and abject in his outward circumstances as he may;

let him be the victim at once of poverty, and disease, and neglect; let the world in their wisdom have settled it that he shall be passed by as undeserving of notice, and trampled on as one who has no right to complain; still they are not influenced by these seeming disadvantages to harbour any dislike to him, or to treat him with any contumely. They remember that Lazarus was a beggar, and "laid at the rich man's gate full of sores," and yet that when he died, he "was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom." They remember that the apostles were deemed "the off-scouring of all things," and were "despised," and "persecuted," and "defamed;" and yet that they were "full of the Holy Ghost" and of spiritual power, and came at length to "the spirits of the just made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all." They remember that a greater than the apostles was still more lightly esteemed than Lazarus, "despised and rejected of men, had not where to lay his head," and at last expired under the ignominy of a cross; and yet that all the while he was the Son of the most high God; that his very humiliation perfected his character; that amidst

the indignities that were heaped upon him, he was triumphing over sin and hell; and that he now reigns on the throne of glory, the dispenser of salvation, and the joy of his redeemed people. And remembering these things they learn to penetrate through the guise of outward wretchedness, sad and revolting as it may be; and beholding in him whom it covers, one “who fears the Lord,” whose heart is devoted to the Saviour, who is living in faith, and purity, and patience, and heavenly mindedness, and who from his hut of poverty, and his bed of straw, lifts up the voice of praise to the God of his salvation, and darts the eye of hope forward to the unsuffering kingdom that awaits him;—beholding in him thus a child of God, and an heir of immortality, they honour him with the unfeigned tribute of their approbation and their love; they fix on him a kindly and delighted eye; they are not afraid to minister to him as “a fellow citizen with the saints;” and their souls glow with exalted affection towards him, as they anticipate the day when they shall see him arrayed in the robe, and wearing the crown, of “life eternal.” And by thus nourishing in their souls a hatred of sin and a

love of holiness, whatever be the dress which hides the deformity of the one, and conceals the beauties of the other, they gradually and certainly fit themselves for “abiding in the tabernacle of the Lord, and dwelling in his holy hill.”

5. Then comes the inviolable honour and unbending integrity of this character. “He swear-eth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” He prefers a good conscience to every thing else. Relief from personal injury, and the advancement of his earthly interests are not prized by him when they come into competition with a faithful and scrupulous adherence to his word. If he has taken an oath, or what should be the same thing with a man of real principle, given his solemn promise, in any transaction which he may find it convenient or profitable to have annulled and cancelled,—whatever be the inconveniences or losses to which its fulfilment may subject him, and even though by breaking it he should “gain the whole world,” and escape any penalty from the hand of mortals, yet he “holds fast his righteousness and will not let it go.” He keeps his oath, he adheres to his promise, in the full extent

of its import and design. He suffers for it; but he is contented to suffer, since he has the approving and pleasing testimony of his own mind; and he is willing to endure any consequences that may result from his engagement, provided he keeps his "conscience void of offence towards God and men." He is looking forward to heaven as the dwelling place of the saints; and he cannot look forward with comfort or satisfaction to the company of those to whom he was bound by the most sacred ties, but whose expectations he had frustrated, and whose interests he had impaired, at the instigation of his own selfishness, and at the expense of his own pledged veracity; and still more, he is looking forward to heaven as the place where he hopes to derive ineffable enjoyment from the immediate and glorious presence of God, and that is altogether inconsistent with an act which involves in it the violation of what he had invoked God to witness as the God of omniscience and of truth, and the breach of that commandment which says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

6. Finally, “He putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent :” That is, he will not increase his wealth by any unjust or oppressive means. He will prosecute his worldly employments with becoming care and diligence. He will not despise the maxim which says, that “the hand of the diligent maketh rich.” And he will receive with gratitude, and enjoy with moderation, whatever his heavenly father is pleased to grant as the fruit of his lawful enterprise, or the reward of his honest industry. But then he has Christian principle, Christian love, and Christian hope, to elevate him above the world, to preserve him amidst the debasing and selfish influence of its peculiar occupations, and to give him the victory over its most powerful allurements. He may lend his money for gain, as he may endeavour to profit by any other species of property ; but he will not employ it as an engine of ungenerous and aggrandising power. He will not take advantage of the misfortunes and distresses of others to exact from them what they are unable to afford, and to aggravate their hardships, already sufficiently severe, in order to add to his own treasures, al-

ready more than adequate to all his need. Believing and feeling that the substance which Providence has conferred upon him is committed to his stewardship for the good of others, he will not act so inconsistently with that scriptural doctrine as to make his substance an instrument of evil to them. He will never regard the liberality of his gifts to some, as any atonement or any compensation for his griping cruelty to others; but considering all that he has as a sacred trust, for which he must finally render an account, he will refrain from every attempt to increase it by usurious dealings, and will rather, according to the proverbial phraseology of the Bible, be ready to "lend to those that would borrow of him, hoping for nothing again." And as he detests and avoids usury, so his soul abhors a bribe, nor will he permit it to stain his hand. Whether he be an administrator of public justice, or whether he be a private individual who has it in his power to do injury to his fellow men, he will never encroach on their rights, nor deal out iniquity to the innocent. No reward that can be offered will succeed in prevailing upon him to touch a hair of their head. He will rather throw around them

the shield of his protection; he will vindicate their character, and maintain their cause, and defend them from every assault; and this he will do, though detraction and malice should be all his recompense, and though an opposite conduct would have secured for him much of the gold that perisheth, the favour of the powerful, and the countenance of the great. He is proof against all such temptations to unjust and ungenerous conduct, for he looks to God as his father, to men as his brethren, and to heaven as his home.

Such, my friends, is a very short and imperfect view of the character of those who are to dwell in the holy hill of the Lord, so far as it is here unfolded. Let me exhort you to study it; to study it minutely and seriously, and with application to yourselves. You must necessarily be distinguished by it, otherwise you cannot see the kingdom of heaven. This you are assured of, and this you profess to believe. Be persuaded then to cultivate it with unceasing activity. Pray, and strive that you may be all which is required of those who would enter the celestial abodes; that you may have the principles, the

temper, and the conduct that is prescribed to them by him who “sits upon the throne;” and that as every day brings you nearer the eternal world, every day may find you better prepared for entering into the “rest which remaineth for the people of God.” “He that doth these things shall never be moved.” He shall be like Mount Zion itself which abideth for ever. Only build upon the Rock of Ages; cling to the mighty Redeemer; live as the citizens of heaven,—and nothing shall then be able to remove you from your place, to hurt your interests, or to blast your hope. You are safe amidst the buffetings of adversity, and amidst the assaults of temptation, and amidst the malice and persecution of your bitterest and your mightiest foes. “All things are yours, for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” He “knoweth them that are his;” and having engraven on the tablets of your hearts, and on the features of your character, the marks of his true children, he will keep you as “the apple of his eye” during all the time of your sojourning in the wilderness, and then he will put you in possession of the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of the promised land.

LECTURE IV.

PSALM XVI. 1—3.

“ Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.”

THE first thing that David does in this beautiful and interesting Psalm, is to commend himself to the protection of God, as the God in whom he had placed his confidence. And this is what all of us will do, who are living under the influence of vital and experimental religion. If we have been permitted to know God as he really is, and if we have been enabled to cherish towards him those sentiments which it becomes us to feel, an implicit and unwavering affiance in him must necessarily pervade and animate our breasts. He possesses all those perfections in an infinite degree, by which such affiance is created,

and encouraged, and confirmed; he is full of kindness to his people; he is as able as he is willing to do them good; and every promise that he has made to promote their welfare, he is unchangeably faithful to perform. So that, if we be among the number of his people, we may confide in him with our whole heart, for every communication of his grace, and for every exercise of his power, which our varied circumstances may require.

This trust we will constantly repose in God, because he is constantly deserving of it, and because it is constantly demanded for our personal comfort and stability. But it will be especially active and vigorous when we are exposed to those peculiar difficulties and dangers by which every Christian is often beset in the course of his pilgrimage. In such seasons, and in such situations, we will think much of the divine character; we will contemplate it as it is exhibited to our view in the revelation of the Gospel; we will meditate on the great and glorious attributes by which it is distinguished; we will listen to all the assurances of mercy, and to all the promises of assistance with which it stands connected in the word

of truth ; we will remember how He to whom it belongs, has in the experience of them that he knew to be his, verified every declaration that he had made, and redeemed every pledge that he had given ; and thus from what we have “ seen with our eyes,” and “ heard with our ears,” and “ believed with our hearts,” we will regard him as our only “ refuge in the time of trouble,” and cling to him as one who is “ mighty to save,” and worthy to be “ the confidence of all the ends of the earth.”

Nor will we rest satisfied with a mere consciousness of this unlimited reliance upon God ; we will give it free expression in those cases, which are calculated to call it forth, by applying to him for the help or the deliverance that we need, in the language of devout and fervent supplication. We will beseech him to preserve us : to preserve us from the temporal adversities that would otherwise distress and overwhelm us ; but above all to preserve us from the spiritual calamities by which our souls are put in peril of present discomfort, and “ everlasting destruction.” We will beseech him to preserve us from the workings of inward corruption, and from the wiles of the wicked one,

and from the snares and temptations of an evil world. We will beseech him to preserve us from the sins that most easily beset us,—from avarice, or from sensuality, or from worldly mindedness, or from indifference, or from sloth. We will beseech him to preserve us from distrusting his providence, and from slighting his grace; from Judas's heartless treachery, and from Peter's cowardly denial; from the unbelief of the Sadducees, and from the hypocrisy, and self-righteousness, and bigotry of the Scribes and Pharisees; from the iniquity that injures men, and from the impiety that dishonours God, and from the intemperance that degrades ourselves; from the indulgences that impair our love to the Saviour, and the prejudices and pursuits that weaken our faith in his merits; from “the fear of man, which bringeth a snare,” and from the “fear of death,” which makes us “subject to bondage;” from the backsliding which fills us with present remorse, and from the apostacy which terminates in irretrievable ruin. We will beseech him to preserve us from such evils as these; and we will enforce our intreaty by the argument here employed by the Psalmist; “Preserve me, O God, for in thee

do I put my trust." We feel that in ourselves we have no resource, and that there is no help for us in man. But we have found in God an all-sufficient refuge. In the exhibition of his character which he has afforded us, and in the manifold declarations which he has addressed to us in his word, he exhorts, he encourages, he commands us to place our sole dependance upon Him, and to flee to him as our "strong hold in the day of trouble." And, therefore, when we cry to him for preservation and deliverance, it is right that we should appeal to all that he has said, and to all that he has promised; and plead the confidence which he himself has taught us to rest on his mercy which never faileth, on his wisdom whose depth is unfathomable, on his strength which is mighty and everlasting, and on his "truth which he has magnified above all his name."

"O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." Here the Psalmist intimates that he had taken the Lord to be his Lord; and surely it is impossible for any of us who are at once acquainted with our duty, and our interest, to make a better or a different choice. He is

entitled to the supremacy over us in every respect in which that supremacy can be either exercised by *him*, or acknowledged by *us*. And when we refuse him any measure of homage or submission; when we do not acquiesce in his disposal of every thing that concerns us; when we do not cheerfully commit ourselves to him to be governed and treated according to his sovereign pleasure, we forget what is due from the creature to the Creator, and are guilty of rebellion against the all-perfect ruler of the universe. But it is not only our duty; it is also our interest to take the Lord for *our* Lord. Surrendering ourselves to the dominion of any other being, or asserting our own independence, as if we were divinities, we provoke the holy displeasure of omnipotence, and must sink under its overwhelming weight. But yielding implicitly and unreservedly to God, who is not more the holder of all authority, than he is the fountain of all good, we must be safe, and we must be happy; because in that case there is nothing to interrupt the current of his favour, and his favour must secure for every one who enjoys it, guardianship from all evil, and the possession of every blessing.

It is necessary, however, that in this dedication of ourselves to God, the heart be really and chiefly concerned. It is the *soul* that must say to him, "Thou art my Lord." Mere language of this sort is easily employed; and in the estimation of those before whom it is used, it may have all the tone, not only of sincerity, but of fervour, and it may procure for us the reputation of personal and decided piety. But going "out of feigned lips," it can meet with no acceptance from the God of truth, and will be more displeasing to him than the absence of all acknowledgment of his excellence and supremacy. Whatever we say to him; whatever declarations we make of dependence upon his bounty, or of submission to his power; whatever pledges we utter of future devotedness to his service and glory;—it must all be the faithful expression of our convictions and our feelings. We must be conscious of the vow that we intimate in words having its origin, and its purpose, and its meaning within us. And He to whom it is offered must see it to be the effusion of a sentiment which goes forth with the full approbation of our understanding, and with the unreserved consent of our will, and with the cheerful tribute of our affections.

And, aware of our aptness to forget what we have resolved and promised in reference to God, we must frequently remind our souls, as it were, of the ties by which they are voluntarily and solemnly bound to him, and of the consequent obligations which they have to fulfill. It is of infinite importance for us, both as to comfort and improvement, never to lose sight of the fact that we are not our own but his. But there are many weaknesses and corruptions within us, and there are many temptations and delusions without us, which tend either to enfeeble the impression of that fact, or to efface it altogether. And, therefore, we cannot be too careful to prevent it from being impaired; we cannot be too vigilant against the approach or influence of any thing that would injure it in the least degree; we cannot be too anxious to add to its native vividness and strength; and with a jealousy of its fading away, and with a desire of increasing its practical effect, we should often and seriously put ourselves in remembrance of what we have done, saying, like the Psalmist, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord."

Here, however, there is another evil to be guarded against. When we have consecrated

ourselves to God, and when recollecting this, we are active in his service, the Pharisaical idea is apt to steal upon us, that we have something to boast of; that our labours may be beneficial to him to whom they are rendered; and that on account of these, we are entitled to his favour and protection. There cannot be a greater or more pernicious mistake. Nothing that we are capable of doing can be of advantage to God. It can neither increase the sum of his blessedness, nor the perfection of his character, nor the lustre of his glory. He is infinitely above us, and he stands in no need of us. Supreme in the happiness of his being; unbounded in the attributes of his nature; self-existent, eternal and unchangeable, he can derive no benefit from our services, even though we had been as sinless as the angels in heaven, and as distinguished by wisdom and by strength as they are. And how much more impressively should we feel the force of this statement, when we recollect the ignorance, and the weakness, and the pollution which adhere to us amidst our highest attainments in piety and virtue! The vilest thing on earth may, of itself, or in its combinations, be useful to the mightiest

monarch that ever swayed a sceptre, because they stand in the relation of one creature to another creature. But as creatures we are removed at an immeasurable distance from the Creator, and on this account, we cannot be “profitable to our Maker, as he that is wise and kind may be profitable to” his neighbour. Whatever we have, or whatever we do, that is entitled to the name of goodness, is the gift of his own bounty, bestowed upon us that we may have wherewithal to make a practical acknowledgment of our dependance upon him, and to render the homage which is due to so great and gracious a God. And whether we offer to him the tribute of our hearts or the praises of our lips, or the labours of our active life, we must still say to him, “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

But while our goodness extendeth not to God, so as that it can be useful to him or meritorious in his sight, “it extendeth,” says the Psalmist, “to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all our delight.” There are saints in the earth. Alienated as men naturally are from God, and pervaded as their general

character is by moral transgression, there are those of them to whom this appellation may be justly applied. They are saints; they are holy: they love what is holy in their hearts, and they practise what is holy in their lives. Their holiness indeed has much imperfection mixed with it, and comes far short of what the divine law requires of them. But still it exists in their principles, in their desires, in their endeavours, and in their actual acquirements; and, therefore, it confers upon them their leading and distinctive character. They are saints,—transformed and sanctified by divine grace; separated from a “world that lieth in wickedness;” made to see and to feel the evil of sin; redeemed from its reigning power; animated to struggle against its temptations, and to deny themselves to its indulgences; taught to love the character of God, and to obey his will, and to take delight in his commandments; and guided by his Spirit into a decided, cordial, habitual, and persevering cultivation of those qualities of the mind and conduct which constitute true holiness.

Being thus saints, they are “excellent.” They may be lightly esteemed among men; they may

be made the subjects of ridicule and reproach; they may be accounted and treated as the basest of hypocrites. And indeed a more striking and lamentable proof that such is actually the case, cannot easily be conceived than this, that the very term which the Spirit of God employs to designate them in the Scripture, is the very term by which worldly men direct against them their malignity and their scorn, and by which they hold them up to general detestation and contempt. But "it is a small matter to be thus judged of men's judgment; there is one that judgeth, even God." And in his revealed word, while he denominates them "saints," he at the same time pronounces them to be "excellent." And how can they be otherwise than excellent in the true sense of that word? God is the standard of excellence, and they are like God. They are renewed after his image; they conform to his will; they imitate his character; they love what he loves and hate what he hates; and though by reason of natural and moral infirmity they are frequently "overtaken in a fault," and sometimes fall into grievous sins, they yet sorrow for their unworthiness in his sight, and according to his

appointment, they apply to the blood of atonement for the expiation of their guilt, and put themselves under the sanctifying and guiding influences of the Spirit of all grace, and labour with all their heart and with all their strength to be every thing which the God of truth and purity requires. Thus “*approving* the things that are excellent,” and thus *doing* the things that are excellent, they are the objects of God’s affection, and are honoured with his favourable testimony.

And while this is the most satisfactory mode of demonstrating their excellence, it may be also illustrated by contrasting them with their fellow men. It is neither their duty nor their habit to assert their own superiority by making such a comparison. But the comparison is stated in Scripture, when it is affirmed that “the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.” Those who have not experienced the renewal which he has experienced, and do not maintain the character which he maintains, are plainly destitute of those properties which assimilate the creature to his God, and make him worthy of the esteem and admiration of every holy intelligence. Nay they are polluted and degraded by qualities whose in-

trinsic turpitude, whose contrariety to the supreme will, and whose mischievous and ruinous effects expose them to the divine condemnation, and alienate from them the regards of the wise and the good, both in heaven and on earth. That unregenerated world, of which they form a part, and which so often puts "good for evil, and evil for good," may admire and applaud them for the very actions in which their spiritual debasement is embodied; but this is only an additional proof of their degeneracy, and imparts not one tittle of worth to palliate or to redeem their essential demerit. And even the most specious and comely appearance which their deportment may be made to assume,—all the decencies, and honesties, and charities, that may find a place in it, and all the beneficial influence which may accidentally emanate from it,—cannot conceal from us its inherent depravity, and its total worthlessness, when we search into its spirit and its principles, and apply to the determination of its merits that test which is furnished by the word and the law of God. But of how much purer and more elevated a cast than this,—how completely different from it, indeed, is the deportment of the

saint ! The latter has not only the aspect but the reality of excellence. It is excellent not merely in the estimation of fallible mortals, but in the judgment of a righteous, omniscient, and unerring God. It is excellent in the effects which it produces ; in the deeds of which it consists ; in the motives by which it is regulated ; and in the source from which it springs. And while the deportment of the worldling has worthlessness for its general character, and while any portions of it which seem to be exceptions to that general character, are not so in truth, the deportment of the saint is pervaded by excellence, both in its spirit and in its actings, and the imperfections by which it is partially or occasionally tarnished, are merely indications that he whom it characterises, though raised from the death of sin, and made “ a new creature,” and consecrated to the service of his Maker, is still in a body of corruption, and still in a world of temptation and of trial.

The Psalmist not only asserts the excellence of the saints, but declares that in them was “ all his delight.” And such will be the case with us, if our minds are actuated and governed by right

sentiments. In the first place, and in the highest measure, we will delight in God as the centre of all perfection, and as the fountain of all good. And in the next place, and in a proportionate degree, we will delight in such of his creatures as are entitled to our complacency from the resemblance which they bear to him, or from their being suitable to those affections which he permits us to cherish. Among these the saints will hold a distinguished place. They are adorned with all those features of moral beauty, which are fitted to secure our attachment, and to awaken in us emotions of satisfaction and pleasure. These indeed are possessed by the angels in a much higher style; but though we must be gratified with meditating on the existence, the attributes, the employments, and the bliss of such exalted and sinless beings, we cannot delight in *them* as we delight in those of our fellow-men, who wear the same holy likeness to God which *they* wear, and do his will upon earth as *they* do it in heaven; who, while they are thus clothed with those graces of piety, and purity, and benevolence, which place these celestial spirits so near the throne of love, are still “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh;”

who are the subjects of that redeeming mercy and of that sanctifying grace, by which they and we are united to one common head, and in one common hope; and whose very failings and errors not only fill them with that penitential sorrow which only endears a fellow-creature the more to our regard, but serve to excite in us a deeper sympathy and a livelier interest in their behalf, and thus to enhance the joy that we feel when we see them keeping themselves pure from “the corruption that is in the world,” cultivating the habits of godliness and virtue, and “beautified with the salvation” of the Gospel.

But if we imitate the Psalmist, we will not simply delight in the saints—in them will be “*all* our delight.” We will take no delight in the wicked,—in those who have rebelled against God, who have rejected the Saviour, who are continuing in the pollutions of sin. Even them, indeed, we will not regard with sentiments of hatred or dislike. So far as they are blind to their own welfare and in danger of perdition, we will view them with deep felt compassion, and withhold from them no expression of kindness and humanity which their situation may demand from us. Nay, we will

look with an indulgent eye on every thing that is amiable in their temper, and dispositions, and conduct; following the example of our Redeemer, who is said to have loved a young man that showed he had some good thing in him, though he preferred the riches of the world to the service of the Saviour, and thus evinced that he was not of the number of "the *saints*." But we cannot *delight* in them, because they have not those principles, those affections, those substantial marks of God's people, which we have learnt to prize as the only legitimate causes of devoted and complacent regard. This kind and this degree of regard we will confine to "the saints" or "the excellent ones of the earth:" the outgoings of our hearts will be to them, and to them alone. In the contemplation of their personal worth, we will feel a pleasure with which the most splendid endowments, and the most heroic exploits of the ungodly, can never inspire our breasts. And from those who are great, and wise, and happy in this world's vocabulary, but not in the word of God, we will turn away to feast our minds, and nourish our virtue, amidst the faith, and the patience, and the righteousness of the true Chris-

tian,—though, like his divine Master, whom he adores, and who has made him what he is, he be “despised and rejected of men,” and “have not where to lay his head.”

Now, it is to the saints, who are thus excellent, and in whom we take delight, that our goodness extends. If we have just views of the relation in which they stand to God, and of the character which they maintain; if we cherish towards them those sentiments of love and admiration to which their excellence entitles them; if we really rejoice in them as God’s children and as our brethren in Christ Jesus, it follows as a matter of course that we will do them good, according to their need and according to our ability. Their circumstances are such as to admit of our services being beneficial to them; and these services, so far as they are required, we are under indispensable obligations to render to the full extent of our capacity. Feelings of attachment and words of sympathy are well enough in their own place; but they are of no avail, unless accompanied with the doings of a cordial and practical benevolence; and by such doings our treatment of the saints must be habitually distinguished. It

is incumbent on us, indeed, to “do good to all men as we have opportunity;” and he is not a true or enlightened Christian that is a stranger to the exercise of this expanded and universal charity,—that does not imitate his heavenly Father who “makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust.” But it is peculiarly incumbent on us to do good “to them who are of the household of faith.” Between them and us there is a spiritual and intimate relationship, which not only warrants, but calls for the exercise of a kindlier affection and the communications of a richer liberality, than what can be considered as due to those who are still “far from righteousness,” and “far from God.” And we will be especially careful to let our goodness extend to them, when they are suffering persecution on account of their marked separation from the world, and their faithful adherence to the cause of truth and duty. In such a contingency we will do what we can to invigorate their faith, to preserve their steadfastness, to animate their hopes, to comfort and encourage them in their way to Sion. We will remember them in our prayers; we will assist them

by our counsels ; we will stimulate them by our example. And while we thus attend to their spiritual necessities, we will not be unmindful of their temporal wants and circumstances. We will study to protect them from the violence, and to vindicate them from the slanders, of unbelieving men. And by countenancing their honest exertions, ministering of our abundance to them in their times of need, and consoling them when they suffer from injury or from neglect, we will endeavour to realise in their experience that maxim of the Bible which says that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.”

All this we will do, in obedience to the claims of that community of faith and hope which we hold with our brethren in Christ Jesus, and in a wise adaptation of our conduct to the exigencies in which their religious profession may occasionally place them ; and we will do it from a solemn view to the account which we have to render at the last day, and to the specified character which we must have if we would be welcomed by our Judge in these cheering words : “Come ye bless-

ed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This sentence will rest upon the fact that those on whom it is to be pronounced had been minutely careful to make their goodness extend to the saints, and to the excellent of the earth, whom Christ thus graciously condescends to identify with himself: "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me;" "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Let all true Christians bear this continually in mind, and be determined by it not only to cultivate that charity which goes out in deeds of beneficence among all the suffering children of Adam, but especially to cultivate that brotherly kindness which cares for the poor afflicted members of Christ's body, and which, as manifested towards them, he will consider and reward as manifested towards himself.

And let those who are in the habit of ridiculing and traducing the disciples of Christ, who perse-

cute instead of protecting them, and who draw the weapons of their reproach out of the armoury of the divine word, attaching the nickname of *saints* to such as, if there be truth in the Gospel, God “delighteth to honour;” let those who speak and act thus, if unsusceptible of generous feelings, and uninfluenced by any respect for that consistency which, as professing Christians, it becomes them to observe, be persuaded, “by the terrors of that Lord” whom they insult as often as they traduce his people, to desist from their cruel and unhallowed mockery, and to adopt the more honourable, the more rational, and the safer part, of throwing the shield of their protection over those who though subjected to suffering are now “the sons of God,” and will soon enter into their heavenly inheritance. They may “reject this counsel,” but if they do, it is “against themselves,” and “verily they shall have their reward:” for most assuredly a decree of condemnation will go forth against them from the judgment seat of Christ, since he can annex to the sentence which will seal their fate for ever, “I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a

stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not: Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.”—“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

LECTURE V.

PSALM xvi. 4—7.

“ Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.”

THE Psalmist had declared his trust in God, and upon that ground applied for the divine protection and support. He had reminded himself of his having taken the Lord for his portion, and of his having promised to be his faithful and devoted servant. But in the midst of those happy and elevated feelings which this was calculated to awaken, he did not forget the humility which it became him to cherish and to express. He acknowledged that all his doings, however excellent they might be in their own nature, and however beneficial in their effects, were utterly unprofitable to

his Maker, and could merit no favour for him from that supreme and holy source. At the same time he acknowledged that his goodness extended to his brethren of mankind, and especially to the saints, or the excellent of the earth; that he was under obligations to promote their comfort and welfare by every means in his power; and that to a sense of duty there was added the more persuasive motive of the pleasure that he had in contemplating their worth, in holding intercourse with them, and in communicating to them whatever benefits he was able to confer.

At the beginning of the passage that we have now read, the Psalmist introduces the subject of idolatry, and forms respecting it a worthy and decided resolution. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God; their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips." He here speaks of the misery of such as attach themselves to the worship and service of false gods: "Their sorrows shall be multiplied." Not only shall they be subjected to calamity, but their calamities shall be manifold. One evil shall come upon them after another, till there be such an ac-

cumulation of suffering as utterly to overwhelm and destroy them. And this arises from two causes. In the *first* place, the gods in whom they have placed their confidence are mere imaginary beings, who, of course, can do nothing for them, and by their dependance upon them, they are led into many dangerous and fatal errors. And, in the *second* place, by forsaking the true God, they have forfeited all the advantages which trust in him, and obedience to him would have certainly produced; and by giving to another the glory which is due to him alone, they have provoked his holy indignation, and rendered it essential for the honour of his character and his government, to inflict upon them condign punishment. While they lose all the satisfaction and happiness which result from believing the doctrines, and performing the duties, and cherishing the hopes of true religion, they also incur all the wretchedness that is so plentifully engendered by the absurdities, the immoralities, and abominations of a false and idolatrous system of faith. And even though no visible judgments, and no penal consequences of any magnitude should befall them in this world, it is not possible that

having forsaken the true God to hasten after another god—having contracted guilt so heinous and aggravated as this implies, they should escape the divine condemnation in the world to come.

On account of the sinfulness and misery of such conduct, the Psalmist determined that he should not be chargeable with it. He had too just a horror at its enormity, and too strong a sense of its enmity to his peace and safety, to allow himself to indulge in any of the forms or practices of idolatry. He was surrounded with its votaries, and many of his people had joined them; but the displeasure of heaven had been so severely manifested against them, and the threatenings of the law bore upon them so expressly and so awfully, that neither vicinity nor example could induce him to partake of its rites, or to give it any portion of his countenance. He would not unite with the heathen in offering their drink offerings of blood. Nor did he merely abstain from this most expressive proof of attachment to their false and degrading worship: he refused to do or say any thing that could be supposed indicative even of forbearance or indifference to-

wards it. He would not so much as take the names of their gods into his lips. He would not utter their names in such a way as to intimate any thing like belief in their existence, or respect for their character; he would not speak of them in any other way than that which might distinctly declare that he denied their reality as much as he abhorred the services that were paid to them, and that, in his view, those who gave them homage were blinded in understanding, depraved in heart, and lost to all that was best, and purest, and happiest in the universe.

You may probably think, my friends, that all this is inapplicable to you; and that as you are not liable to the offence against which the Psalmist so scrupulously guarded, it can be of no use to inculcate upon you the sentiments which he entertained, and according to which he acted. But herein you are mistaken. It is very true you are in no great danger of becoming idolaters in the literal and original sense of the word. But the word has a more general sense, which is recognised in Scripture, and in which it is frequently exhibited in human character, and is the besetting sin of most men. To be guilty

of idolatry, it is not necessary that you make gods to yourselves, as the heathens did—that you deify the heroes of your country—that you invest the objects of nature with the attributes of divinity—and that you build real temples, and give formal worship to these creatures of your vain imaginations. You may have knowledge and philosophy enough to preserve you from such gross absurdity; and yet you may be chargeable with the offence of which the Psalmist speaks with such just and decided abhorrence. The substance of the crime is contained in your feeling and showing a stronger attachment to some other being than to the *Supreme* Being; in giving to something else an influence over your mind and conduct, greater than what you allow to Him; in recognising in the works of his hands an excellence and a claim to your deference and submission, which by your actions, if not by your words, you deny to exist in himself. This is idolatry, according to the nature of the case, and according to the declarations of Scripture.

It is of no consequence what it is to which you thus pay the homage and give the glory which are due to God alone. Still it is idolatry. That

to which you are devoted, or to which you give the preference over him, may be quite innocent in itself, and a regulated and subordinate affection for it may even constitute a virtue and a duty; and yet your merely giving it the preference involves you in the guilt of idolatry. For that is to “serve the creature more than the Creator.” It is to deprive God of his supremacy, and to put another in his place. It may be worldly honours; it may be power; it may be riches; it may be pleasure; it may be literature and science; it may be parents, or children, or friends; in all these cases, if you set your heart upon them in such a manner, or to such an extent as to exclude God from your regard, or to give him but a secondary station in it, you are characterized by idolatry, and are as liable to the divine displeasure as are the blinded heathen, who literally bow down to stocks and stones. It is said of the heathen, that though they originally “knew God, they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;” and that therefore he “revealed his

wrath from heaven" against those who thus "held the truth in unrighteousness." And think you that any better character belongs to you, or that any better fate can await you, if, knowing God, as he has made himself known in the Gospel, you do not like to retain him in your affections; if, instead of "loving him with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind," you love him less than many of your fellow-mortals; if you permit the gains, or the amusements, or the vanities of this passing world, to engross the time that should be occupied, and the efforts that should be made, in his worship and service; if, in the study and admiration of any of his works, you forget the tribute which you owe him as the all-perfect maker of the universe, and the bountiful giver of those very faculties which fit you for contemplating and for relishing its beauties; if, listening to the voice of temptation, you are seen "going after your covetousness," and your sinful indulgences, and your vain fancies, regardless of the commandment of him whom it is your highest honour to obey, and who by the Gospel of his Son has "called you to glory and to virtue?" Think you, that in acting and living thus, you are not guilty of idolatry; and that

your idolatry is not as heinous and aggravated as that of the heathen on whom God is said to have “poured out his fury?”

You may not be accustomed to view the subject in this light, but if you think justly and seriously, if you take Scripture for your guide, and are to be determined in your judgment by its principles and maxims, I do not see how you can view the subject in any other light. Your conduct is idolatrous and criminal in the eye of reason. When the benighted Gentile falls down and worships the sun in his meridian splendour, or the moon in her midnight brightness, this is not more offensive and revolting than the conduct of the professing Christian, who adores his gold in the character of a miser, or of the professing Christian, who kneels at the shrine of fashion in the character of a man of pleasure, each of them being devoted to a false divinity, and neither of them having the true “God in all his thoughts.” And in the real spirit and import of the divine law, He who rules over all must be considered as speaking in reference to both classes of idolaters, when he says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” “Thou

shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God."

Beware, then, of the guilt of idolatry, and of the vengeance which impends over those who indulge in it. See that you not only renounce it in general, but that you keep yourselves free from it, in all its particular forms; that you abstain from it, not merely in its grosser and more aggravated instances, but even in those instances in which it assumes the aspect of cordial friendship, of intellectual ambition, of universal philanthropy. Say with the Psalmist, "Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips." Say with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Say with the inhabitants of Judah, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." Say in the spirit and language of every real Christian, "Lord, I am thine, for thou hast made me; thou hast preserved me; thou hast redeemed me. Occupy the throne of my heart, and reign there with unresisted and undivided sway. I confess that I have

given too much of my regard to objects and pursuits, in which thou wert but little acknowledged, or not acknowledged at all. Pardon my homage to the creature; and help me by thy grace to serve it no more. Subdue me to thyself, as alone worthy of all my reverence, and all my love. Give me to feel the solemn and endearing obligations which I owe to thee, my chosen and redeeming God. And make me willing, and obedient, and devoted, in the day of thy power."

It is in conformity to the import of the Psalmist's resolution, which we have been considering, that he goes on to say, as in the fifth verse, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot." "The Lord is the portion of our inheritance" in a future life. Having chosen him for our portion; accounting his favour the highest and richest blessing we can possibly enjoy; and having an interest in it through faith in the blood of atonement, we can look forward to heaven as our best and everlasting abode. He has secured it for us; he has promised it to us; he has prepared it for our reception. And how comfortable, how encouraging, how delightful to reflect, that whatever be our condition in this world; however

destitute and despised we may now be ; though we should “ suffer the loss of all things” here below, there is reserved for us on high an “ inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away :” And that, as “ it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom,” as the expression of his unmerited bounty, the gracious recompence of our labours, the appointed result of our sufferings in his service, so his immediate presence will constitute at once its happiness, its glory, and its stability, and that from such a bountiful and inexhaustible source of excellence we may confidently expect to derive every thing that can carry our nature to its highest pitch of perfection and felicity ! O let us often anticipate heaven as the land towards which we are travelling ; let our ambition perpetually point to it as the end “ of our high calling ;” let our hopes fondly dwell on it as the final resting place from our toils and sorrows ; and remembering that God, holy as well as good, is the fountain of all its blessedness, let us not only be comforted with the prospect of dwelling in it for ever, but also be animated to prepare for it, by studying to conform in all things to his righteous will, by

leading a life of faith on the merits of his Son, and by “purifying ourselves even as he also is pure.”

But the Lord is not only the portion of our inheritance in a future life; he is also the portion of our cup in the “life that now is.” If we are his true people, we have chosen him as to every thing that concerns our well-being, and he has assured us that he will be “our guide even until death.” In all that happens to us we will recognize the operation of his combined mercy, and wisdom, and faithfulness. Whatever be our lot we will trace it to his appointment, and submit it to his management. Amidst all the vicissitudes of life we will comfort our hearts with believing that he rules over us in the exercise of infinite perfection, that his manifold dealings with us are intended to promote our good, and that if we continue to put our trust in him, he “will never leave nor forsake us,” till he has placed us beyond the reach of whatever can harass or distress us. He may put the cup of prosperity in our hands. And we will drink it with thanksgiving and joy; regarding it as a pledge of his rich beneficence; lifting up our souls in gratitude for his unmerited

kindness; living to the praise of him who “fill-eth our mouth with good things, so that our youth is renewed like the eagle’s;” and feeling every past expression of his benevolence as an argument and a motive for our putting more confidence in him, and rendering more obedience to him, and holding more communion with him, in all the time of our sojourning that is yet to come. And when he presses to our lips the cup of adversity, we will drink that also, with patience and resignation; remembering that our afflictions are of his ordination or by his permission; satisfied that the heaviest of them will not be allowed to overwhelm us, but that all of them are intended or will be overruled for our permanent advantage; consoling ourselves with the belief that they are the discipline of our heavenly father, and with the hope that they will “work out for us an exceeding weight of glory;” and praying and striving that they may purify and improve us here, and that they may issue in immortal joys hereafter. Our confidence and our rejoicing is this, that the Lord himself will maintain our lot. Whatever good we possess, whatever happiness we enjoy, it may be taken from

us, if the preservation of it be left to ourselves. But, in the hands of him, to whom, as our chosen portion, we have committed our all, it is perfectly secure. Our enemies, in that case, have no power to deprive us of it, be they ever so numerous, and be they ever so strong. "None can pluck us out of the hand of God" who is "greater than all." Nothing shall "ever be able to separate us from his love which is in Christ." He will maintain whatever he has wrought for us; and will keep us "by his mighty power through faith unto salvation." And if this be the consequence of having God for our portion, how blessed are we in having made such a choice, and in enjoying such a privilege! And how miserable must those be who, by making the world their portion, have no security in life, no peace at death, no hope beyond the grave! While we pity these infatuated mortals, and supplicate the God of all grace in their behalf, let us be careful to "hold fast that which we have," to cleave with still greater devotedness to God, to "set him continually before us," and to take him as our guide, our refuge, our consolation, and our "exceeding great reward."

“ The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” This expresses the satisfaction which God’s people have with their condition. They may not be able to say so of their temporal circumstances. They are not indifferent to the good and evil of which, as inhabitants of this world, they are called to partake. And when trouble and destitution assail them, they are not insensible to the affliction ; they will not speak of it as if all were going well and prosperously with them, and as if they set no value on the bounties of Providence. They feel the ordinary calamities of life as well as others. They pray to be delivered from them. And when they obtain deliverance, and the “ candle of the Lord shines upon their head,” they acknowledge the boon with grateful and rejoicing hearts. But then here is the peculiarity of their character, and their situation ; their principal concern is with their *spiritual* circumstances. And if these be right and prosperous, they care little about their bodily and external comfort. God being their portion, they have nothing left to fear on the one hand, or to desire on the other. Their souls being safe and their eternal interests se-

cure, every other care is absorbed in the delightful persuasion that no real injury can befall them, in the blessed experience of “the peace which passeth understanding,” in the animating hope that is full of immortality. They envy not the man of the world his sensual gratifications and carnal mirth. They are abundantly satisfied with the communications of God’s love to them, by which their every want is supplied, and by which they are filled with the “joy that no man taketh from them.” When a temporal benefit comes to them they receive it, and thank the bountiful giver for this additional token of that grace which has provided so richly for their eternal salvation. And when they are visited with hardships and sufferings, they endure the visitation with patience, well knowing that it comes to them on an errand of mercy; that it is no less a token of their father’s love than the other, and that they have great cause to rejoice even in this their tribulation. Reconciled to God, “walking in the light of his countenance,” enjoying the consolations of his Spirit, and cheered with the hope of his glory, surely they may say without reserve, in the very midst of deep and dark adversity,

that “the lines are fallen unto them in pleasant places, and that they have a goodly heritage.” In this view it may be justly said of believers, that “all things are theirs, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs; and they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Now, my friends, if such be our spiritual state, great cause have we to “bless the Lord who hath given us counsel.” Not only has he brought us into “the valley of vision,” but he has enabled us to see with a believing eye the redemption which it unfolds. Not only has he conferred upon us those external privileges which we enjoy by the Gospel dispensation, but he has taught us to improve them, and by his blessing has rendered them effectual for our good. Not only has he made the lines fall to us in pleasant places, and given us a goodly heritage, but he has counselled us to value them aright, to set up our everlasting rest in them, and to seek from them our best comforts, and our highest happiness. Had we been left to ourselves, his kindness would have been lavished on us in vain; and we should have been like many others who, though born in

a land of saving light, prefer walking in the darkness of infidelity and sin. But, taught by his Spirit, we have had our understandings enlightened to see the realities of the Gospel, and our hearts moved to seek after an interest in the Saviour, and “our feet guided into the way of peace” and safety. And this being the case, surely we cannot fail to give thanks to him “by whose grace it is that we are what we are;” to cherish towards him the warmest gratitude of which our souls are susceptible, and to “praise him even while we have a being.”

And having been influenced and enabled by him to “choose the good part which cannot be taken from us,” we must be careful to make a right use of the privilege. “Our reins must instruct us in the night seasons.” We must meditate on what we have done; and in our times of retirement and solitude, “commune with our own hearts” on the subject, that thus we may be more fully instructed in what we have received, and in what we owe to our merciful God; that we may be encouraged to persevere in the choice which we have so wisely and happily made; that we may be more thoroughly comforted by it

amidst the trials and distresses to which we are subjected; that we may be furnished with more animating motives to thanksgiving and praise; that we may learn how needful we are of the continuance of that divine interposition which “began the good work in us;” and that we may be stimulated to greater diligence in the duties of our holy vocation, and to greater earnestness in our applications for the wisdom and the strength which are necessary to our abiding in the love of God, and to our being finally conducted into his heavenly presence.

LECTURE VI.

PSALM XVI. 8—END.

“ I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest in hope : For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

IN the preceding part of this Psalm, we have considered David as speaking solely in his own person, in reference to his own feelings, his own comfort, and his own conduct. We are aware, indeed, that by many it is regarded as applicable to the Messiah ; but of this we see no satisfactory proof, and we are always unwilling, when interpreting Scripture, to indulge unnecessarily in conjecture, or to give a construction to the language of the sacred writers which is merely suggested by a particular theory, and which is adopted not so much to express and illustrate

the real meaning of the passage, as to render it more evangelical and more interesting than it would otherwise be. Some have treated the whole book of Psalms as in every the minutest part, more or less prophetic or descriptive of the Saviour; whereas it must be evident to every intelligent reader of them, that they often speak of circumstances, and experience, and character, which cannot be attached to the Saviour without violating the soundest and most important of those principles on which we are accustomed to ascertain the import of revelation, and introducing a mode of determining the mind of the Spirit, which would put every thing at the mercy of an ill regulated piety, or of a lively imagination. The question is not—*may* this, by a little exercise of fancy, and a little accommodation of fact, and a little straining of phraseology, be made to intimate something concerning Christ? The question is—*does* this truly speak of Christ, and are we justified in taking that view of it, by the context, or by strict analogy, or by express warrant, or by any other legitimate and safe mode of judging in such cases?

Now, my friends, it is in deference to the rules and maxims implied in this statement that, when expounding the previous portion of this Psalm, we considered it as spoken by David in reference to himself; and it is in deference to the same rules and maxims that we are to consider the remainder of the Psalm as spoken by him in reference to the Messiah, of whom he was both a prophet and a type. Not only may all the passage that we have just read be applied to Christ without constraint; and not only is there some of it which is applicable to him alone; but we have New Testament authority for making such an application. The Apostle Peter, in his first discourse after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, expressly quoted these verses as uttered by David, in exclusive reference to the Redeemer; and, therefore, in explaining and illustrating them, we are not only entitled, but bound to keep the Redeemer in our eye as the person from whom they primarily proceed, and towards whom they direct our attention.

Peter, you know, quoted them when addressing the Jews on the subject of Christ's resurrection, asserting its reality, and showing them that

it was predicted by the Psalmist. But though that be the main topic which he employed them for pressing on the notice and belief of his audience, they offer along with this some other topics to our consideration, from all which, as connected with *him*, we may derive many appropriate and salutary instructions. Let us meditate on them for a little ; and may the Lord direct and bless our meditations !

I. In the *first* place, this passage reminds us of the sufferings of Christ.

It is clear that the types, the promises, and the predictions of Christ which we meet with in the Old Testament describe him as a *suffering* Saviour. We often read of him, indeed, as one who was to be great and triumphant ; and the language in which his greatness and his triumphs are depicted, is so frequent, so energetic, and so splendid, that the Jews in general thought of him, and expected him in that and in no other character. But it is impossible to peruse the accounts and to look at the representations of him which are set before us in the records and the ceremonies of the ancient dispensation, without perceiving that the Saviour whom they point-

ed out was to appear in a state of abasement; to be “bruised and put to grief,” and to have a “sorrow like unto no other sorrow.” In the book of Psalms we have various affecting delineations of what he was to endure at the hands both of God and man. Of this the twenty-second Psalm furnishes a remarkable and striking instance. And even in the passage now before us, the same truth is to be found—not indeed in plain and direct statement—but in obvious and necessary inference. When Christ says here by the mouth of David that “he would not be moved,” and that “his soul would not be left in hell,” his assertions, of course, presuppose that he was to be exposed to such trials and distresses as might endanger his stability, and that he was to die and descend into the grave; and when he commits himself so emphatically to *divine* interposition for support under the former, and for deliverance from the latter of these evils, he distinctly intimates that they were of no ordinary magnitude and extent. And the view of him which is thus given through the medium of prophecy, is completely realised in his actual history. According to that history, he was from

his cradle to his grave, “ a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He was harassed by the malignity of men ; he was assailed by the malice of devils ; he was bereft of the countenance of his heavenly Father. He was deserted by his friends and persecuted by his foes. He was so poor that he “ had not where to lay his head.” He was so despised that the mighty and the mean equally “ hid their faces from him.” He was so forlorn that when “ he came to his own, his own would not receive him.” His body was tortured ; his soul was wrung with anguish ; ignominy darkened his departing hour ; and while he expired amidst the shame and the agony of a cross, he expired under the curse of holy and incensed omnipotence.

It is painful, my friends, to contemplate this ; to see true greatness humiliated so low, and warmest charity so ungratefully requited, and immaculate innocence plunged into such a depth of affliction. Yet we are not permitted to withdraw or turn away our minds from the contemplation, sad and heart-rending as it is. As we travel through the word of truth, the sufferings of Christ are presented to our observation at

every step ; they are set before us in all their variety and in all their aggravations ; they are mixed up with the most elevated and cheering views that are afforded of his exaltation and his glory. When, amidst our meditations on his essential dignity and blessedness, we might be apt to forget how low he stooped and how much he bore, a glimpse of them is let in upon us as exhibited in the stable in Bethlehem, the garden of Gethsemane, or the hill of Calvary. The Evangelists and the Apostles dwell upon them as the most striking features of their narrative, and as the most indispensable theme of their preaching. And it is to them that the attention of his people is specially called, and by them that their devotion is to be principally kindled, in that ordinance which is appointed to be a commemoration of him even to the end of the world. In this ordinance he does not require you to remember him as one whose birth was announced by a multitude of angels ; in whom were “ hid all the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom ;” whose word was implicitly obeyed by the elements of nature, and the spirits of darkness ; who rescued the victims that death was spoiling in the tomb ; who

was acknowledged by “ a voice from the excellent glory;” and at last ascended on the clouds to heaven. He does not require you to remember him at his table as distinguished by these attributes of his character, and these glories of his condition. No ; he requires you to remember him as one who suffered and died. “ Eat of this bread, which is a memorial of my broken body ; drink of this wine, which is a memorial of my shed blood : *do THIS* in remembrance of me : thus show *MY DEATH* till I come.”

And well may such an emphasis be laid on the *sufferings* and *death* of Christ ; for this was the instituted method of redemption. He suffered and died that he might “ take away our sins ;” that he might “ make reconciliation for iniquities ;” that he might “ bring in an everlasting righteousness.” Such was the appointment of God ; and unless that appointment had taken effect, in Christ “ humbling himself and becoming subject to the suffering of death,” as an atoning sacrifice, vain and unavailing with respect to us would have been all the other achievements of his mediatorial enterprize. All his miracles, all his teaching, all his benevolence, all his example,

all his manifestations of divine excellence and divine perfection, would have been utterly lost upon us. The justice of God being still unsatisfied, and our guilt being still unexpiated, we must have continued under the sentence of condemnation, and under the burden of that sentence we must have inevitably and everlastingly perished. But while the sufferings and death of Christ deserve that prominence which is given to them in the Gospel record, on account of their necessity to the Gospel scheme, their title to it is rendered complete by the efficacy which attends them for answering their destined purpose. He “has seen of the travail of his soul and he is satisfied.” His obedience unto death has fulfilled all the demands of that infinitely holy law which we had transgressed. He has “made peace by the blood of his cross.” The perfections of the divine character are vindicated, and the authority of the divine administration is maintained; and no barrier, therefore, now remains to hinder the divine mercy from pouring itself out on the chief of sinners. In consequence of what Christ endured when he gave himself as a “propitiation for our sins,” God is at once “just, and the

justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." And he now proclaims from his throne of grace, that "whosoever thus believeth, shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

As then the sufferings and death of Christ are held out to us in Scripture as of such essential importance and such saving virtue, let them be the object of our devout and paramount regard. Let us recognize in them the means which God has instituted for our deliverance from sin and misery. Let us place our confidence in their merit for the attainment of salvation and all its blessings. And when we go to the Lord's Table, where they are brought to our recollection by solemn and significant emblems, let our faith be directed towards them with peculiar liveliness and power, and let them be rested on by us as the foundation of all our hope, and applied to as the source of all our joy.

II. In the *second* place, the passage under review, affirms the constancy and the cheerfulness with which Christ was to bear his sorrows and to become obedient to the death of the cross. "I shall not be moved;" and "my heart is glad, and my glory," that is, my tongue, "rejoiceth."

So said David personating the Messiah; and all this was realised in the Messiah's actual deportment. In order to secure our belief and dependence on his mediatorial work, it is perhaps enough for us to know that he finished it; that he did not stop short in the midst of it, but that he brought it to a successful termination; that he was rewarded for its accomplishment; and that it is meritorious to procure for all who trust in it forgiveness, and acceptance, and eternal life. But that we may cherish those sentiments towards Christ which it becomes us to entertain, we must take a nearer view of that temper with which he bore the heavy load of suffering which was laid on him for the purpose of working out our redemption. He foresaw every pang that it was requisite for him to endure in order to save sinners, and yet he scrupled not to undertake the arduous task, and engaged in it with alacrity and zeal. As he proceeded to execute its duties, he met with numerous difficulties, and dangers, and distresses: but he shrunk from none of them; he encountered them all with undaunted firmness; he rose superior to them in every aspect that they assumed, and in every combination in which they

assailed him. He never retreated from one scene of trial on which he was called to enter. He never was heard to utter a complaint under the multiplied privations which continually harassed him. "He stedfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem," where he knew that nothing awaited him but injustice, and cruelty, and death. He rebuked his disciples when they thought it foul scorn that he should submit to the wrongs which he calmly foretold. He exposed himself to the traitor's artifices, when he might have defeated them and escaped. He was in such agony that it extorted from him prayers for deliverance, yet with the same breath he declared his entire acquiescence in all the sorrows to which he was doomed by the decree of heaven. He allowed his enemies to carry him away to judgment, and to procure his condemnation, and to cover him with reproach, and to suspend him on the accursed tree, though with one frown he could have sunk them all in the gulf of perdition. He might have come down from the cross, as the multitude impiously challenged him to do, and erected on their ruin that cause which they were attempting to destroy, yet he patiently en-

dured its anguish, magnanimously despised its shame, and struggled on through all its mysterious and unspeakable terrors, till he could say in the accents of victory, "It is finished." Nor was it mere constancy that he exercised in those dark and trying circumstances through which he passed. It was moreover with feelings of pleasure and exultation that he travelled along the path of sorrow, and "trode the wine press" of the Father's wrath. He was not only contented, but he rejoiced to suffer as a surety for guilty men. His humiliation, and all the hardships and miseries which it implied, were the appointments of God's will. He was well aware that every arrow of affliction which pierced him, from the beginning to the conclusion of his mediatorial labours upon earth, got its direction, and its power, and its bitterness from the hand of his heavenly Father: and yet all along, even when they drunk deepest into his soul, he looked up and said, "To do thy will, I take delight, O my God!"

Such was the constancy and such was the cheerfulness with which our blessed Saviour bore his sufferings. And surely we cannot but

admire the character in which this excellence was so conspicuously displayed. And if our regards should be proportioned to the extent and energy of the virtues which excite them, what must be our admiration of the character of Christ, when we think of the number, and poignancy, and duration of his sorrows, and remember that he persevered under their pressure with a constancy which never wavered for a moment, and with a cheerfulness which found its happiest exercise in the season of his deepest adversity !

But to our admiration of his unequalled magnanimity, we must add the more valuable tribute of our gratitude : for it was in love to our souls that his engagement to suffer and to die had its origin ; and it was by that love to our souls that he was animated to fulfil his generous engagement, with the unbending fortitude and the unaffected gladness which he exhibited throughout the whole course of his endurance. And if we ought to love him because he has so loved us, O how deep seated should our affection be ! How ardently should it burn towards him by whose compassion it has been kindled ! And how resolutely and steadfastly should it be expressed in

spite of all the sacrifices which it may cost us, and of all the troubles and trials in which it may involve us !

And while we admire the character of Christ, and cherish gratitude and love to him on account of the constancy and cheerfulness with which he " bore our griefs and carried our sorrows," let him be in this respect the object of our close and habitual imitation. As his disciples we have much evil to meet with before we " enter into rest ;" bodily pain, worldly disappointments, mental distress, spiritual trials, a thousand things to harass and afflict us in our journey through this vale of tears. Now let us be like our divine Master, and let " none of these things move us." Let us " bear our cross" with patience. Let us be more than patient : let our " heart be glad and our tongue rejoice" in tribulation. Let us " take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses" with which we may be visited for our attachment to his Gospel, or our activity in the cause of Christian benevolence. And let us look well to " Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith," as he is held out to us in the Holy Scriptures, giving himself to a de-

gree of suffering and to a kind of death, infinitely more awful than what we can ever be called to endure, that we may catch some portion of that lofty spirit which his severest woes were unable to subdue, and that we may go back into the world, better prepared to sustain the burdens of life, and to triumph over the fears and the agonies of death.

III. Let us now consider in the *third* and *last* place, what it was, according to the language of the Psalmist, that supported and cheered our Saviour in the midst of his sufferings.

And, *first*, he tells us that he “set the Lord always before him.” He set the Lord always before him as the great object of his regard; to whom his utmost devotedness was due, and in whose dispensations it was at once his honour, his duty, and his happiness to acquiesce. To his will he in every thing submissively bowed. To his character he paid the unlimited homage which perfect and uncreated excellence deserved. To his glory he felt that every affection of the heart, and every action of the life should be uniformly subservient. And thus setting the Lord before him, he was prevented from yielding to those

claims of self love which might otherwise have proved too powerful for him to resist. He could not have declined his sufferings at first, or prematurely ceased to bear them, without opposing the divine will, which had with authority as well as in wisdom appointed them; without affronting the divine character whose brightest attributes they were intended to display; and without obstructing the divine glory, which was to be manifested equally in their fitness and their effects. And the boundless piety of Christ, being not only hostile to all such regardlessness of what was due to God, but ambitious of every thing by which he could be honoured or in which he could be obeyed, made him at once patient and delighted to bear the whole weight of affliction that was laid upon him, for accomplishing God's purposes of mercy to our fallen race.

Now let us also "set the Lord always before us." When we are visited with affliction of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, let us remember that it "does not spring out of the ground," and that it must not be considered and treated as an evil which has no connection with what is good in its origin or in its issue. We

should recollect that it proceeds, either directly or indirectly, from the hand of that great Being who manages all our lot, that it indicates the wisdom, the mercy, and the faithfulness of his dealings with us, and that if it be allowed to “have its perfect work,” it will in its final results reflect honour on his administration, and redound to the advantage and happiness of our souls. And recollecting these things, let us submit, without murmuring, to all the hardships of our condition, and even “count it all joy when we fall into divers trials” and tribulations.

In the *next* place, our Saviour tells us that he was supported and cheered in the midst of his sufferings, by the assurance that God was “at his right hand.” He was not in a forlorn and helpless state—unprotected against the assaults of his foes—unsustained under the weight of his calamities—abandoned to the feebleness of human wisdom and human strength, and left to resources as uncertain as they were inadequate in “the time of his need.” Had this been the case, and had he known it, his heart would have sunk into despondency, the work of redemption would have failed in his hands, and we should

have had no suffering obedience—no atoning death, on which to rely for acceptance. But far different was his situation. Omnipotence befriended him. The arm of Jehovah was stretched out for his stay and his deliverance. His enemies might be numerous and strong, but there was one to help him mightier than them all. His perplexities might be great, but they were nothing to the scan of unerring wisdom. His anguish might be bitter and severe, but his bitterest and severest anguish must have given way to the consolations of divinity. His trials might be round about him, and within him, and press close and hard upon his inmost soul; but there was nearer to him still than these could be, that God who has the universe at his command, and is pledged to preserve his chosen from all that would injure and overwhelm them. All this the Saviour knew. He knew that Deity was thus present with him, and thus engaged in his behalf. He confided in the great truth as one which would be realised in every exigency of his case. And fully convinced that he had only to trust and pray, in order to experience, in richest abundance, the aid that would uphold him, and

the comfort that would cheer him, and the interposition that would deliver him in all his times of danger and of need, he “feared no evil” that could possibly befall him, at any stage of his perilous undertaking. His dangers might be imminent, and his prospects dark, and his sorrows multiplied and great, but he cast himself on the protection of the Almighty, whose servant he was, and whose work he was doing; and he rejoiced in the sense of present safety, and in the hope of ultimate triumph.

Such was our Saviour’s “strong hold in the day of trouble;” let it also be ours. If we be followers of him, God is at *our* right hand, as he was at *his*, and we may warrantably exercise the same reliance, and take to ourselves the same encouragement which sustained and animated him along the path of suffering. God is always beside us to observe our circumstances, to listen to our petitions, to guide us through our difficulties, to soothe us in our distresses, to rescue us out of the hand of our adversaries, and to keep us from falling away in the hour of temptation “from our own steadfastness.” Is not he possessed of every attribute to which we would appeal for

comfort and for preservation? Has he not promised to put forth these attributes in our behalf as often as our situation requires their exercise? Does not the infinite perfection of his nature insure the fulfilment of that gracious promise in all its extent? And does not the experience of our Redeemer, who showed what we might expect, as well as exemplified what we ought to do, afford us a practical and satisfactory demonstration of the faithfulness with which our heavenly Father will communicate to us all that he has taught us to pray and to hope for in the course of our pilgrimage? Let us then confide in him without hesitation or reserve. Let us bear upon our minds continually the lively persuasion that wherever we are, and whatever we suffer, he is present with us in the character of our guide, our comforter, and our protector. Let us ask, according to our necessities, that we may receive what he is both able and willing to bestow for their relief. Let us lean upon him in the exercise of a faith which looks perpetually to his word, and doubts as little of its veracity as of its kindness. And when the multitude or the severity of our trials would lead us to despond, let

us think of the conduct and the consolations of Christ, and remonstrate with ourselves for not cherishing the confidence by which he was held up, and say “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.”

Lastly, our Saviour informs us that he was supported and cheered by the hope of a resurrection to life and blessedness. “My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

This was to be the termination and issue of Christ’s sufferings. They were, indeed, to “bring him to death,” and that death was to be characterised by all that was frightful and distressing. But he “had hope in his death.” He knew that the dominion of the king of terrors was to be destroyed, and that he was, by returning from the grave, to “become the first fruits of them that sleep.” God would “not leave his soul in hell,”

that is, would not allow his human spirit to remain in the state of the dead, and would not permit his body, which was as free from moral pollution as his soul, and equally sanctified with it for the work of redemption, to undergo in any measure that process of dissolution which must pass upon all the sinful posterity of Adam. Instead of suffering him to continue in the grave, he would “show him the path of life;” he would make the darksome valley a way along which he would conduct him to immortality; and, “raising him from the dead, would give him glory,”—would receive him into his heavenly presence as a triumphant Redeemer, and exalt him to his right hand, that in the fulness of everlasting bliss he might reap the reward of his meritorious sufferings, and his victorious decease. Christ had this prospect continually in his view. He was well aware that he should speedily “rest from his labours” and sorrows, and that “his rest would be glorious.” It was “for the joy set before him that he endured the cross and despised the shame.” And knowing that when he committed his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, who would keep what he had thus com-

mitted to him, and that his body would come forth from the tomb unhurt by the power of corruption, and that thus raised again and “justified in the spirit” by his resurrection, he would be “straightway glorified with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was;” anticipating such a splendid and felicitous result as this, he was resigned in suffering, and he was brave in death, beyond all that the generations of men have ever witnessed, or will ever be able to exhibit.

But though we can never equal the fortitude with which our Saviour suffered and died, we may humbly imitate him in this as in other departments of his exalted character. And, indeed, it is our duty to study this resemblance to him, and to strive after it, under the influence of the same motives by which he was actuated. These motives, it is true, we have not in that high style and commanding power in which they presented themselves to his mind. Still, however, they form a part of our Christian privileges, and it becomes us to fix our regards upon them, and to surrender ourselves freely to all the effects which they are calculated to produce on our sentiments and

conduct. If we are united to Christ by faith, and if we are studying to “be holy as he who hath called us is holy;” then we shall be partakers of Christ’s resurrection, of Christ’s joy, of Christ’s glory. Our bodies, indeed, must moulder into their kindred earth, and a long period may elapse before they are recalled from their dreary abode. But the doctrine is true and stable, that as Christ has risen we shall rise also—that there is “life and immortality” for us beyond the grave—that there awaits us, in celestial companionship with him who “is the resurrection and the life,” a “fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.” And with this scene of restoration and of happiness before us, why should we grudge to suffer, and why should we be afraid to die? Our sufferings may be severe and protracted, but we suffer along with Christ, and suffering patiently along with him, we shall also reign with him in heaven; and as his sufferings merited the recompense which he received in his resurrection from the dead, and his exaltation to “the right hand of the majesty on high,” so our sufferings shall be so sanctified as to qualify us for being “children of the resurrection,” and

“ heirs of the kingdom” which he has secured for all his faithful followers. Death may come upon us unexpectedly, and may come in his most forbidding form; and the terrors of his coming may be more awful and agonising than our fearful imaginations had ever conceived; but Christ also died, and “ by his death overcame death,” spoiled him of his destroying power, and is pledged to make every believer a sharer in his dear-bought victory, and in his well-earned triumph. And “ living to the Lord, and dying in the Lord,” the grave, dark and noisome as it is, is consecrated as a resting place to our mortal bodies “ till the times of restitution,” when he who “ lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death,” shall awaken us from our refreshing slumbers, and clothe us in the robe of undecaying beauty, and conduct us into that region of unclouded light, and spotless purity, and unmingled bliss, where we shall dwell and be happy for ever. And, destined to such an award as this, let us not be cast down by any calamities that can happen to us, or be immoderately alarmed by any dangers that can threaten us, either during the time of our sojourning in this evil

world, or at the period of our departure from it. Let us cherish habitually the hope of that eternal life which God hath promised to us, and which he will assuredly bestow upon us. Let us believe stedfastly, and act holily, as it becomes those who have such a "high calling" and such a glorious destination. Let our faith and our hope derive new energy from the contemplation of Christ's death, by which he at once purchased our title to immortality, and ratified the charter in which it is made over to us. And then let us go on our Christian way rejoicing, trusting in the Lord Jehovah, and looking forward to "the glory that is to be revealed." Thus, we shall be "filled with comfort and exceeding joyful in all our tribulation;" and when the hour of our departure comes, we shall take up the language of triumph and say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

LECTURE VII.

PSALM xxxiii. 1—7.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long: For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

PART I.

THE passage that we have now read presents to our notice, some important and interesting particulars. There is *first*, the uncomfortable state of a convinced but still impenitent sinner. *Secondly*, there is the pardon of sin. *Thirdly*, there is the connection between the pardon of sin and the grace of repentance. *Fourthly*, there is the happiness of such as have repented and obtained pardon. *Fifthly*, there is the disposition of those

who are penitent and pardoned, to engage in the exercise of prayer. And, *lastly*, there is the security of God's people in the midst of danger and distress.

I. First, we have here represented to us the uncomfortable state of those who are convinced of sin but still impenitent. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

This was the sad experience of the Psalmist himself. He had transgressed God's law. This he both knew and felt; and it brought along with it the pangs of remorse. His mind was conscious of having offended the divine majesty—of having incurred the divine displeasure—of having done what rendered him liable to the punishment threatened in the divine law. But he did not seek for deliverance from the burden of guilt by the confession of a contrite heart, and by application to the mercy of heaven. In both these respects he "kept silence." And the consequence was, that his convictions of the commission, and of the evil, and of the danger of sin, continued to harass him as before. He

could find no peace. Wherever he was, and with whatever he was occupied, “the hand of God was heavy upon him.” And this compunction of soul, haunting him continually, disturbing his midnight repose, accompanying him through the active employments of the day, and incessantly troubling him with anxiety and alarm, so affected him, that the vigour and freshness of youth were exchanged for the debility and exhaustion of age, and his “moisture was turned into the drought of summer.”

Thus was it with the Psalmist; and thus in some measure will it be with all who attempt to stifle and overpower the convictions of sin. They may not be sensible of their guilt as he was; they may not feel it so acutely; they may not be so much alive to its impression; and they may not suffer from it the same degree of annoyance and misery. But still, if they be really convinced that sin attaches to them, and if they see in it a forfeiture of God’s favour, and if they read in it the sentence of God’s wrath, how can it be that they should escape from the anguish of a “wounded spirit,” and not be “filled with the terrors of the Lord?”

When I say this, I doubt not that I speak in accordance with what has been actually experienced by some of you now hearing me; and, perhaps you are still in the situation which the Psalmist has so pathetically described as his own. The iniquity that you have done presses hard upon your conscience. In that iniquity you recognise what has exposed you to the indignation of the Almighty; and the apprehension of his wrath, justly deserved and awfully threatened, is a perpetual source of inquietude and sorrow. You try to forget it in the cares of business, or to charm it away by pleasurable indulgence, or to drive it off by an effort of the will, or to reason it down by the sophistries of a carnal mind. But the endeavour is fruitless. The arrow sticks fast within you; the wound festers in your very vitals; and your attempts to heal it, only serve to render it deeper, and severer, and more painful than ever. It is a mercy that conscience is still awake—that it does not cease to remind you of your wickedness—that it is not yet seared into torpid and fatal insensibility. You have reason to bless God that his voice thus speaks to you—that his spirit thus strives with you—that he does not

permit you to enjoy any inward peace, or to find rest to the sole of your foot, so long as there is within you an impenitent heart, and an unforgiven soul—that he unweariedly pursues you with his admonitions and his warnings, all destructive as they are of your present comfort, till you have abandoned the unhappy struggle which you are maintaining with your convictions, and sought for relief to your troubled mind, where alone that relief can ever be found. And the more effectually to persuade you to make no hesitation, and to lose no time in betaking yourselves to this refuge, consider, we beseech you, that the wretchedness which haunts you as transgressors, in society and in solitude, amidst care and amidst amusement, while it intimates God's willingness that you should flee from sin, both as to its power and its punishment, is but the prelude of that unmingled and everlasting wretchedness which awaits you in another world, if you will not listen to him in this the time of your merciful visitation; and that to persist in keeping silence, while conscience is constraining you every hour and every moment to cry for forgiveness, and to pour forth your penitential ac-

knowledgments at the throne of grace, and to apply to the divine compassion for that rest from your sins which the divine compassion is so ready to bestow, is to aggravate a thousand fold all the perils and miseries of your condition, and by lulling into apathy that internal monitor, which now pleads with you so urgently to flee equally from your present anguish, and from the "wrath to come," is to secure for yourselves an undisturbed continuance in the path of guilt, and an uninterrupted passage to the habitations of darkness and despair.

And why should you so perversely remain in the state of suffering to which conscious unworthiness has reduced you? You know that deliverance from the evils by which you are distressed is not to be obtained by the means to which you have hitherto had recourse. You know that nothing can remove them but the assurance of a full and free forgiveness from him whom you have disobeyed, and whose anger you have incurred. And you know, not only that he is willing to grant this forgiveness, but that he has devised and executed a plan, the whole purpose of which is to accomplish the salvation of sinners,

and to speak "peace to them that are afar off." Look at this blessing as it is represented to you in the Scriptures, that you may be satisfied of its sufficiency to constitute your safety, and to quiet all your alarms.

II. The Psalmist speaks of it in three ways, "Transgression is forgiven,"—"sin is covered,"—"the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

The sinner has his *transgression forgiven*. Having broken God's law, he has become liable to the punishment which the law has denounced, and unless some adequate interposition takes place, this awful punishment must be borne by him beyond the possibility of escape. But when he to whom the prerogative of forgiving the sinner belongs is pleased to exercise that prerogative in his favour, and to pronounce the decree of forgiveness, the punishment is wholly remitted, his obligation to suffer it is cancelled, and no power can again bring him into the condemnation out of which he has thus been authoritatively and judicially released.

More than this, his *sin* is said to be *covered*. The substantial meaning of this expression is the same as that of the preceding one. It conveys the idea of forgiveness. But along with that it

associates another idea which tends to give it additional force as to its effect on the feelings and comfort of the sinner. His sin is not, and cannot be concealed from the eye, nor obliterated from the remembrance of Him who is as omniscient as he is holy. But having been forgiven, its consequences are as effectually and completely done away with, and his condition as free from obnoxiousness to these, as if it had been literally hidden from the observation of the Almighty, or beyond the reach of his knowledge. Could we suppose him not to have seen it or not to have been acquainted with it, no anger could of course have been kindled in him, and no penalty inflicted by him on account of it. And not in one degree more thoroughly secure would the sinner have been in that case from "the curse of the law," than he is, now that, though a transgressor in the sight of God, and condemned by him for his transgression, the sentence is recalled, and he who passed it says to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

And there is still another statement of more liberal import, and more emphatic phrase. It is affirmed, that the Lord *imputeth not iniquity*. When God justifies the sinner, he does not im-

pute his iniquity to him—does not place it to his account, and punish it in his person,—but regards him as if he had not transgressed,—treats him as one of unblameable righteousness,—bestows upon him those blessings which can only be bestowed in consideration of the divine law being satisfied, both in its penal demands and in its active requirements. And why? Because God has laid upon Christ all the demerit of the sinner,—because that demerit has been expiated by the sufferings of the surety,—and because, in its place, and by the same surety, there has been substituted an obedience, not only perfect in itself, but equally authorised and accepted by him whose indignation the sinner had incurred. The guilt of the sinner is imputed to Christ, who accordingly was “made a curse for him,” and “suffered the just for the unjust:” and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner, who accordingly obtains that deliverance from punishment, and that restoration to favour, which God, in the exercise at once of his holiness and his mercy, confers as the reward of righteousness so perfect and so meritorious. This is the Gospel method of salvation as unfolded throughout the

sacred writings, and as referred to by the Psalmist in the passage before us,—of which the Apostle Paul has given an explanation in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where he quotes the very language of David, in order to illustrate his doctrine of justification by grace, through faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ.

III. Now the blessing of pardon as thus secured and thus understood, is said to confer happiness upon those who receive it. “*Blessed* is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. *Blessed* is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.”

Those only who have experienced this blessedness can rightly comprehend its nature, and appreciate its extent. But even for such as have not had that actual experience, it cannot be difficult to conceive that it is indisputably real and incalculably great. Supposing, in the first place, that the sinner, when he is pardoned, were wholly ignorant of the change that has been effected in his spiritual condition, still he must, beyond all controversy, and beyond all calculation, be pronounced happy: for though not aware of it, he is in fact freed from the condemnation, which, had

he remained under it, would have insured his endurance of everlasting misery, and he is in fact brought into a state of reconciliation, which must ultimately insure his enjoyment of everlasting felicity. And whatever be the period of his continuance upon earth, and whatever be the anguish which the consciousness of guilt, and the dread of God's vengeance may inflict upon him, the time cannot be far distant when this season of distressing ignorance shall come to an end, and when, in the awards of the judgment day, he shall know, and see, and feel, that "the anger of God had been turned away" from him, and that he had been invested with a new title to the kingdom of his father.

Such, however, is the constitution of divine grace that the blessedness of the pardoned sinner is not merely in reversion and in prospect: it is in a certain measure granted to him even now. It not only exists as an attribute of his condition; but it is present with him as a benefit which he is conscious of possessing, and which affords him heartfelt consolation. Whenever the Redeemer's righteousness is imputed to him for his justification, there is simultaneously

wrought in him that faith by which he receives and appropriates the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer, and which imparts to him an immediate sense of safety similar to what he would have had if, in the midst of some temporal danger, he had taken a firm and decided grasp of one who was both able and willing to accomplish his deliverance. He also believes the testimony of the word of truth, which says, that whosoever has such a faith is justified in the sight of God ; and the conclusion which he is inevitably led to draw from this, must more or less satisfy him, that to him “ there is no condemnation,” and that his escape from it is as certain as the Divine promise is unequivocal and true. And the grace which justifies him, and the faith through which the justification becomes his, operate such a change on his views, and principles, and temper, that there is borne in upon him the humble hope, or the assured confidence of his being the object of God’s pardoning mercy. And, with such an impression as this prevailing or reigning in his mind, can it be doubted or denied that he is blessed ? Is it a blessed thing for the rebellious subject to ob-

tain the forgiveness of his sovereign, and to be restored to all the immunities and privileges which he had forfeited by his criminal revolt? Is it a blessed thing for the undutiful child to have his ingratitude and disobedience pardoned, to be re-instated in the affection of his offended parent, and re-invested with a title to the inheritance of which paternal displeasure had deprived him? Is it a blessed thing for us to be thus treated by those who are creatures like ourselves, and limited in their power of conferring good and of inflicting evil, and whose favour and whose frown shall shortly terminate in the grave, where they and we must lie down together? And can it be any thing but blessedness—must it not be blessedness inexpressibly and beyond comparison great, to be rescued from the vengeance, and to be recalled to the friendship, of that mighty Sovereign, that everlasting Father, whose vengeance and whose friendship can not only blast or nourish our every earthly comfort, but, what is of infinitely more importance, affect our eternal destinies, and either exalt us to the highest heaven, or sink us down to the lowest hell?

O how sadly do you who are the votaries of a sinful world mistake your interest and your happiness! You give yourselves up to sensual indulgence, or you accumulate sordid wealth, or you run from one amusement and one gaiety to another, or you engage in the busy and useful occupations of life, or your pursuits are directed to the objects of a nobler ambition, and all your activities are employed in the field of intellectual research: You do all this, and in the midst of it all, you think yourselves happy; you say that you are happy; you cannot see that any thing more is necessary to make you happy; you wonder that we can ever doubt of your being happy. And yet we must affirm that you labour under a grievous delusion, and that in truth you are not happy. We are aware that happiness is in one sense a matter of feeling; and that we should in vain attempt to persuade you that you are destitute of pleasurable emotions while you are conscious of having them. But still we must say, that you are not happy.

You are not happy *in comparison*. Giving to your peculiar enjoyments all the value, and variety, and sweetness that you can justly claim for

them, still you would not think of putting them upon a level with the enjoyments of those who believe and feel that he who is the great fountain of life and happiness has ceased to be angry with them, and that while he has taken away all their iniquities and all the displeasure that was due on account of them, he loves them at the same time so freely and so fully as to make them heirs of his "heavenly kingdom." Even in speculation you must allow this to be the case; otherwise you must allege that there are no degrees of happiness, and that the animal which is merely sentient is as happy as the angels that dwell on high and "excel in strength." And if from speculation you come to experience, the argument is all against you: for though you may still adhere to your position that you are happy because you think so, it must be remembered that you are practically acquainted with nothing more than those gratifications, which are connected with present and visible and created things, that you are ignorant of the delight arising from the exercises of a mind that is at peace with God, and that therefore your testimony and your opinion are not to be credited like the testimony and the

opinion of those whose experience has embraced both kinds of enjoyment ; and has there been any one instance in which they have not assured us that they never knew what happiness was till they had become partakers of the grace which pardons and saves the guilty soul, and does not their united voice declare what David declared, when, from his own personal feeling, he uttered and recorded the language before us, “*Blessed* is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity?”

But again we say, that if you persist in alleging you are happy, you are happy *without reason*. Supposing your pleasures were less criminal than we fear they often are ; supposing that they were all of the most exquisite and refined description ; and supposing that they were never interrupted by one pang or one disappointment, to remind you of their insufficiency ;—we should nevertheless assert that to be satisfied with them, and to count yourselves happy by means of them, is irrational and absurd. For know ye not that all this while “the wrath of God is abiding upon you” on account of your sins ? Deny this, and then your conduct becomes consistent, though your condi-

tion remains as full of peril as before. But if you admit that God governs the world; that you are responsible to him for your actions; that you have disobeyed his law; and that consequently you are involved in the forfeiture of his favour and in obnoxiousness to punishment; if you admit this, as most of you profess to do—then, in these circumstances, can you or should you be happy? Though all the sources of indulgence which this world affords were laid open to you, and though you had not an earthly want unsupplied, nor an earthly desire unfulfilled, could all this compensate for the evil of being subject to the curse of Almighty God, any more than it could be effectual in removing it? Or would not your perseverance in devoting your affections to the gratifications of sense and time rather tend, by aggravating your guilt in the eye of offended heaven, to render your misery more certain and your folly more conspicuous? We can conceive nothing more preposterous in the whole range of human error, no deception more gross and melancholy, than for a man to imagine and to insist that he is happy, because the world, and its perishing objects, and its unthinking inhabitants, are smiling

upon him, while yet the terrors of incensed omnipotence and of a coming judgment are frowning on his fate. Compared with this, the maniac is wise, who, in his dreary cell, and with his crown of straw, fancies himself to be the monarch of the universe; the slave is right and noble who boasts of liberty, while he dances in his chains; and the sleeping outcast is an object of complacency, when he dreams that he is "rich and increased in goods, and stands in need of nothing," though at that very moment he is in rags, and poverty, and wretchedness, and stands in need of every thing. Yes, my friends, yours is a sad and delusive dream, when you imagine and call yourselves happy; while, whatever may be your temporal circumstances, and whatever may be your temporal enjoyments, the sentence of condemnation, pronounced upon you by the righteous Judge, is yet unrecalled; while no voice from heaven has whispered that your "sins are forgiven;" while Divine justice still asserts and urges its claim against your guilty souls; and while, from the very scene in which you are setting up your rest, and boasting that your wine and your oil and your mirth abound, there is "a certain fearful

looking for of wrath and fiery indignation to consume you." O that you could be awaked from this wild and fatal dream, and that your eyes were open to see the infatuation which besets you!

From your own case of fancied bliss, look to the case of those into whose number, for your own sake, we would fondly introduce you. They are blessed indeed. They not only have that inward feeling of happiness which you pretend to have; and it is not only from its very nature profounder and more satisfying than yours,—but it can endure the test of reflection and examination; it has the approbation of their own minds impartially sought for, and deliberately conferred; and it must commend itself to the approval of every understanding that is capable of comparing one thing with another, and of forming a sound and unbiassed judgment on the operations of the human heart. It does not reject any enjoyment which God is pleased to bestow; it is not at variance with one innocent pleasure of life; and it has no natural alliance with a single evil for the suffering of which it does not contain an ample recompence. But it is principally and

permanently derived from being delivered out of the greatest calamity, and from being put in possession of the richest inheritance, that can enter into the lot of an immortal being. The more it is considered, the more is its excellence demonstrated, and the more is its value felt. And it has this unspeakable advantage, that its worth and its continuance have no dependence on the fluctuations which belong to all other enjoyments, but remain untouched and undiminished, and are even enhanced and secured by the crosses, and troubles, and disappointments, which denude the sinner and the worldling of all their blessedness, and overwhelm them in misery and despair. O then, if feeling deceive you, let the deception yield to the dictates of reason, and act upon the conviction, that if you are happy, you ought not to be happy, lying as you are, under the curse of God: and let it be the earnest desire of your heart that you may be happy, like those whose situation the Psalmist describes when he says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

And should you still be obstinate, and content yourselves with the enjoyments that are consistent with an unpardoned state, and go on to live as if you both were, and had reason to be, happy, let me just conclude with hinting to you, that if, on any principle of reason, or propriety, or experience, you can be called happy, you are happy *only for a moment*. I allude not to the uncertainty which attaches to every one of your earthly pleasures—though even that consideration should not be without its influence—but I refer to the short period during which on any supposition they can be yours. Multitudes among the generations that are passed, lived and thought and felt as you are doing; they paid no regard to the blessedness of which the Psalmist speaks with so much emphasis; they wrapped themselves up in the fond persuasion that all was well with them, and refused to seek for any other, or any higher happiness than what they found in the gratifications of a carnal mind. And where is their happiness now? Did not death “bring it to a perpetual end?” Could the remembrance of it have any other effect than that of increasing the agony of that punishment to which their unforgiven

spirits were doomed when they appeared before the tribunal of their God? And in like manner, will not a few short years put a final period to your boasted felicity? And will not every indulgence to which you now so eagerly devote yourselves become as if it had never been? And will not you then be left to sink into utter perdition, under the burden of that guilt which now lies so heavy on your souls, and notwithstanding which you have the folly and the presumption to rejoice, as if you, and you alone, were happy? O be persuaded but to look forward a little way, that you may see how short your course of worldly enjoyment is, and how darkly and wretchedly it must terminate. And then cast your eyes upon the path along which the justified sinner is pursuing his way. It looks to you as if it were through a dreary wilderness; and so it is. But amidst all the sorrows and difficulties of that wilderness, he has the favour of a forgiving and reconciled God to uphold and to cheer him; to be his “pillar of cloud by day, and his pillar of fire by night;” to fill him with a peace which the world that you serve can neither give nor take away. And his journey is as short as yours; but

O how differently does it terminate ! It terminates in a land of rest, and bliss, and glory, where the joy that he now feels from the sense of God's pardoning mercy, shall be freed from all that impairs it here, and where it shall be such as to afford the most delightful and the only satisfying illustration of that great truth which he partially experienced upon earth,—that “blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.”

Let me beseech you then to seek after this happiness with your whole heart. “Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids,” till you have asked and obtained the forgiveness of your sins. Apply for that blessing through faith in the atonement and righteousness of the great Redeemer. Pray that it may be communicated to you in “demonstration of the Spirit,” so that you may feel in your experience that you have “obtained mercy,” and be glad in the possession and enjoyment of such a privilege. And He who sent his own Son to be a propitiation for your sins, and is now “in him reconciling the world to him-

self," will lend a gracious ear to your petition, and blot out your iniquities, and give you to partake of all the blessings of the everlasting covenant.

PART II.

WE have considered, in the *first* place, the uncomfortable state of a convinced, but still impenitent and unpardoned sinner; in the *second* place, the blessing of pardon itself; and, in the *third* place, the happiness of those who have been so privileged as to obtain that blessing.

IV. We come now, in the *fourth* place, to consider repentance as connected with the forgiveness of sin. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Confession of sin has no reference to the idea of making God acquainted with our unworthiness. In confessing our fault to a fellow-creature, one principal part of the act frequently consists in revealing to him what he did not know before, and what he would never have known but for our communication. With God, however, the case is

entirely and necessarily different. He is already intimately and perfectly aware of our guilt, of all its extent, of all its particulars, and of all its aggravations. Confessing to *him*, therefore, must mean something else than merely telling him of our unworthiness. It plainly stands opposed to that state of mind in which the transgressor is when he is awakened in some measure to see his sinfulness, but not yet sufficiently affected with the sight to act according to its influence and tendency. In that state he is sensible that he has committed many iniquities, and he is so far convinced of his demerit and his danger as to feel uneasiness from it. But still he labours to persuade himself that things are not so bad with him as his fears would suggest; he tries to believe that such and such actions, for which his conscience had been upbraiding him, have, in truth, no moral evil in them; he is ingenious in devising, and eager in discovering excuses, by which he may palliate conduct, the ungodly or immoral nature of which he cannot wholly deny; he will not recognise such depravity in his heart and life, as should make him tremble for his safety, and anxious to secure it; he struggles to keep

down every rising of remorse—to check every feeling of anxiety and alarm; and he strives to satisfy his mind that he has not been so disobedient to the law of God, as to subject him to condemnation and punishment. When, however, his convictions of sin become powerful, his sense of its evil clear and acute, and his consciousness of its burden too oppressive for him to bear, he ceases to take a partial or a flattering view of his spiritual character. He feels that when he maintains his comparative innocence he is but deceiving himself with a vain and false imagination. Bitter experience teaches him that “there is no peace to the wicked,” even when he is most resolute in speaking peace to his soul. All his sophistries, and all his stout-heartedness, and all his fond delusions are overborne by the aspect which his guilt now assumes. And instead of having recourse to what might be supposed to extenuate his offences or to justify his conduct, he chooses rather to admit that such an attempt is utterly hopeless; he does homage to the truth, mortifying and humiliating as it is, that he is nothing but a great and miserable sinner; and he seeks for relief to his agitated or dejected spirit

by a free, ingenuous, and unreserved acknowledgment that he is chargeable with rebellion against God, which exposes him to divine indignation, and which it is beyond his power to expiate. He not only sees the folly of imposing upon himself, by endeavouring, as it were, to impose upon omniscience; he is not only alive to the double guiltiness of first sinning, and then trying to think that he has not sinned, or has not sinned so as to provoke God; he is not only struck with the danger of thus putting a veil upon his iniquities, and steeling himself against the impression of that unalterable turpitude which belongs to them, and of that coming ruin in which they must in this case involve him;—not only do these things affect him deeply, and determine him, instead of struggling any longer with his convictions, to yield altogether to their impulse, and to allow them their full play on his feelings and his fears; he is also encouraged to cherish them by the views which he begins to take of the grace and mercy of Him against whom he has sinned, and by the assurances which are held out to him, that “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin,” and that the divine compassion extends

to the chief of sinners. And, therefore, he pours out his heart in unqualified and undisguised confession, pleading guilty to every offence which the holy eye of God has marked in his deportment, anxious that in no one instance, and in no one degree, he should indulge in a mitigated opinion of his delinquencies, and studying to take the completest survey, and to have the deepest sense, and to make the frankest and the fullest avowal, of that demerit which adheres to him as a hater and a transgressor of the divine law.

It is quite evident that confession of sin forms but a part of repentance. It is only one of the steps which the penitent takes in the course of that transition which he makes, or of that change which he undergoes, when he turns from sin unto God. And yet it obviously stands here for the whole of repentance, having the blessing of forgiveness and salvation annexed to it, and intimating the Psalmist's return from that state of guilt into which he had plunged, to the holy principles and holy practice which he had criminally abandoned. This is not uncommon in Scripture.* We read in another passage be-

* See Lecture III. Part II.

sides this, that “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Such a substitution of a part for the whole of repentance, seems to proceed on the same general principle, according to which we often find a single Christian virtue put for the Christian character at large; as when our Saviour says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Here mercy stands for every thing which a good man is required to possess. And, when properly considered, such a representation is perfectly correct: For the mercy here spoken of is genuine mercy,—mercy wrought by the spirit of God, and governed by right and worthy motives; but this being the case, we may be quite sure that this grace will not stand alone, but will be accompanied and connected with every other grace that characterises a genuine disciple of Christ. The spirit of God cannot be supposed to implant the sentiment of mercy, and to leave the mind unfurnished with those other excellencies which are equally becoming, and equally necessary, and without which the persons whom it distinguishes would not be men of God, “furnished unto *all* good works.”

And the motives which lead to the cultivation of this moral quality, must, of course, operate to the cultivation of justice, temperance, faith, humility, and every remanent virtue which goes to constitute that character to the possession of which the promise of salvation is annexed. Now, in like manner, and for a similar reason, confession of sin is taken to signify the whole of repentance. This confession is not supposed to be a mere verbal or formal acknowledgment of iniquity, which is perfectly consistent with perseverance in the iniquity which is confessed. It is understood to be sincere and worthy; and that being the case, it proceeds from just and Scriptural views of sin; it implies a sacred homage to the character and the law of God; it is associated with godly sorrow and self-abasement; it is quickened by a believing regard to the mediation of Jesus; and it is succeeded by practical reformation and holy obedience. And, viewed in that light, and in these relations, it may, with the greatest propriety, be spoken of as we speak of repentance itself, and set down as bringing along with it the rich recompense which divine benignity has been pleased to attach to the exercise of

that comprehensive grace. And we may remark also a peculiar propriety in its being so employed in the passage before us. For the Psalmist had been speaking of the misery that he experienced in consequence of his “keeping silence,” or refusing utterance and effect to his convictions of sin; and now that his mind is relieved by adopting an opposite course, and giving vent to his feelings in an acknowledgment dictated by those full and affecting views of his guilt which would terminate in a thorough change, he very naturally ascribes to it the substantial character and beneficial results connected with repentance. “I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

Repentance, as expressed by confession of sin, is here united with the blessing of forgiveness. And this is a union recognised and stated throughout the whole of Scripture. The doctrine of God’s word is plainly and unequivocally this,—that while the impenitent must perish in their sins, the truly penitent shall obtain the pardon

of their sins, and final admission into the kingdom of heaven.

We must be very careful, however, to entertain accurate notions of the relation which these two things bear to each other. It is not the relation of cause and effect. You do not obtain forgiveness on account of your repentance. It might easily be shown, from the nature of repentance itself, that it could not procure such a benefit by any worth or virtue or efficacy of its own. But I would just remind you of one essential truth in the gospel scheme, and in the gospel record; namely, that it is “through the blood of Christ that ye have redemption, even the forgiveness of your sins.” It is for the sake of what Christ did and suffered, as an atoning sacrifice, that God in his undeserved mercy blots out your iniquities. And any weight given to your own doings in the attainment of this mighty boon, is just to detract so much from the riches of divine grace, and from the merit of the only Saviour, and to evince a spirit which is at once opposed to the gospel method of deliverance, and most inconsistent with the primary and essential elements of repentance itself. Forgiveness is annexed to the exercise of

faith, but neither is faith the cause of your forgiveness, nor the foundation on which you can rest either your application for that blessing, or your hope of receiving it. It is nothing else than an acceptance of Him who expiates your guilt by the oblation of himself, and procures for you by his exclusive merit the pardon that you need. In its proper exercise, it withdraws your regards entirely from yourselves, and fixes them solely on the atoning death and finished work of the Redeemer. And as this faith is a leading principle in the true penitent, every true penitent will lose sight of all that is in himself, and place his confidence entirely in that one sacrifice by which Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of the world.

But still it must not be forgotten that repentance is necessary—absolutely and indispensably necessary for you. It is necessary for maintaining consistency in God's administration towards you—for nothing could be more contradictory to his moral perfection than to make provision for the pardon of your sin, and to allow you to continue in the love and practice of it. It is necessary to fit you for enjoying his favour and

friendship upon earth, it being impossible for *him* to hold communion with you, or for you to have any relish for his loving kindness, while you continued “enemies to him in your minds, and by wicked works.” It is necessary to qualify you for the employments and the blessedness of the heavenly world, because these are so holy and immaculate, that an unconverted man could neither willingly engage in the one, nor have any satisfaction or complacency in the other. It is necessary in all these important respects; and we cannot imagine a wilder or more fatal delusion, than for such as have not repented to appropriate to themselves the blessedness of those “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” We cannot here enter particularly into the nature and process of that repentance which you must exercise; but we would earnestly press upon you the necessity of having this evidence of your spiritual safety; and would beseech you to try and examine yourselves in order to ascertain whether you indeed possess it; and never to rest satisfied till in this respect “there is no guile in your heart,” and till you can say with the Psalm-

ist, in the full import of his language, “ I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

V. We now come to consider the disposition of those who are penitent and pardoned to engage in prayer. “ For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found.”

The true penitent may be denominated godly during every period of his progress ; from the first moment that he gets decided views of the evil of sin, till he comes to abound in every good word and work. And at every period of his progress, he feels an inclination to pray. Nothing is more natural to him—nothing more requisite for him—nothing more beneficial to him. Whenever he is thoroughly convinced of sin, his heart instinctively ascends in supplication to the throne of God. He is impressed with an overwhelming sense of the evil of sin, in its contrariety to the divine law, and in its obnoxiousness to the divine wrath. His conscience tells him that it cleaves to him, and that it has involv-

ved him in dishonour and perdition. He is aware that there is no deliverance, and no safety for him but what must come from that great Being whose authority he has disobeyed, and whose anger he has incurred. He knows also, that his offended maker is as compassionate as he is holy, and is ready to forgive all that come to him by "the new and living way" that he has appointed. And thus not merely urged by his spiritual necessities, but encouraged by the divine willingness to supply them, he looks up and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He beseeches God to "save him from going down to the pit"—to pardon his manifold iniquities, and thus to speak peace to his guilty and troubled soul.

Nor is he contented with once offering up this supplication. He is too strongly impressed with the magnitude of his guilt and the imminence of his danger; he thirsts too vehemently for the blessing that he has implored; he is too anxious and fearful about falling short of that which he so greatly needs and so devoutly wishes for, to be satisfied with such a rare and short-lived application to the fountain of mercy. He continues to ask for the divine forgiveness and favour with

a fervour and an importunity, such as might be expected in the case of one who knew that, if he succeeded, eternal felicity would be his, and that if he failed, he must die and that for ever. And while he perseveres in petitioning for mercy to pardon him, he also supplicates “ grace to help him in his time of need.” He knows that he is polluted as well as guilty; that he must be sanctified as well as justified; that of his own strength he can no more do the former than he can do the latter; that both achievements must be performed by “ the great power of God;” and therefore, he prays, that while he is rescued from the curse of the law, he may be also emancipated from “ the bondage of corruption,” and “ created again in Christ Jesus unto good works.”

He is aware, that though God may have accorded to him the forgiveness he has asked, yet that he has *continued* need of the pardoning mercy he has experienced; that he is every day sinning against his Maker and Redeemer, and consequently is in daily want of that blessing, which can henceforth come only from him who at first bestowed it; and therefore he ceases not to intreat it from his merciful father in heaven; and

amidst all the prayers that he offers up, he never forgets to ask the repeated forgiveness of his repeated transgressions. He is also sensible that the change which has been commenced in his soul, can no more be carried on and completed, than it was originated, by his own independent energies; that he must have the divine help to keep him from falling back into that state of blindness, and insensibility, and degradation, from which he has been delivered; that without it, he would cease even to feel any desire for the thorough renewal and final purification of his character; that every view of the evil of sin which he had obtained, would quickly be obscured and lost; that all his good resolutions would be feeble and unavailing; that sin would regain its mastery over his affections and his conduct; that he would assuredly fall back into that state of impenitence, and unbelief, and wickedness, from which he was happily emerging. And therefore he prays, that “He who had begun the good work in him, would perfect it until the day of Christ;” would save him from the corruption of his own heart; strengthen in him all the holy dispositions which he had implanted; fortify him

against the assaults of temptation, and the inroads of his spiritual enemies ; carry forward the process of his sanctification, and continue to administer to him that direction and that assistance, that sufficient grace and perfect strength, which would keep him from falling away, and “ preserve him blameless unto the coming of his Lord.”

He prays for these things. He prays for them with an ardour and an earnestness, proportioned to the lively conviction that he has of their infinite importance and indispensable necessity. He prays for them in the name of that great High Priest to whom every true penitent in every age has looked as the only foundation of hope. He prays under the influence of that encouragement which he draws from the goodness of God already vouchsafed to him in opening his eyes to the danger and misery of his condition, and revealing himself to him as ready to forgive, and imparting to him some portion of the relief and blessedness which accompany the communications of his pardoning love. And he prays “ in a time when God may be found.” He considers that any delay in applying at the throne of grace

would be both idle and dangerous—that no season can be more proper than that in which the hearer of prayer is himself prompting him, as it were, to the holy exercise—that it is when God, by giving him an affecting sense of his guilty and helpless condition, hedges him in to the attitude of devotion, he can with most propriety and with fondest hope beseech him for deliverance from it—that as his need of pardon, and sanctification, and all other spiritual blessings, is both urgent and certain, he would be acting foolishly if he did not supplicate these as often as God's providence calls him, and as often as God's Spirit stirs him up to seek them—that life is short in reference to the great work of preparation for eternity, and that he may be suddenly and unexpectedly withdrawn from the means and opportunities of carrying it on. And, therefore, he prays to God *now*, which is “the accepted time”—*now*, which is “the day of salvation;” and has it as one of his most ardent petitions, that the spirit of prayer may be kept alive in his soul, and that he may be made as desirous to obtain, as God is willing and able to bestow, “mercy to pardon, and grace to help him in his times of need.”

Are any of you, my friends, living in neglect of prayer? Then be assured that you are neither penitent nor pardoned. You must be sensible, if you know any thing at all of the subject, that of the real penitent, it cannot be more truly affirmed that he has repented than it may be said, "Behold he prayeth." The one necessarily leads to, and implies the other. All the discoveries that are made, all the feelings that are brought into operation, and all the grace that is experienced throughout the process of the sinner's repentance, and throughout the life by which that change is succeeded, do plainly and irresistibly dictate the necessity of supplication. And, indeed, one of the very sins of which he has to repent, and one consequently which he must be understood to forsake, is the neglect of this great duty. So that it is quite impossible that the repentance which is "unto salvation" can have taken place, if it has not been accompanied with prayer. And yet you do not pray! You never went to the throne of grace; or if you did you grew weary of the exercise, and have ceased in a great measure, or altogether to engage in it! And with all this you flatter yourselves that you have

repented, and that you may appropriate to yourselves the blessedness of those whose transgression is forgiven! What inconsistency! What presumption! What self-deception is there here! No, my friends, repentance and neglect of prayer are quite incompatible. Repentance is not more evidenced to the world around him by the sanctified life of the penitent, than it is evidenced to his own mind by that recourse to prayer which it necessarily prompts, and which in its turn is requisite for the full accomplishment of his return to God and to the way of salvation. He only is the true penitent—he only is the pardoned penitent—he only is the godly penitent—whose moral change is attended with, and helped onward by supplication and prayer; who sees in God alone his refuge and his help; and who, according to God's appointment, and in the way of his appointment, applies to him for every thing that he needs. This is characteristic of the people of God; and it is on this account that we can speak of them as blessed beyond all that careless and indevout and unconverted sinners can either experience or conceive.

VI. This leads us to say a few things on the last particular which we proposed to consider, namely, the security of God's people in the midst of danger and distress. "Surely, in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

This language does not intimate that God's people are to be exempted from trials and sufferings. On the contrary, it supposes them to be actually involved in these, as well as at all times liable to them. And, indeed, the history both of the Old and the New Testament church, not to speak of our own observation and experience, may satisfy us that though they have a happiness which others know nothing of, and cannot appreciate till they feel it, they are exposed to all the ordinary calamities which afflict the lot of man—that they are often visited with bereavements and sorrows from which the men of the world escape—and that they have spiritual troubles which are peculiar to themselves, and which are frequently far severer and more difficult to endure than the worst of outward dis-

tresses. But herein is their grand distinction, that they are supported, and guarded, and saved by Him who has all things under his sovereign control, and who says of his people, "He that touches them, touches the apple of mine eye."

They must pass through a wilderness, indeed, where difficulties beset them, where dangers threaten them, where privations visit them, where malevolence pursues them. And in many respects it is more a wilderness to them than it is to those who are yet "far from God, and far from righteousness." There is one consideration, however, which takes away from it, in their case, all that can render it gloomy or formidable to such as have to traverse its rugged paths. They are the objects of God's love, and from his love, which must constitute the safety and the happiness of every creature that is privileged to enjoy it, nothing that can possibly happen, whether of good or evil, is able for one moment to separate them. They enter the wilderness, blessed with the enjoyment and the assurance of his pardoning mercy, and warranted to look to him as their reconciled friend. They travel on under his unerring guidance and almighty protection. And

beyond it lies the land of promise, into which he will ere long introduce them, and for the felicity of which the toils and troubles of their pilgrimage will be overruled to prepare them. "The floods of great waters" may surround the Christian, and to the eye of unthinking men, and in the apprehensions of his own timid mind, they may be about to overwhelm him. But his God says to them "Hitherto shall ye come, but no farther;" and he reposes on that love which "many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown." God is his "hiding place" which he may flee to, when perils menace him, into which his most powerful enemies cannot follow him, and where he is as secure from harm as omnipotence can make him. God "preserves him from trouble;" saves him from every disappointment, and from every pain that would injure his essential interests; blunts the edge of such afflictions as are allowed to befall him, by imparting help and consolation along with them; and converts them into blessings, by making them subservient to his present improvement, and his everlasting happiness. And even when he seems ready to fall a prey to the adver-

sities which come upon him, when all things wear the aspect of hostility, and conspire to accomplish his ruin, and when escape appears to be hopeless and impossible, even then God magnifies his grace and his might by “compassing him about with songs of deliverance,”—not only delivering him, but making the deliverance so manifest to him as to impress him with the sense of his divine interposition, and to fill his heart with gratitude, and his mouth with praise.

But though even here—in this world of sin and sorrow—which looks as if it were no resting place for the Zionward traveller, as if it had nothing for him but trials and temptations and distresses, and as if it would destroy him before he reached the place of his ultimate destination; though even here he is so much the object of God’s providential care and upholding grace, that he is always safe, and can employ the triumphant strains of David on another occasion, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”—yet it is in heaven that he expects, and it is to heaven that he looks

forward, for that complete deliverance from his troubles which is necessary to his perfect blessedness, and which he has been taught to regard as the sure and final portion of every one that is pardoned and reconciled to God. And what are all the blessings that he can be called on to endure in this scene of trial—what all the violence of all his enemies—what all the hardships, and privations, and anguish that can be attached to his mortal fate—when compared with the great and glorious “redemption that draweth nigh”—by which he shall be rescued at once from all sin, and from all misery—by which he shall be introduced into a world where no enemy can reach him, and where no tempter can harass him, and where no evil can befall him, and where, in a sense in which he could never use it, and with a joy which could never animate him here, he will take up the song of deliverance, and say in the company of the redeemed on high, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever !”

I trust, my friends, that such is the experience felt, and that such are the anticipations cherished by many of those now hearing me. The passage that we have been considering expresses the sense of safety and the hope of deliverance with which the Psalmist was favoured. Then he was in the midst of troubles from which he could not extricate himself, and by which, but for divine help, he must have been utterly destroyed. It expresses what was felt by all the ancient worthies both of the Old and New Testament church, when in the Providence of God, they were placed in similar circumstances of danger and distress. I trust it is no mean recommendation of it when I tell you that it was a chosen portion of Scripture with our forefathers, who, when persecuted for conscience sake, and hunted like partridges on the mountains, because they would not bend their necks to the yoke of bondage, often made the sequestered glen and the barren rock echo to their voice as they lifted it up to God in this appropriate and pathetic psalm, and in the notes of their favourite and heart-touching melodies, conveyed to his listening ear, the sorrows which oppressed, the consolations which supported, and

the hopes which cheered them. And well will it be for you, if in every season of calamity you can cherish that confidence in the mercy of God, and count upon that saving power of his which have been the distinction, and the comfort, and the rejoicing of his saints in every period of his church—which will continue to distinguish and uphold them in all future generations—and which will have their issue in the purity, and bliss, and glory of his unsuffering kingdom.

LECTURE VIII.

PSALM xliii.

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation : O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength : why dost thou cast me off ? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ? O send out thy light and thy truth : let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy : yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

IT is evident, from the tenor of this Psalm, that David was in great difficulty and distress when he wrote it. He speaks of “an ungodly nation” against whom he required help—of “the deceitful and unjust man,” from whom he needed to be delivered—of “the oppression of the enemy” that caused him to go mourning. We should find it difficult, and perhaps might find it impossible to ascertain, with any degree of certainty, the precise circumstances to which he alludes ;

but that is no bar to our understanding the general import of the passage, and to our deriving from it those salutary lessons which it is doubtless intended to teach us. We are liable to afflictions similar to those with which the Psalmist was visited, and when thus afflicted, we cannot do better than look to the manner in which he expressed and conducted himself on such trying occasions, that we may learn how to suffer, and how to apply for consolation and deliverance.

You will observe, my friends, that at the very outset, and all along, his views are directed to heaven. He had set his heart upon God: in him he had placed his trust, and from him he expected all necessary aid. This was the habitual feeling and exercise of his mind. And whenever any peculiar exigency occurred, he had immediate recourse to that Great Being in whom he had been taught and accustomed to hope. It was not to himself—it was not to his friends—it was not to any mere created refuge that he applied; it was to God in whom there is all that is good, and mighty, and faithful, and wise; who has every object and every event under his supreme control; and who has promised that he will be

with his people in all their times of trouble and of danger.

Thus it was with the Psalmist; and thus will it be with all of us who are truly devout. We will cherish a constant dependence upon God. It is to his providence and grace that we will look amidst all the vicissitudes of life. And, as in our seasons of prosperity we will ascribe to him the blessings that we enjoy, so in our seasons of perplexity and distress it is upon him that we will cast ourselves for guidance and comfort. The ordinary means of obtaining these we will carefully employ, whether they are to be found in our own personal efforts, or in the assistance of our fellow-men, or in the circumstances by which we are surrounded. We will carefully employ these means, because they are divinely appointed, and because we cannot succeed in procuring what we wish for without them. But still we will confide in the blessing of God for rendering them effectual. We will seek for our solace, and our encouragement, and our support in his promised grace and almighty power. We will lift up our souls to Him in prayer and faith. And from our knowledge of his charac-

ter, our belief in his word, and our experience of his mercy, we will lean upon him as our stay, and rejoice in him as our salvation.

One reason why we are so much borne down by our adversities is our thinking too little of the divine administration,—giving too much attention to secondary causes,—regarding the arrangements of our lot too much in a state of separation from the unseen hand which regulates them,—and viewing every thing that befalls us rather in the effects which it produces upon our present feelings than in the purposes in which it originates, and in its final and permanent results on our most important interests. O, if we could only bring ourselves to see the finger of God in all that happens to us,—to believe, that whoever persecutes us, and whatever annoys us, He is our never-failing friend,—to remember that he calls upon us to place unlimited confidence in his government of the world, and in his dealings with his people,—and to build our hopes of his unceasing protection and care upon that strong foundation which he has laid for them in the gospel of his Son— if we could but bring ourselves to do this, we should less frequently repine and despond under

the pressure of calamity; we should assume a loftier tone, and experience a more undisturbed serenity amidst the disappointments and vexations of life; and all the hardships to which the malice of our bitterest foes could subject us, would only make us cling closer to that arm which is "mighty to save," and drink deeper into those streams of life and consolation which flow from the throne of a reconciled God.

We may not, my friends, have to sustain the assaults of such enemies as those with whom the Psalmist had to struggle. But still we cannot expect to be exempted altogether from this tribulation; and sometimes it may come upon us in its most aggravated form. There are *ungodly* men who, being destitute of religious principle, will not scruple to injure us, when they can thereby gratify their passions or advance their worldly interests. There are *deceitful* men, who will put on the garb of friendship, and acquire our confidence and esteem, and then treacherously cheat us out of our property, or our reputation, or our peace. There are *unjust* men who, by fraud or by violence would rob us of our dearest rights and most valuable possessions, and not only re-

duce our powers and opportunities of doing good, but even diminish our means of comfortable subsistence. And there are *oppressors*, who taking advantage of our weakness or dependence, and trampling alike on the maxims of equity and humanity, may exact from us unreasonable services, impose upon us heavy burdens and cruel restraints, and ply us with insults, and harassments, and deprivations, from which we can make no escape, and for which we can find no redress.

And what does it become us to do when thus situated? Shall we indulge in those resentful feelings which the infliction of such wrongs is calculated to awaken in our breasts? No: that were to cherish an unbecoming spirit, and to add the demerit of sin to the evil of suffering. Shall we then, give way to emotions of sorrow, and act as if our case were that of inevitable and hopeless misery? No: while God reigns, our condition never can be such as to justify despair. Or shall we be contented with using every exertion to vindicate our character and maintain our privileges, and repel the aggressions that are made upon us? No; that would both prove insufficient to its purpose, and be unsuitable to what we

know and believe concerning the operations of a superintending Providence, and the necessity of divine interposition. We know and believe that there is one who “rules over the inhabitants of the earth, as well as the armies of heaven,”—that his sway is universal, perpetual, and uncontrollable—that infinite perfection adheres to every part of the dominion which he exercises—that all those who love and serve him are the objects of his favour, and that his eye is ever upon them for good—that, far from beholding with indifference the severities which are practised upon them by wicked men, he *then* takes a more special and affectionate interest in their well-being—and that he speaks in these terms to them, when they are in circumstances of destitution and suffering, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” And knowing and believing these things, we cannot but go to the throne of grace when our foes rise up against us, and while, in the spirit of love and of a sound mind, we employ every weapon of defence, and every means of safety with which God has entrusted us, it is at once our duty and our privilege to commit our ways to his guidance,

and our fortunes to his management, and to say to him with the voice of earnest supplication, “ Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation. O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man : for thou art the God of my strength.”

We apply to God as our *Judge*—not that he may decide upon our personal merits, and give us the award that is justly due to us; for this were to court and to secure the punishment which our sins deserve. As guilty creatures we cast ourselves upon his mercy, and though we must look to him as “ setting his throne for judgment,” yet we look to him as appointing to that throne the Lord Jesus Christ in whom we have believed as our Saviour. But when we apply to him as our Judge in the sense in which the Psalmist uses that language, it is that he may judge between us and those who are inflicting upon us unmerited wrongs. And, therefore, in order that we may make such an application with propriety, with confidence, and with success, we must be previously satisfied that we are the injured party—that our adversaries, in vilifying or in maltreating us, are not merely resenting the mischief which

we have done to *them*,—but that their cruelty is unprovoked, and their hatred without a cause. Were not this the case, were we chargeable with the same offence on account of which we complain of others, did their enmity to us proceed from our enmity to them, and had we indulged in the spirit or in the practice of a vindictive retaliation, our appeal to God in the character of *Judge* could only have the effect of involving ourselves as well as our enemies in a sentence of condemnation, and of increasing our guilt by exhibiting our presumption. But if we suffer from the wanton malice or unprincipled selfishness of our fellowmen; if we are innocent of what they allege against us as the ground of their hostility; and still more, if that hostility has been created by our firm adherence to truth and duty, or if it appears in the form of an ungrateful return for kindness that has been felt, and benefits that have been bestowed—then is it both safe and becoming in us to make our reference to God's judicial character; and in doing so, we may rest assured, that having committed our cause to Him who is the Judge of all the earth, and who “judges righteous judgment,” its determination will

be such as to vindicate our rights and secure our final welfare.

We apply to God as our *Advocate*. “Plead my cause,” says the Psalmist, “against an ungodly nation.” Those who have not the fear of God before their eyes, may reproach us, and wound us, and despoil us; and all our arguments and remonstrances may be unavailing to the removal or the abatement of their malevolence; and every effort that we make to ward off the injuries with which they menace us, may only add to the bitterness of their malignity and to the activity of their evil speaking and their evil doing. But God condescends to take up our plea, and to urge it home upon them with an energy which *we* could not employ, and which *they* cannot resist. And we render a just homage to those high and gracious attributes in which he has been pleased to reveal himself to us, as well as consult our own personal advantage, when we beseech him so to manage and defend our suit, as that our enemies shall not be permitted to succeed in their endeavours, or to triumph in their injustice. Thus praying to God, from the firm conviction

that he can, we may also pray to him with the animating persuasion that he will, effectually take our part against them that trouble us—that by the secret influences of his Spirit or the open demonstrations of his providence, he will convert their hearts, or stop their mouths, or arrest them in their career of mischief—that in his own way, and at his own time, but certainly and completely, he will bring the controversy to such an issue as to show that the foes of his people, though they may harass for a season cannot and shall not ultimately prosper.

We apply to God as our *Deliverer*. “O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.” Those wicked men into whose hands we have fallen, and who are attempting to make a prey of us, may overmatch us in cunning or in force; and if abandoned to our own resources, we may become the victims of their malicious designs, or their violent assaults. But God is made known to us as a Being on whom, in such perilous and helpless circumstances, we may place unsuspecting and cheerful reliance, for he is our strength; he is strong in wisdom, strong in power, strong in all the perfections which can operate to rescue

us from the grasp and machinations of our foes ; and these perfections he is pledged by his promises to put forth in our behalf. Whatever be the number, and the artifice, and the might of them that set themselves against us, this is our comfort, and this is our refuge, that “ the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ;” that his everlasting arm is underneath and round about us continually ; that we have free access to that throne on which he sits as the hearer of prayer ; and that if, from the midst of those perils into which unjust and deceitful men have plunged us, we implore his merciful interposition, our supplications will prevail upon him to “ take to him his great power,” to scatter all our enemies, and to emancipate us from all our fears.

And truly, my friends, what need we more than that we should thus be privileged to confide in God as our Judge, our Advocate, and our Deliverer ? Yet the Psalmist who seems to have habitually looked up to God and trusted in him as sustaining these important characters, ventures, in a moment of forgetfulness and despondency, to utter this complaint, “ Why dost thou cast me off ? Why go I mourning because of the

oppression of the enemy?" And alas! it is to be feared that the same discontent is felt, and the same impatience expressed, by not a few believers, in the season of severe and protracted calamity. All this is quite natural. If God is almighty to destroy or to subdue our enemies, it is difficult to perceive why they should be allowed to disturb our peace, or to injure our welfare, as if they were stronger than He who is for us; and if, in spite of all our importunate intreaties for deliverance, we are still exposed to their fiery assaults, our argument being strengthened by feeling, it is not wonderful that in our haste we should be betrayed into that querulous language which fell from the lips of David, when under the pressure of evils which he had long endured, and to which he saw no symptoms of a speedy termination. But though all this be quite natural, it is both erroneous and sinful. It is erroneous, because it implies that the present is a state of unqualified retribution; that, because God is possessed of infinite justice and power, he must, therefore, exercise them immediately, and to their full extent; that when we are in danger or distress he cannot allow us

to continue in it, consistently with his own revealed character or with our real welfare. And it is sinful, inasmuch as it is setting up our imperfect wisdom in opposition to the unerring wisdom of God, accusing him of violating his promises and abandoning his people, and dictating to him the time and the manner of bestowing upon us those blessings of which we stand in need, and for which he has instructed us to pray. Being thus erroneous and sinful, let us avoid such conduct; and if, on any occasion, we are like the Psalmist, betrayed into it, let us also like him, humbly impute it to a want of knowledge in our minds, and a want of grace in our hearts, and still let us apply to God in prayer as he did, that these wants may be supplied, and that we may be taught to see more clearly the rectitude of all his dealings with us, and enabled more submissively to acquiesce in all his dispensations, and more unreservedly to trust in his faithfulness and mercy.

No sooner had David vented his unreasonable and unjustifiable complaint than he poured out his soul in this appropriate supplication, "O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead

me." Let such be the supplication of our souls when similarly situated. Let us ask God to lead us into correct views and correct feelings, respecting his moral administration. We are naturally ignorant of that subject ; and even though we have been made acquainted with it by means of the written word, yet much imperfection still cleaves to all the information we have acquired, and the trials with which we are frequently visited, are apt to darken and perplex our understandings, when endeavouring to scan the divine procedure, and to reconcile what we experience of disappointment and of suffering with what we believe of the greatness and the goodness of that Being, under whose government these evils befall us. But though our knowledge were as extensive and accurate on this point as we could desire it to be, still that attainment would not be sufficient ; for amidst it all, there is a natural aversion to every thing which afflicts us with pain, or which frustrates our hopes, or which subjects us to the scorn and the enmity of our fellow-mortals ; and this aversion is so strong and so inveterate as to make us mutiny under such calamities, notwithstanding their constitut-

ing, in our system of belief, a part of God's ordinances concerning our lot. And, therefore, we need a two-fold communication from heaven to meet our necessities, and to "guide our feet into the way of peace;" and for these we must be careful to pray. We must pray that God would "send forth his light;"—that he would give us such bright and realizing conceptions of those attributes of his, which make him worthy to be "the confidence of all the ends of the earth," as that we shall see them operating in our seasons of adversity as well as in our seasons of prosperity, and shall recognise wisdom and mercy in those dispensations which to the carnal and unenlightened eye, wear the aspect of nothing but capricious chance, or cruel and relentless fate. And we must pray that he would "send forth his truth;"—that he would hold out to us such a strong and impressive manifestation of that feature of his character which tells us that he is unchangeably true to all the promises that he has ever made, that he would so carry home this peculiar display of himself to our conviction and our experience, as that we should deem it at once irrational and undutiful to distrust him in

any thing, and that in the gloomiest and most disheartening of his providences towards us, we may cling to his faithfulness “as the anchor of our soul, both sure and stedfast,” and cherish the unwavering, cheering, delightful conviction, that the most formidable of our adversaries shall never prevail against us—that he will “make their wrath to praise him” by making it subservient to the good of his people, while “the remainder of that wrath he will restrain;”—that he will finally and wholly rescue us from whatever they have inflicted, and from whatever they may threaten—and that all that we are doomed to suffer from their malice will be overruled by him for promoting our spiritual improvement and our future happiness.

But while we beseech God so to illuminate our minds with a knowledge of his character, and so to impress them with a sense of his faithfulness, as that we may be led to a right mode of judging, and a right tone of feeling, respecting his care of us when we endure the buffetings and persecutions of ungodly men, we should also pray for these divine influences in reference to our engaging in the ordinances of religion. “Let them

bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." At all times, and in all circumstances, it is both a bounden duty, and a valuable privilege to wait upon God in the exercises of his house. But from the nature of these exercises—from their tendency to instruct, and console, and encourage—it is more especially incumbent upon those to engage in them, who are in perplexity and distress by reason of the harsh and slanderous and injurious usage which they receive from a world lying in wickedness. All who in such trying conditions have betaken themselves to the house of God, and devoutly mingled in its sacred occupations, can bear testimony to the comfort and the advantage which these are calculated to impart to the afflicted, but humble and sincere worshipper. He finds in them a support infinitely stronger, and a solacement infinitely sweeter than any that the mere worldling has ever found, when, visited by some sorrowful dispensation, he seeks for an assuagement to his grief, or a stay to his dejected mind, in the secularities of a busy life, or in the amusements of a gay one. The prayers that he offers up in faith—the sympathies of his Christian brethren—his

researches into the oracles of truth—his meditations on divine things—and the various topics to which his attention is directed—all are fitted to give him a more thorough apprehension of the divine character and government, to reconcile him more effectually to the painfulness of that discipline to which he is subjected, to awaken in him a spirit of more patient endurance and more heartfelt submission, to procure for him more abundant supplies of that grace which is necessary to help him in his times of need, and to send him back to his scene of suffering, better prepared to encounter it with fortitude, and to bear it with resignation.

But, that we may thus profit by the services of the sanctuary, we must preface them with prayer and supplication. We require, and therefore we must ask the light and truth of God to “bring us unto his holy hill and to his tabernacles”—to dispose us to make that solemn approach to him—to fit us for a right discharge of the duties which it implies—and to make it “a good thing for us to draw near” to the object of our reverence and our love. And while we pray for such a blessing to accompany us, and to rest upon us,

and to sanctify all our service, we must take care that our service be a spiritual as well as an external service—that we do not merely “go unto the altar of God,” but “unto God” himself—that besides passing through all the “forms of godliness” we study to feel and to cherish its animating power—that while we give a visible demonstration of our respect for every outward observance in which we are called to participate, it be our main concern to hold communion with the father of our spirits—that we appear before him, and think of him, and address ourselves to him, as the fountain of our happiness—that we recognise in him the giver of a an “exceeding joy,” a joy that far exceeds in its nature, its degree, and its duration, the joy that we can derive from any created source—that while enjoying the honour and the privilege of engaging in his worship, and experiencing the benefits with which his mercy has thereby provided us, we lift up our souls to him in grateful adoration—that, in conformity to the character of our New Testament economy, we praise him with our voices, as David praised him with his harp—that whatever be the channel through which our thanksgivings are conveyed, or whatever be the

mode in which they are expressed, they be the outgoings of devout and deep-felt affection—and that they be offered with all the earnestness and ardour which should accompany the sacrifices that we present to God as our God, with whom we have reconciliation by the blood of sprinkling, who will be “our guide even until death,” and our “portion for evermore.” And surely, if we thus pray, and if we thus go to the sanctuary of the Lord, and if we thus engage in its pious and holy offices, we may well employ the language of self remonstrance and self encouragement with which David concludes the Psalm, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.”

The Psalmist had formerly, in the spirit of despondency, complained that God had cast him off, and allowed him to “go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy.” But his mind now resumes a better tone—his views become enlightened—his soul “returns to its rest,”—and he blames himself for being immoderately agitated and dejected by what he had to suffer, and sum-

mons up all his energies to place an unlimited and rejoicing confidence in God, whom he had been guilty of "charging foolishly" with having abandoned him to the malice of his foes. To such of you, my believing friends, as have much to harass and distress you, and who in your sad and solitary musings on the hardships of your lot, are ready to murmur or to despair; even though your path hitherto has been only ruffled and thorny, and you have at this moment a cup of bitter sorrow pressed to your lips, and in the picture of your coming life there be nothing but snares, and difficulties, and cruel mockings, and multiplied sufferings in the foreground, and nothing but darkness and desolation in the distance; even then I would say to you in the words of expostulation, why are your souls "cast down, and why are they disquieted within you?" Do not you "believe in God?" Are not you convinced that all things are at his disposal, and under his control? Is not his character adorned with all the excellencies which can assure you of present safety and eternal felicity? Has not he promised, and is not he faithful to perform his promise, that he "will never leave you nor forsake you?"

Cannot you trust that, armed as he is with irresistible power, and clothed as he is with unsearchable wisdom, and full as he is of the richest and tenderest mercy, he will bring light to you out of the darkness by which you are surrounded, and good to you out of the manifold evils which beset your path? Is it not the distinct prediction of Christ that “in the world ye shall have tribulation?” but has he not told you that he has “overcome the world,” and that he will give you the victory over all its terrors? Does not the history of the church furnish you with many illustrious examples of the divine interposition in behalf of persecuted and afflicted believers? And is the arm of your heavenly king now “shortened that it cannot save, or his ear now heavy that it cannot hear?” Was Daniel safe amidst the fierce lions? Did the three children walk unhurt through the burning furnace? Did David escape from his troubles, though “all the waves and billows of adversity had gone over him?” Was not God himself the angel of their deliverance? And is he not *your* God? And will he not also deliver you, “O ye of little faith?” Did he give up his own dear Son to crucifixion

and to death, that he might pluck you out of the spoiler's hand? And after this costly ransoming of your souls, and this marvellous exhibition of his grace and strength, think you that he either cannot or will not disenthral you from the power of unjust, deceitful, ungodly, and oppressive men? Away all such unworthy suspicions—such groundless fears! “Hope in God.” Rest upon his promises, which are all “yea and amen” in Christ Jesus. Take shelter in the declarations and assurances of that covenant which he has established with his church, and which in all things is well ordered, sure, and everlasting. Do this and you “shall yet praise him.” His goodness will yet be for a “song in the house of your pilgrimage.” And that “sadness of the countenance” which has been generated by your trials and sorrows, will be found to conceal the tokens of his fatherly love, and by “making your heart better,” will attune it for magnifying in higher and holier strains, the faithfulness and the salvation of him in whom you have put your trust.

And even though no such gladness should ever fill your bosom or pour from your lips, while you travel through the wilderness—though you should

go “mourning all your days” because of present and pressing hardships—though, when we ask you to sing us one of the songs of Zion, you should reply, with the captive Israelites of old, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land;” yet we still bid you “hope in God, for you shall yet praise him.” There is a world beyond this, where all your sorrows shall be hushed into oblivious silence—where the voice of the oppressor shall no more be heard—where you shall set up that everlasting “rest which remaineth for the people of God”—where uninterrupted peace, and holiest love, and unmingled joy, shall pervade and animate the countless multitude that “have come through much tribulation,” and have “entered into their glory”—and where one theme of your unceasing gratitude shall be those very afflictions which, in this dark and distant dwelling, had almost overturned your faith, and almost plunged you into despair.

LECTURE IX.

PSALM LXXXIV. 8—END.

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory : no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

IT has been the characteristic of good men in every age that they have not “restrained prayer before God”—that they have, on principle and from feeling, been given to this exercise—that in all their varied circumstances they have engaged in it as at once a duty and a privilege, an expression of piety, a means of improvement, and a source of consolation. And if we be among the number of those who have received “the spi-

rit of grace and of supplications," we will not only, under the influence of that spirit, "make our requests known unto God," but we will be anxious that they should be heard with acceptance, and answered in peace and mercy. We are guilty of mockery when we ask that which we do not need, or when we are unconcerned about the success of the application that we make. It becomes us to take a lively interest in every thing that is requisite for promoting our real welfare; to depend for the communication of it upon Him "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift"—to make it the subject of sincere and devout petition at the foot-stool of his throne—and to address him with all that earnestness, and with all that solicitude, which correspond with the importance of the blessings that we implore, and with the character of the Being who is entreated to bestow them.

And as we pray for the particular benefits which are suited to our particular situations, so we will appeal to those particular attributes, by the exercise of which we may expect to find an appropriate supply to our wants, and an appropriate refuge from our distresses. If we are involved

in difficulties which we have no skill to unravel or to remove, we will of course apply to God for deliverance; but we will apply to him more peculiarly as a God of wisdom,—a God whose wisdom can extricate us out of all our perplexities, and render our path plain, and our prospects clear. If we are in danger from the assault of enemies, whose hostility we have no strength to resist or subdue, we will of course apply to God for protection and safety; but we will apply to him more peculiarly as a God to whom “belongeth power,” power to rescue us from every peril, and to defend us against every foe, and to place us in perfect security. If we are conscious of guilt, and fearful of condemnation, we will of course apply to God for forgiveness; but we will apply to him more peculiarly as a God of mercy, as a God whose mercy *may* be exercised in perfect consistency with his other attributes,—whose mercy *will* be exercised towards all who apply for it in the appointed way,—whose mercy can pardon the deepest and most aggravated guilt of the sincere penitent. And if we are in distress, whether it be of a temporal or of a spiritual kind, we will of course apply to God for

support and relief; but we will apply to him more peculiarly as the God of consolation,—as a God in whom compassions flow,—who is “afflicted in all our afflictions,”—and who is both able and willing to comfort us amidst the various tribulations in which we may be involved.

And while we pray to God for the blessings that we need, and while we offer up our supplications with sincerity and earnestness, and while we address God in special reference to those attributes, which correspond with the nature of our necessities, we will never forget, if we have drawn our notions from the Gospel, and if we have been taught by the Spirit to pray, that our petitions must depend for their success, not upon any merit of our own, for, alas! we have nothing of that kind to plead before the holy majesty of heaven,—but upon the merit of him whom God has appointed to be our Mediator, and for whose sake alone, therefore, we can expect to find acceptance when we approach the divine presence, and to get an answer in peace when we implore the divine bounty.

Of all this we have an example and a practical illustration in the case of the Psalmist. He was

a man of God, and, therefore, he was a man of piety and prayer. And whether he was in joy or in sorrow, he delighted to pour out his heart to that great being to whom he was indebted for the one, and from whom he expected support amidst the other. It was particularly in seasons of difficulty and distress that he had recourse to "the throne of grace." Nor was it merely or chiefly in the time of temporal calamities—it was also and chiefly in the time of spiritual deprivations, that he took refuge in devotional exercises. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the passage before us. The Psalmist had, by the rebellion of his son, and the united power and malice of his enemies, been necessitated to abandon the holy city. In this way he was prevented from engaging in the public ordinances of religion on which he had, from principle and from experience, been accustomed to set the highest value. And considering it as one of the heaviest dispensations with which it was possible for him to be visited, he is naturally most anxious to be delivered from it, and restored to privileges in the enjoyment of which he had formerly been so happy, and through the loss of

which he had become so miserable and forlorn. In his extremity, he calls upon God. He fervently intreats him to hear his prayer. He reiterates the intreaty that he would lend an attentive ear to the aspirations of his soul. And he pleads with all the urgency and importunateness of one who deeply feels his wretchedness, and eagerly desires to have it mitigated or removed.

He appeals to those characters by which God commends himself to his people when they are in circumstances of destitution and affliction, and when they are crying to him for help and for comfort. He prays to him as the "*Lord God of Hosts,*" who is the supreme ruler of the universe,—who has every thing in it at his uncontrolled command and sovereign disposal,—who "does according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,"—and whose arm, therefore, is mighty to guard from evil or to deliver out of it all who are interested in his favour, and need his aid. He prays to him as "*the God of Jacob,*" who had graciously condescended to make a covenant with Jacob and his seed,—who is faithful to fulfil all the promises of that covenant,—and one of whose richest pro-

mises is that which the Psalmist records in another place, “ Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver *thee*, and thou shalt glorify *me*.” And he prays to him as “ *God his shield ;*” who was not only powerful to accomplish his relief, but whose power was in continual activity for that purpose ; who said to Abraham of old, “ Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield ;” who was to be considered as holding the same language to all the spiritual descendants of the Patriarch ; and who, in the time of their trouble, would “ hide them in his pavilion, and in the secret of his tabernacle,” and even when they were at a distance from that tabernacle, as the Psalmist now was, would still stand between them and all their foes, and secure them against every deadly assault, and every fatal catastrophe. And then, though he addresses God as the Lord God of Hosts, as the God of Jacob, and as God his shield, and though he addresses him in these characters with the utmost degree of importunity,—he does not feel that he has done enough to effectuate the object at which he aims. He directs his believing regards to the Messiah,—to him whom God had “ anointed” to be the Saviour of sinners, and on account

of whose obedience unto death, typified by the unspotted sacrifices under the law, God became propitious to those who drew near to him; and he beseeches God to hear him, and answer him, in consideration of the appointed Mediator in whom he believed, and by whom he had confidence and boldness to pray.

Now, my friends, let us imitate the example of the Psalmist. Let us be especially afflicted by the deprivation of spiritual benefits, and especially solicitous to have spiritual benefits restored to us when they happen to be taken away. And for this end, let us address God in prayer; convinced that all our fortunes are in his hands,—that he alone can comfort, and assist, and rescue us when we are so situated as to require interposition,—and that devout and fervent applications to him at his throne of mercy, are the means which he himself has ordained and sanctioned for our obtaining from him the blessings that we stand in need of. Let us in all such approaches contemplate him, and recognise him, and appeal to him, as possessing the peculiar excellencies which render him infinitely worthy of our dependance, and which invite and encourage us to ask, and to seek, and

to knock for the communications of his grace. And while we apply to him as clothed with majesty and power, and as unchangeably true to the promises of his covenant, and as continually holding forth the protection of his providence, let us apply to him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone it is that we can hope to find acceptance, and through whom alone it is that we can hope to receive what we supplicate; whose merits are at once absolutely essential, and altogether sufficient to procure for us “mercy to pardon, and grace to help in every time of need.”

The Psalmist explains the reason that he had for being so urgent in praying to be restored to the privilege from which he had been unjustly and cruelly separated: it was the ardent love that he bore to the house, and the public ordinances of God. “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” In the beginning of the Psalm, he had proclaimed the amiableness of God’s tabernacles considered in themselves. Here he looks at the subject in the way of comparison; and he

states his preference in terms the most explicit and emphatic. So much enjoyment had he in the services of the sanctuary, and such important advantages did he derive from them, and so closely was his engaging in them connected with a principle of obedience to the divine authority, and of regard for the divine honour, that if he could be permitted to devote ever so short a time to them, that short time would be far more precious to him than the longest period spent in places where God was not acknowledged, and in exercises with which the fear and the love of God were not permitted to intermingle. Sin, he saw and knew, had its honours, and its pleasures, and its profits; but though he could be allowed to inhabit its most costly and luxurious palaces, though he could command for himself every desirable thing which it had to bestow, and though he had the power of communicating these to all around him, he would not think for a moment of putting his situation there in competition with the meanest place that ever a saint occupied, and with the scantiest fare that ever a saint received, in the temple of his God. This was David's deliberate and determined choice; a choice which he often

expressed in the most glowing language; a choice, the decisiveness and sincerity of which he uniformly demonstrated in his conduct.

O how unlike to the Psalmist, in this respect, are many professing Christians! We speak not of those who do not acknowledge the truth and authority of revelation. Living visibly, if not avowedly, "without God in the world," we cannot wonder that the institutions of the Gospel should be viewed by them with dislike, and treated by them with contempt. But we speak of those who profess to have faith in the Bible, and to hope for salvation by Christ, and who pay a certain degree of respect to religious ordinances; and we say of many of them, that in their mouths the language of the Psalmist would be mere pretence, because it is habitually contradicted by their conduct. They have evidently no liking to the house of God, and to its services. Many and trivial are their excuses for absence. When prevented from attending, they feel no regret; and when they do come, it is with an ill-concealed reluctance. And then how cold and unconcerned in their devotions! How inattentive are they to the preaching of the Gospel! How much more in-

terested in their outward appearance, and outward comfort, than in the state of their affections, and in the improvement of their understandings and their hearts ! And how fretful and discontented when the service exceeds by ever so little, the very limited period during which they are disposed to engage in it, or to be present at it, without losing their patience. But follow them into the world, and observe the contrast which they exhibit. To the gay pleasures, and to the grave pursuits of that world, they have no aversion. For these they so eagerly long, that the sacredness of the Sabbath scarcely escapes violation. Into these they plunge with a devotedness of feeling which all the prayers, and the praises, and the instructions of the sanctuary, could never command. While indulging in them, how quickly does their time pass away ! How do they murmur when any thing occurs to interrupt or to shorten them ! How vehemently do they strive to prolong their duration, and to heighten their relish, and to secure their permanency ! And rather than forego them, how ready are they to renounce all that is good in principle, and great in character, if they render such a sacrifice indis-

pensable, and to sit down contented with the paltriest advantages they can afford, and with the meanest gratifications they can give, to the most worthless of their slaves! In every thing worldly they engage with all their heart; but for the spiritual services of God's house, they have little or no heart at all. And it would be a just expression of their character, were they to invert the language of the Psalmist, and say, "A day spent in the occupation and indulgences of a worldly life, is better than a thousand in the courts of the Lord: I had rather be the humblest partaker of those joys which are to be found in the tents of wickedness, than fill the most honourable station, and feast upon the richest blessings, to which I could be invited in the house of my God."

O if there be any now hearing me to whom this description justly applies, think how completely it strips you of all your pretensions to genuine Christianity. Neglecting or disliking the ordinances of religion, what becomes of your respect for the authority of God, who has appointed these ordinances, and commanded you to observe them? Taking no serious inter-

est in the pious and instructive exercises of the sanctuary, how is it possible to help concluding that the truths of the gospel have no value in your estimation, and that they are the objects neither of your faith, nor of your love? Taking no pleasure in holding communion with your God and Saviour in his house below, where is your preparation for maintaining that more intimate intercourse with him in his temple above, which is to form one of the highest honours, and most delightful employments of those who are to be introduced into that blessed place? And preferring the service of the world to the service of him who made you and has redeemed you, upon what ground can you expect that he will bestow upon you any reward at last, or that he will not leave you to be recompensed by that master to whom you have cleaved, and whose "wages is death?" If you know any thing of what true religion is, and reflect but for a moment on what you are doing, you must be sensible that so long as the ordinances of God's house are treated by you either with indifference or dislike, you have no lot or part in the salvation of the gospel; you are not only destitute of one thing which has invari-

ably distinguished the people of God, but you are destitute of that which indicates the want of all their essential principles, and all their peculiar affections. Let me therefore beseech you to examine yourselves by this test ; and not to think yourselves safe till you have been brought to feel somewhat of that warm affection for the worship and service of God, which animated the breast, and actuated the conduct of the Psalmist. Nor rest satisfied with low attainments in this important grace. The more ardently you love the house of prayer and praise, the stronger will be the proof of your progress in sanctification ; and then that devout attendance on the ordinances of the gospel, which will necessarily accompany your love for them, must have a powerful effect on the improvement of all your Christian virtues, and lead you to verify the statement in Scripture, which declares, that “ they who wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles : they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

And you my Christian friends, who have cherished that profound and affectionate attachment to the house and ordinances of God, which was

so deeply felt and so rapturously expressed by the Psalmist, will be ready to bear your testimony along with his, to the strong encouragement which his people have to draw near to him in his sanctuary. Such is his character, and such are the manifestations he condescends to make of it, that it is impossible to know him, and believe in him, and love him, without ardently desiring to dwell in his courts, and faithfully and piously engaging in the institutions which are there observed. “The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” How comprehensive and how satisfying is this representation of him whom you are called to worship and to serve! And if you give credit to the statement, how anxious must you be to tread his courts, and with what fervour and delight will you mingle in those ordinances in which he thus reveals himself, and through which he thus becomes to you all that you need, and all that you can desire!

He is a *Sun* to enlighten your understandings with saving knowledge, and “to guide your feet in the way of peace;” to cheer your hearts amidst

the perplexities and discouragements of your earthly pilgrimage; and to give warmth and life and activity to all your powers, which, but for his vivifying influences, would become cold and torpid. And he is a *Shield* to defend you from “the fiery darts of the wicked one;” to ward off the arrows of malice and of scorn with which ungodly men assail you; to protect you not only from the evils which would otherwise overwhelm you, but also from the petty injuries by which you might be harassed and depressed; and to interpose between you and your spiritual enemies with such vigilance and constancy, that they cannot overcome you, or prevent you from being finally triumphant in that arduous warfare which you are doomed to wage with them.

The Lord will give *Grace*; grace to pardon your offences, and deliver your conscience from the burden of guilt; grace to purify your souls more and more from that moral defilement which naturally cleaves to them; grace to help you in all your seasons of trial and of weakness; grace to comfort you in every disconsolate hour, and to strengthen you for every Christian duty; grace to keep you stedfast in the faith of Jesus, and in

the obedience of his law, and in the hope of his gospel; grace to insure your perseverance in the path of spiritual life, and to obtain the victory over the terrors and the power of death. And having thus given you *Grace* here, he will also give you *Glory* hereafter. He will receive you into that heavenly kingdom for which he was preparing you upon earth; a state from which all that is sinful, all that is degrading, and all that is unhappy, shall be for ever excluded, and in which you shall be privileged with whatever is great in intellectual attainment, and perfect in moral excellence,—with whatever is splendid in honour, and exquisite in enjoyment,—with all the fulness of God, and all the blessedness of immortality.

And is there any thing else of which you feel your need, and which you do not conceive to enter into these views of the divine beneficence? Then here it is in the assurance that he “will withhold no good thing from you.” There is nothing which is either necessary or conducive to your welfare, which his loving kindness will not bestow upon you in its proper measure, and in its proper season. Even the comforts of a present world will be given, so far as the wisdom of your heavenly

Father sees them for your real benefit, and farther than that you could not safely or dutifully wish to receive them. No temporal evil will be permitted to befall you, which is not requisite for “the trial of your faith” and patience, and which he will not overrule for promoting your highest advantage. No temporal blessing will be refused to you, or taken from you, except where its bestowal or its continuance is inconsistent with what you should value infinitely more than all that the world can furnish,—your advancement in the work of preparation for judgment and eternity. It is the general fact, announced in Scripture, and confirmed by experience, that as the people of God you have not only the promise of “the life that now is,” but the actual and liberal fulfilment of that promise. And all the exceptions to it that you may meet with in your journeyings through the wilderness, all that you suffer in these from poverty, from sickness, from the loss of friends, from disappointments in business, from unmerited neglect, from base ingratitude, or from any other of the privations and sorrows to which humanity is liable,—all these things are but varied expressions of the same paternal love which cared

for the salvation of your souls; many of them, even while they last and operate in all their bitterness, will be recognised by you as tokens of kindness; and there is not one of them which, when looked back upon from the land of promised rest, and contemplated in the light of celestial truth, will not furnish a theme of gratitude and praise, as having formed a part of that plan of grace by which you were fitted and matured for glory.

Such, my friends, is that God whom ye are called to worship in his holy temple—such is the generous treatment which you may expect from him—such is his willingness, his ability, his sufficiency, his promise, to be unto every one of you all that is needful to make you perfectly and for ever happy. And will not you give yourselves in the full tide of admiration and affection, to the service of such a wise, and merciful, and mighty being? Will not you feel regret when you lose an opportunity of approaching him in the sanctuary? Will not you lament the imperfection and the sinfulness which mix with all your best endeavours to honour him in his “house of prayer?” Will not you labour more and more that you may be disposed to engage in his ordinances with

heartfelt devotion, and enabled to engage in them with a keener relish for the comforts which they inspire, and a more resolute ambition for the advantages which they impart? And will not you pray and strive that you may attain that height of pious regard for them which dictated the strong and impassioned language of the Psalmist, “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?”

Remember, however, my friends, that the blessings promised to them who love and observe the ordinances of God are connected with a certain prescribed character. They will be given to those only who “walk uprightly;” who have their conduct both in the sanctuary and out of it agreeable to the divine will; who “worship God who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth;” who “have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity;” who are habitually and strenuously aiming at the possession of a good conscience, and at the cultivation of a holy life. You cannot otherwise be qualified for the services of the sanctuary, or the reception of spi-

ritual benefits. As, therefore, you value these, be careful to “walk uprightly,” and remember for your encouragement that it is one manifest and appointed end of the services of God’s house, to improve your principles and dispositions, and to send you back to the world better prepared for discharging its ordinary duties, and “keeping yourselves unspotted” from its pollutions. And remember also that your knowledge of the character in which God has represented himself to you as your sun and your shield, and as giving grace and glory, and withholding no good thing from you, is calculated to produce the same effect in your heart and your deportment; and that especially the divine influences are promised to comfort, and purify, and strengthen you, and to make you “fruitful in every good word and work.” Study then to live and act as the people of God, that you may be fit worshippers in the temple of God, and worthy receivers of the bounty of God: and let God’s bounty be often and affectionately thought upon, and let God’s temple be regularly and devoutly attended, that you may feel their reciprocal advantage in having your faith invigorated, your piety exalted, your hatred

of sin increased, your love of holiness strengthened, and your whole character brought to a nearer and a nearer resemblance to the character of him to whom you owe all your comforts and all your hopes.

And finally, “put your trust in the Lord;” for it is in this case only that you can be truly blessed. Trust in him that he will perform all that he has promised; place unlimited confidence in every assurance he has given you; and act as it becomes those in whose minds this affiance is lively and unwavering. Then shall ye be happy indeed; happy now as having the communications of his love and the hopes that stretch into eternity; and happy hereafter in the full and everlasting enjoyment of all that can constitute the felicity of a rational and immortal being.

LECTURE X.

PSALM CXVI. 1—9.

I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

THERE are two motives which should constrain us to love God. In the *first* place, God has, in his nature and character, all those qualities which are naturally fitted to awaken this sentiment in our hearts. And, in the *second* place, these ami-

able qualities have been exhibited in promoting our welfare; and from a principle of our moral constitution, “we love him, because he first loved us.” It is to the latter motive that the Psalmist here refers. “I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.” David had asked the interposition of God’s mercy in his behalf. It had been granted to him according to the desire and petition of his heart. And in the benefits which he received, he not only saw goodness manifested as an attribute of Deity, but he felt it in his own personal experience, as goodness of which he was the object, and as constituting an urgent and irresistible claim on his reciprocal affection. There arose therefore, in his breast, and there was cherished there, the gratitude and love which he owed to his heavenly father; and in simple language he acknowledges and records at once the feelings of which he was conscious, and the consideration by which they had been excited.

The experience of the Psalmist, on this point, must be more or less the experience of every true Christian. Every true Christian habitually lifts up to God the voice of supplication;—praying

for the various blessings, temporal and spiritual, which his circumstances require. Every true Christian, praying "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," has the promise of divine faithfulness that he shall receive according to his need. And every true Christian labouring to fulfil the first and great commandment, will meditate on the manifold tokens of kindness which God has shown him in answer to his applications at a throne of grace, and yield to the native influence of that kindness, by cherishing a still more cordial, and still more devoted attachment to the giver of all his mercies.

My friends, if you are real Christians, it is one of your leading characteristics, that you continually look to God as the fountain of all good, and that while you regularly ask from him in his own appointed way, what is necessary for your well-being, in the ordinary course of life, you ask from him with particular emphasis and importunateness, those benefits which are of the highest general importance, and those which are most suited to your special and unexpected exigencies. And I am sure that, having done so, you can bear your personal testimony to the truth of that declara-

tion which God has addressed to every member of his church, "Call upon me, and I will answer you." It has been your privilege and your happiness to find, that he provides for the temporal wants of his people with wisdom and liberality; that he communicates in still richer abundance the blessings after which their souls are hungering and thirsting; that he gives them grace and glory, and withholds from them no good thing which is essential to their comfort, their improvement, their salvation. You may have had your seasons of mental dejection and distress; and you may have been sometimes ready to cry out, "hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious, and will he be favourable no more?" but say, my believing brethren, if, when the Spirit carried you to the mercy seat, and with the faith which rests on the merits of your heavenly intercessor, you there poured forth the petitions of your hearts, these petitions were not answered by God's appearing in mercy as a sun to enlighten you in the midst of your darkness, and as a shield to protect you from all the dangers by which you were afraid of being overwhelmed? And when you have been weighed down with worldly cares and

afflictions, and the whole scene of human life perhaps put on the garb of melancholy and of woe, and you have still had recourse to prayer, have not you felt your sorrowful spirits visited with consolation ; and though it may be that the bitter cup is still pressed to your lips, have not you been taught that it is the hand of your heavenly father which gives you this cup to drink, and have you not learnt that it is in faithfulness and in compassion that he has mingled it for you, and have not you been enabled even to “ rejoice in the midst of your tribulations ? ” Has not this been in one degree or another your comfortable experience ? Has not such experience constrained you more and more to love God who thus hears you when you cry to him, and delivers you out of your distresses, and makes it “ good for you that you have been afflicted,” and causes you to be “ glad in the light of his countenance ? ” And is not this the language by which you at once express your gratitude, and encourage it, “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving kind-

ness and tender mercies ; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

But the Psalmist not only declares his love to God on account of God's goodness and mercy to him in answer to his prayers, he adds, " Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." And this is precisely what all the people of God will do in similar circumstances. If God has graciously condescended to grant us deliverance and the other blessings that we implored from him, there is, in the *first* place, laid upon us an obligation to be thankful which we shall never be able to exhaust ; and, in the *next* place, there is suggested to us a powerful encouragement to persevere in our supplications, to which a regard to our own welfare will determine us to yield. When we think of our personal unworthiness of any of the least token of God's mercy ; when we think of our just obnoxiousness to his displeasure on account of our manifold and aggravated provocations ; and when we recollect, that notwithstanding all this we have been invited to the throne of his grace, and have been allowed to

make our requests known to him, and have received what was necessary to support, and comfort, and bless us, can we ever cease to “sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and to declare his works with rejoicing?” Supposing that we were left to go mourning all the remainder of our earthly pilgrimage, still the remembrance of what we have already experienced of “the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,” and the hope which that experienced goodness has taught us to repose in his continued favour, will not only cheer us as we travel through the wilderness, but will call forth all our powers and affections to bless and to magnify his holy name. And the last breath that we draw will whisper the beginning of that song of praise which we are to sing to our redeeming God, when we enter upon the unmingled and eternal joys of the promised land.

But we will not only celebrate the praises of God so long as we live, on account of his merciful answer to our prayers;—having received such an answer, we shall feel encouraged to pray to him in every succeeding emergency of our spiritual career. There is no period when we can

expect to be exempt from those necessities which require the interposition of divine aid and the communication of divine bounty; and we may lay our account with being sometimes placed in those circumstances of peculiar trial, danger or distress, which demand the peculiar supplies of Almighty grace to uphold and to save us; and our only resource in such cases is to be found in earnest, believing, unwearied prayer. And how much must we be animated to engage in that exercise, not only by the promises held out to us in the word of God, but by the fulfilment of these promises which have actually taken place in the history of our own lives! He who heard and answered us from his holy hill when we formerly petitioned him, will not fail to hear and answer us on every future occasion that we cast ourselves upon his compassion and his power. He has emphatically taught us by his past kindness, to apply to him and to trust in him, amid all the coming difficulties and hardships of our Christian journey. And we will but ill understand and ill improve the lesson, if it does not serve to keep alive in us an active spirit of prayer and supplication, and if it does not make us “go

boldly to the throne of grace," and ask with confidence, that we may receive with freeness, mercy and grace, and every needful blessing.

Having stated, in general, God's mercy to him, and the general effect which it produced upon his sentiments and conduct, the Psalmist proceeds to take a more particular view of God's gracious dealings with him, and of the impressions which these made upon him, both as to his present feelings and his resolutions for the future. "The sorrows of death compassed me," says he, "the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow." He was menaced with death. It was not some bodily distemper which might be easily and speedily removed. It was not some ordinary calamity which ordinary fortitude would enable him to endure. It was a distemper which seemed to be mortal—it was a calamity which threatened to prove fatal. The prospect of dissolution was before him; and there was something more alarming still—something after death which made him shrink back from it as his worst enemy, and which filled him with trouble and sorrow.

It is truly a fearful thing to die; to go from the place of hope to the place of unalterable retribution; to leave this world, in which, amidst all its sinfulness, we are still permitted to hear the voice of divine mercy, and to pass into that untried scene where we must encounter all the perils of a righteous judgment, and have our doom irrevocably and everlastingly fixed. It is the prerogative of faith, indeed, to convert the king of terrors into a messenger of peace—to shed a cheering light along the dark valley—and to realise in the most holy judge a most compassionate Saviour. But even in those whose belief has been heretofore strong, and lively, and influential, and who have often said, under the impressions of its elevating power—“O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;”—even in them, there may be misgivings at the last hour, and terrible apprehensions of a coming tribunal, and a coming eternity. They may be visited with the compunctions of guilt; and thinking of all their transgressions and all their aggravations, they may be agitated with the terrors of the Lord,

and feel as it were the punishment of hell beginning in their souls. Melancholy and distressing is their situation. It is not indeed to be compared with the situation of those who are not only thus afraid to die, but who have reason to be thus afraid; who have sinned, and never repented; who have been offered a Saviour, but have not believed in him; who are called to give in their account, but have made no preparation for such a dread reckoning; and who either are not aware of their danger,—or try to banish it from their thoughts,—or, roused to a sense of it, breathe nothing but the language of despair. The situation of the believer whose heart is fearful of dying, is not indeed for a moment to be compared with that of the careless and hardened, or the awakened and hopeless sinner. Still, however, it is one of severe suffering; and he is frequently heard to express the mental anguish which afflicts him. But then there is a refuge for him. To that refuge he flees. He looks to God as a God rich in mercy. He relies upon the mediator of the new covenant. He calls upon him whose “ear is open to his cry;” and finds relief by committing himself to him in the earnestness

and the confidence of prayer ;—“ then called I upon the name of the Lord ; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.”

This prayer is short and simple, but it is the prayer of the heart and the prayer of faith, and cannot fail to succeed. He who prefers it, asks the deliverance of the soul ; its deliverance from the guilt of sin, which would leave it under the sentence of condemnation ; and its deliverance from the pollution of sin, which would disqualify it for the kingdom of heaven. And he does not merely ask it as if it were a matter of indifference whether he obtained it or not. He asks it as a blessing of the highest—of infinite importance ; as a blessing *without* which he must be undone ; as a blessing *with* which his happiness is secure and complete. “ O Lord, *I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*”—Then again he appeals to God as a God of mercy and of grace. “ Gracious is the Lord, yea our God is merciful.” He knows and feels, that were God to deal justly with him, instead of obtaining deliverance, he should receive condemnation ; and therefore he relies upon his mercy. He refers to that as the source of all his expectations ; and laying aside as presump-

tuous and vain every claim on the ground of personal deserving, he looks and applies to the free and unmerited grace of him whose memorial it is, that he possesses this endearing attribute, and that he delights in the exercise of it.

But the believer does not rest satisfied with the conviction of God's mercy, and with resting his hopes upon that as if it were the only perfection in God's character. He entertains more worthy and consistent notions on the subject. He regards God, not as his own corrupt nature would perversely wish him to be; but as he really is, and as he has been pleased to reveal himself to sinners. He regards him as no less holy than he is merciful. "Gracious is the Lord, and *righteous.*" And this leads him not merely to glorify and do homage to the character of God, by ascribing to it all its native excellence, but to attend to that provision which the high and holy One has made for the consistent and effectual manifestation of his love to guilty men. He contemplates the gospel scheme; he sees there the arrangement which supreme wisdom has contrived for reconciling the bestowal of mercy with the demands of justice; and he seeks for the deliver-

ance of his soul in the way which has been divinely appointed—through faith in the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ, which is God's instituted method for a sinner's justification.

Nor does the believer rest even here. He knows that while he must depend entirely upon the merit of Christ as the procuring cause, and upon the mercy of God as the originating cause of his deliverance, still it is not in any spirit that he feels himself entitled to ask for that boon. He does not conceive it to be enough that he makes use of the mere words and phrases of a petition, or that he makes a verbal reference, however decided and orthodox, in that petition, to the work of the Redeemer. He knows that in all this, in order to its being of any weight, there must be "simplicity and godly sincerity;" for it is only "the *simple*" that the Lord "*preserves.*" And therefore he studies to be "without guile" before God, to have a single eye to what *God* requires of *him*, as well as to what *he* is asking from *God*; and conscious of being without wisdom and without strength himself, he casts himself entirely and unreservedly on the divine protection.

Now, the consequence of such an application to God, is the attainment of that support and deliverance which were implored. "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me." I was brought so low—I was so beset with danger and so overwhelmed with fear—I was in such a miserable and hopeless state, that not only was there no help for me in man, but I was almost despairing of help from God. And yet he has disappointed all my fears, he has scattered all mine enemies, he has "taken me out of the fearful pit and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings." As a poor, destitute, and wretched man, "I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me out of all my distresses." I was cast down, but he raised me up: the waves and billows of adversity were threatening to swallow me up; but he made "the overflowing of the proud waters to pass by," and brought me to the shore of safety and of peace. His everlasting arm has rescued me from the jaws of destruction, and now "I fear no evil." "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

If our souls are properly affected they will be perpetually seeking rest—a rest in which they can delight themselves, and on whose permanence they can count with certainty. And this rest is nowhere to be found but in the bounty and favour of the Lord. “The depth saith, it is not in me, and the sea, it is not in me. It can not be gotten for gold.” All the wealth of the world cannot purchase it. The soul has wants which no human beneficence can supply. It has diseases which no human skill can heal. It has desires which no human power can satisfy. It has sorrows which no human sympathies can charm away. And if left to the resources of created being, it is indeed “weary and heavy laden,” and can repose neither in what it has, nor in what it expects to attain. This is the case in some measure with every worldling; who, though not aware, perhaps, of the cause, or not inclined to have it removed, yet feels that in all his most eager pursuits, and in all his choicest pleasures, there is little else than “vanity and vexation of spirit.” But it is more especially the case with the believer, who views things in the light of reason, and in the light of

Scripture, and in the light of eternity ; who sees in the very best and highest of earthly enjoyments nothing that is worthy of an immortal mind—nothing that accommodates itself to the necessities of a guilty conscience or of a depraved heart—nothing that can make affliction light, death comfortable, and futurity blessed ; and who would, therefore, regard a sentence dooming him to seek and to find his happiness in these, as a sentence dooming him to an utter exclusion from the rest which he is so anxious to obtain, and to the continued endurance of that misery out of which he is so anxious to escape. But, blessed be God, while he feels that “ this is not his rest,” he knows where to find it. He “ arises and departs out of the land which is polluted,” and he goes into the land in which the dominion of sin is destroyed, and in which he can lie down on “ the green pastures,” and walk beside “ the still waters” of divine grace. He sees the ocean of a worldly and unsanctified life to be without an island on which he may dwell securely, and without a twig even on which for one moment he may plant his foot ; and, therefore, he returns to the ark of safety and of peace. He takes the

good and ever-living God for his portion ; and in the riches of *his* bounty he finds all that can give “ rest to his soul,” amidst his most numerous troubles and his most aggravated sorrows. There is no evil in his existing condition, and no evil that he can anticipate, from which he is not emancipated, or under which he is not upheld and comforted, by that merciful and mighty being to whom he has surrendered himself in faith and in well-doing.

The Psalmist here gives an enumeration of the blessings which he experienced from the bountiful dealing of the Lord. There is first, the deliverance of the “ soul from death.” “ The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” And having sinned, we are justly and necessarily condemned to die. But as it is impossible to describe, or even to conceive, all the horrors of that punishment which we have incurred by our transgression of God’s law, so proportionally awful must be the convictions of the awakened sinner who has in any measure realised these in his imagination, and is conscious of deserving them, and is impressed with the apprehension of suffering them. But if, in the midst of all these dangers, and all this anguish,

we have “ fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us,” and have put our trust in God’s mercy as exhibited in the mediation of Jesus, it is the assurance of him “ who cannot lie,” that our guilt is remitted, that we obtain reconciliation, that we become partakers of an “ eternal redemption.” And what can be wanting to give us rest from the agitations of guilt, when we hear that great and gracious being whose wrath we had incurred, saying to us, son, “ daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee ?” Surely this declaration, so full of mercy and so full of meaning, must impart to us that “ peace of mind which passeth understanding,” and fill us with “ a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.”

But, besides delivering our souls from death, the Lord also in his bounty delivers our “ eyes from tears.” In this sinful world, there is no complete exemption from evil that is either promised to us, or that can be experienced by us. It abounds in causes of mourning, to the operation of which we must be subjected in common with all the children of mortality, and there are some by which we are peculiarly affected as the disciples of a holy and crucified Redeemer. But

though we are exposed to these, and must often endure them in all their variety, and in all their weight, still being reconciled to God through Christ, and consequently interested in all the promises of the well ordered covenant, we have wherewithal to comfort our hearts in the darkest and most distressful hour. No affliction befalls us which is not accompanied with its appropriate consolation. Even our heaviest calamities are represented and brought home to us as expressions of God's paternal love. And in the gloomiest vale of sorrow, we are permitted to lift up the eye of hope to that region of unclouded sky and undisturbed repose which is reserved for the faithful; and to consider what we suffer now as a preparation for that blessed period longed for, though not distant, by all the afflicted followers of Christ, when God shall translate them into his unsuffering kingdom, and shall "wipe away all tears from their eyes." With this prospect before us, secured to us by the word of promise, and brought near by that "faith which is the evidence of things not seen," we may not only "possess our souls in patience," but even "rejoice in our tribulations."

And while God delivers our souls from death, and our eyes from tears, he also delivers our "feet from falling." If we are true believers, sensible of our obligations to God, and desirous of final admission into heaven, we must be perpetually concerned to maintain "a conscience void of offence," and to be "holy in all manner of conversation." And, aware of the numberless temptations that surround us, and of our own weakness and inability to resist and overcome them, the fear of falling a prey to them must frequently harass and distress us. But here also a bountiful God has provided rest for us. We are assured by him that his "grace will be sufficient for us, and that his strength will be perfected in our weakness;" that the divine Spirit is to be given us for our guidance and sanctification; that Christ has vanquished our spiritual foes, and that believing in him, his victory becomes ours. And having such an assurance, what reason have we not merely to exclude all despondency as to our perseverance, but even to go on our Christian way rejoicing, humble indeed under a sense of our manifold dangers and deficiencies, but yet animated by the encouraging

truth, that we are “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” that even in the wilderness we shall have “rest from our enemies,” and that by a course of cheerful and universal obedience, we shall be maturing our meetness for enjoying that sinless, and perfect, and eternal “rest which remains” above “for the people of God!”

Now, what is the practical result of this experience? What was it with the Psalmist? And what should it be with us? “I will walk before the Lord,” says David, “in the land of the living.” This was his resolution,—this was his endeavour; and it must be ours. We must act with a spirit of confidence in his wisdom and goodness; with unfeigned submission to his authority, with “a single eye to his glory,” with the blessed hope of seeing him in heaven. And especially we must act as it becomes those who have experienced so much of his loving kindness,—recognising in this a powerful motive for being more active and zealous in his service,—more anxious in promoting his honour among our fellow-men—and more careful to embrace every opportunity that is offered, of showing to the souls

and bodies of others that mercy which we have received from him.

And there must be no delay, no remissness, no indolence in the great duty of walking before the Lord. “I will walk before the Lord *in the land of the living.*” O my friends, life is short. We are now in the land of living men: We shall ere long be immured in the darkness and the silence of the tomb. Let us “work the works of God, therefore, while it is day; the night cometh” soon, and it may come unexpectedly, “when no man can work.” “Whatever our hand findeth to do;” whether it be an exercise of faith in the Redeemer,—or whether it be an act of repentance towards our offended Maker,—or whether it be an application by prayer at the foot-stool of mercy,—or whether it be a deed of justice and reparation to some one that we have wronged,—or whether it be a work of piety and beneficence, in behalf of the victims of disease and poverty,—“*whatever* our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither we are going.”

LECTURE XI.

PSALM CXVI. 10—END.

I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me ? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid : thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.

“ I BELIEVED,” says David, “ therefore have I spoken.” The Apostle Paul, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, quotes this language, and applies it to himself and to his fellow labourers, as enduring affliction, and yet preaching, and openly declaring their attachment to, the truths on

account of which that affliction was suffered. And hence, we may learn, according to the judgment of the Apostle, that the Psalmist intimates, in this concise phraseology, that he was bold to confess his reliance on the divine promises, even in the midst of all his persecutions and distress, and that he was enabled to manifest this boldness by the strength and the vividness of his religious faith.

The conduct of David and of Paul was rational as well as pious, and it must be our conduct if we would be wise, and consistent, and holy. Trusting in the providence, and “glorying in the cross of Christ,” we may, like many that have gone before us, be exposed to ridicule and reproach. Our understanding may be impeached; our sincerity may be denied; our good name may be traduced, and our worldly interest impaired; and we may be beset with evils as many and as severe as those which harassed the King of Israel and the Apostle of the Gentiles. But, amidst them all, we will never, if we are true Christians, be deterred nor discouraged from confessing the Redeemer of our souls, and the God of our salvation. We will make this confession, when called upon to do so, even though it should increase the hatred of

our enemies, and the severity of our hardships a thousand fold. And we will be the more resolute to do this, not only because it is right in itself, but because by the noble testimony which we thus give, of a good conscience, and to a righteous cause, we may be instrumental in awakening, and finally converting the hearts of those who so unjustly vilify and oppress us.

Nor my friends can we possibly act otherwise, if we truly and firmly believe. Let us only be convinced that "the Lord reigns," and that his word concerning his people is as true as his purpose is merciful, and as his arm is mighty; let our minds be influenced by realising views of the necessity and the greatness of that deliverance which he has provided for us, by the meritorious righteousness and atoning death of his own Son; let our belief extend to all that he has spoken of the compassion and the kindness, with which he will regard us as we journey along the pilgrimage of life, and travel through "the dark valley of death;" let our hope "enter into that within the vail," and contemplate whatever is great and good and happy in the sinless and unsuffering kingdom which is prepared for us in heaven; and what

is there in the hostility of mortal man—what is there in the privation of earthly comfort—what is there in the last and deepest agonies of bodily suffering, that should prevent us from proclaiming in the loudest strains our unshaken trust in the Lord Jehovah, in the grace and power of Jesus, in the virtue and the faithfulness of the everlasting covenant? The afflictions to which we are subjected, cannot alter the objects towards which our faith is turned: they cannot alter the grounds upon which it is established; they cannot alter the reasonableness of that connexion which subsists between the principle itself, and the arguments, whether speculative or experimental, which have produced it; they cannot alter these things, and, therefore, why should our faith in such circumstances, be either enfeebled or destroyed? Nay, if that faith be genuine and enlightened, it will not merely brave the storms of persecution, but will gather strength and vigour from them. For while he in whom we believe gives us no reason to expect any exemption from the ills and calamities of life, he has even told us that our lot in consequence of our Christian profession, and Christian practice, may be more

troubled than that of other men, and that it may happen that every proof we give, either in word or deed, of our devotedness to the doctrine of a particular providence, or of a crucified Saviour, may be the signal for opposition, and contumely, and scorn. And, consequently, when such things befall us, they give us additional evidence of the truth of the Gospel, and of the veracity of him to whom we have committed our interests. This evidence becomes the more interesting and powerful, when we recollect the promise with which the prediction of suffering is accompanied, namely, that it will be all overruled for our ultimate happiness; and, indeed, that it is to operate as a wise and intended means of sanctifying us for the presence of the blessed God. And, in this view of the subject, it surely becomes us to be “strong in the faith;” to “sing at once of mercy and of judgment;” to lift up a witnessing voice to the unceasing and unchangeable love of him under whose permission, or by whose appointment, we are put into the furnace of affliction; and to tell the church and the world, in the language of settled and animated belief, that we rejoice in him who suffered on Calvary, and that in spite of all

the obloquy that can be heaped upon us by infidel and ungodly men, we still cling to his cross as "all our salvation and all our desire." "Thus believing, we will thus speak."

But, my friends, though this be the language of true and genuine faith, we know enough of the frailty of men, and of believing men, not to be aware that believing men do not uniformly hold this language; that they sometimes allow their convictions to be weakened, or to fall into a temporary slumber; that when assailed by bitter provocations, or by unexpected miseries, they occasionally become uncharitable, fretful, and disconsolate. In the intensity of their feelings towards those who are but the instruments of what they endure, they forget the perfection and the character of him by whom these instruments are guided or restrained. And, irritated by the pains that they suffer, or perplexed by the difficulties in which they are involved, they lose their hold of that stay on which their souls, in less trying circumstances, had securely rested; they speak and act as if the divine protection were withdrawn, or, as if their enemies were now stronger than God; and look with an evil eye, and pro-

nounce an indiscriminating sentence of condemnation, on all their brethren of mankind.

Of this we have an example in the Psalmist. "I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, all men are liars." He had been deserted by those on whom he relied as his friends; he had been deceived, as well as thwarted and persecuted by such as might have been expected to stand by him, and support him in his time of need. But, not contented with expressing his indignation at the treachery and misconduct of these individuals, he concludes that every other person is actuated by the same spirit of falsehood and deception, and involves the good and the bad, friends and foes, in one sweeping censure. And he does it in such a way as to show that he was thinking with more concern, about the guilt and the malice of his adversaries, than about the power and the providence of his God.

But then he acknowledges that he did this rashly and unadvisedly. He did not sufficiently consider the nature and grounds of the sentiment which he uttered. He yielded to a sudden ebullition of temper, instead of having recourse to the great truths in which he believed, and which

would have served in this, as in former cases, to fortify his courage, to comfort his heart, and to guide his steps. And this sinful conduct originated in the greatness of his affliction. His affliction was so great as to overwhelm his better principles and feelings, to bring into action the angry passions of his nature, and to make him speak as if he had been faithless, as well as resentful.

This, however, is not to be viewed so much in the light of an excuse for *him*, as of a warning to *us*. We may suffer greatly and grievously from the malice of men. There may be found among our foes, those whom we had befriended, who had "eaten of our bread," who had shared of our bounty, who had taught us to confide in their affection: And they may employ the very tokens of our confidence as the weapons of their malignity. But what is there in all this to justify us in anathematising the whole of our species, and in branding with duplicity such as have never done us wrong? We know not how many hearts may be sympathising with us in our distresses; how many voices are lifted up in prayer for our deliverance; how many hands are actively en-

gaged in our defence. And why should a sense of injuries, however unmerited, and however great, crush in our souls that charity which would make us believe to be good in our brethren, what we do not know to be evil? Or why should the persecution of a few, or of many, sour us against the rest, and alienate our affections from all? Granting, however, that there were a countless multitude against us, why should we give way to the feelings, or why should we utter the language of disappointment and of querulousness, when we know who is for us? We “believe in God; we believe also in Christ: Let not, therefore, our hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid.” Instead of the discontented and unbecoming effusion which David poured forth in his haste and his forgetfulness, let us adopt the tone of triumphant confidence which animated him on another occasion, when he said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should

rise up against me, in this will I be confident." But, sensible how weak we are, how apt we are to be thrown off our guard, and overwhelmed by unlooked for calamities ; warned of this, if not by our own experience, at least by the experience of the Psalmist, and by the teaching of the Bible, let us be vigilant against the influence of such circumstances ; let us study to live in the habitual exercise of faith ; let us be especially careful to call forth its energies in such trials as that which made David unmindful of his trust in the Almighty ; let us be continually employed in nourishing and invigorating it, by meditations on the divine character, and the divine promises ; and let us pray earnestly that, in every season of peril and of perplexity, it may be made strong by the might of heaven to overcome every foe, and to banish every fear.

Notwithstanding the sinful and uncharitable despondency into which the Psalmist had fallen, the Lord had been merciful to him, and delivered him out of all his troubles : " set his feet in a large place, and established his goings." And, strongly impressed by a sense of his manifold obligations, he cries out, " what shall I render unto

the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Such is the feeling which it becomes every Christian to cherish, and such is the language which it becomes every Christian to employ. Numerous are the blessings which God has conferred upon us. From the earliest moment of our existence until now, he has watched over us to do us good. How often has he rescued us from pain and danger! How often has he guided us in our difficulties, and comforted us in our sorrows! How liberally has he provided for our ever returning wants! How abundantly has he favoured our lot both with temporal mercies, and with spiritual privileges! And how undeserving have we been even of the very least of those benefits which we were daily and hourly receiving from his bountiful hand! Surely then, if gratitude be due to a benefactor, it becomes us to be grateful to the Lord our God; and if our gratitude to a benefactor should be enhanced by the generosity of the giver, and the unworthiness of the receiver, what a debt of gratitude do we owe to him whose loving-kindness to us has been equally unbounded and unmerited! Let us often think of the preserving and redeeming goodness of our Maker: let us call

up every thankful emotion of which our hearts are susceptible; let every year, and let every hour, as it increases the weight of our obligations, find us more disposed to acknowledge and to fulfil them; and let it be our serious and our perpetual enquiry, how we shall give the most unequivocal and most suitable expression to that gratitude, which such a rich experience of the divine beneficence should awaken in our breasts. “What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us?”

“I will take the cup of salvation,” says the Psalmist, “and call upon the name of the Lord.” The Psalmist, it is probable, by “the cup of salvation,” means the drink offerings appointed by the law in token of thankfulness for any deliverance that had been experienced; or he may refer to a custom that prevailed among the pious Jews, of the master of the house having at his private meal a cup of blessing of which he drank first, and in which his guests and family pledged him,—all uniting in the act of thanksgiving to God with which the ceremony was accompanied. Whichever of these interpretations be the just one, the instruction which it imparts to us is, that we

should adopt every appointed and every proper method of signifying how much we owe to our heavenly father; that in the exercises of public worship and of domestic piety, as well as of private devotion, we should not fail to make mention of our debt of gratitude; that we should "call upon the name of the Lord," praising him for his works of mercy and of kindness, and praying to him for a mind more willing to make those returns to which he is entitled, and for ability more ample to act according to what we feel in our hearts and utter with our lips.

And especially should we be faithful to the vows that we have made in the season of distress. It too often happens that these vows are broken and forgotten. Under the pressure of affliction, and more particularly in the prospect of its terminating fatally, we are apt to form resolutions and to make promises of amendment, and to say, that if it pleases God to spare us and to deliver us, we will henceforth render him a new and a better obedience; that we will be careful to avoid the sins of our past lives, which we now see to have been sinful far beyond what we had ever conceived them in the season of health and safe-

ty ; and that all who shall hereafter witness our conduct, shall behold it adorned with the fruits of sincere penitence, and holy purposes, and sanctified distresses. All this is well : but alas, how often does it all vanish like the goodness of Ephraim, which was as “ the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away ! ” How often have we risen from the bed of sickness, or escaped from the jaws of death, and thought little more, or thought no more, of the contrition that we had felt, of the confessions that we had made, of the determinations that we had formed to be more watchful against temptation, and more vigorous in duty, and more abundant in faith than we had ever been before ! How often have we exhibited the spectacle of employing our renovated health, our restored life, our returning prosperity, far more for the gratification of our own perverse dispositions, than for the honour and the praise of him by whom these blessings were bestowed, and to whom we solemnly covenanted them all the rest of our days ! Brethren, these things ought not so to be ; and let them not be so with any of us. But as we have vowed unto the Lord, let us be faithful to *pay* our vows. Instead of coming short

of what might have been expected from all that we had felt and said in the time of trouble, let us labour if possible to go beyond it; and show in the confirmed steadfastness of our faith and in the growing purity of our deportment, not only that it was “good for us to have been afflicted,” but that we were sincere and decided in the surrender which we then made of our future selves, and of our whole selves, to the glory of that God whose mercy we invoked, and whose mercy we experienced.

And let us do this “now.” Delay in such a case is sinful. It is a violation of the very vow that was made; it is persevering in what we know to be wrong, and have promised to forsake. And it is foolish as well as sinful; for if we do not begin to fulfil our engagements when the circumstances which induced them are still fresh in our recollection and our feelings, how is it to be supposed that we shall afterwards be prevailed upon to begin the work, when the pains of sickness, the ills of adversity, the apprehensions of death, shall have been swallowed up in the cares, and the amusements, and the fascinations of a world which we have so deliberately allowed to regain its ascendancy? Nor is it less dangerous than

it is foolish and sinful, to defer to any future day the fulfilment of our vows. The retrospect of every past year, and all which the events of that year have taught us, inculcate the momentous lesson which is recorded in our Bible, that “*now* is the accepted time—that *now* is the day of salvation.” We know not, and we cannot know, whether our period of probation shall be lengthened; whether our present opportunities shall be repeated; whether space shall be granted us, not for carrying our purposes into full effect, but even for giving one decisive proof that they were cordial and sincere. And, therefore, our only safety lies in beginning immediately to embody our resolutions and our vows into our actual character, and to become all that we intend to be, and all that we must be, as the monuments of God’s saving mercy, and as the expectants of his heavenly presence. We must “pay our vows *now* in the presence of all God’s people;” telling them what great things he has done for our souls and our bodies; calling upon them to join us in magnifying his holy name; and giving them to see our renewed anxiety and our improved exertions to conform to all his holy will. We

must do it, “in the courts of the Lord’s house,” by a more punctual attendance on the public ordinances of his grace, and by a more devout, more fervent, more consistent engagement in all the exercises and services of the sanctuary. And we must do it, as it were, “in the midst of Jerusalem.” We must do it before the world as well as before the church; in the presence of God’s enemies as well as in the presence of all his people. We are not to make an *ostentatious* display of God’s merciful dealings with us; nor of the gratitude which we feel to him on account of these; nor of the practical proofs by which that gratitude is evinced and perfected. But as little are we to be ashamed of these things or to conceal them from the knowledge and observation of “them that are without.” This would neither be honourable to God, nor would it be just to our own personal feelings and consistency, nor would it be any thing towards ungodly men, but a withholding from them what, if plainly and prudently exhibited, might have the effect of subduing their opposition, and calling them to serious thought. Under the influence of all these considerations, we must pay our vows to

the Lord with unaffected simplicity and undaunted boldness : believing it to be at once right and useful that none should be ignorant of the divine goodness to “ them that love him ” and put their trust in him, and of that tribute of piety and righteousness, which, as he requires it, so they are ready to yield, in token of their gratitude to him who preserves “ their souls from death, their eyes from tears, and their feet from falling.”

It is a comfortable and an animating thought, that, “ precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints.” He has often permitted his people to be persecuted unto the death ; and there is a host of blessed martyrs around his throne. But he gave them up to the will of their enemies that they might bear a more impressive witness to the truth than the longest and most prosperous life could have effected ; he stood by them when they were suffering for his sake, and spread a glory over their last scene, brighter and more permanent by far than what has ever accompanied the departure of the proudest and most splendid of this world’s heroes ; and from the scaffold or the flames, where they perished,

he has wafted their spirits to the peculiar blessedness of those who “have come through much tribulation.” And as in these cases he has loved and honoured his saints even in the midst of apparent desertion, so in all circumstances he watches over them for good. He does not needlessly allow them to be the victims of human enmity. He does not set so little value on their continuance in the world as to eye their treatment in it, or their exit from it, with indifference. While they are here, he “keeps them as the apple of his eye,” and when they go hence, his Spirit goes with them to place them in their sainted rest, and to give them entrance into “the joy of their Lord.” How anxious, then, should we be to consecrate to him the life which he is so careful to preserve, and the death which he is so gracious to embalm! “Whether we live, let us live to the Lord; and whether we die, let us die to the Lord; that living or dying we may be the Lord’s.”

If we are real Christians, then are we truly the “servants” of God—his servants by our being the children “of his handmaid,” or born and settled within the pale of his church, and inheriting its

outward privileges: and his servants by his having “loosed our bonds,” and rescued us from “the sorrows of death and the pains of hell, which had compassed and taken hold upon us.” Let us then remember the obligations, and perform the duties of that service into which he has called us by his grace, and to which he has bound us with the cords of love. Let us walk worthy of the spiritual advantages and of the temporal benefits by which he has distinguished us. Remembering that we “are not our own, but bought with a price,” even the precious blood of his incarnate son, let us “glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are his.” And let us be animated to fidelity, and diligence, and constancy, by the assurance he has given us, that he will support us under our labours, and crown us at last with a great recompense of reward.

LECTURE XII.

PSALM III.

“ Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people.”

DAVID's conduct in the case of Uriah had justly provoked the divine displeasure, and God threatened to “ raise up evil against him out of his own house.” This threatening was soon executed. His son Absalom became his foe; contrived a scheme for depriving him of his crown, and of his life; prevailed upon his subjects to join him in the unnatural rebellion; and speedily reduced him to

a state of extreme danger, and of deep distress. There was every thing in his situation to agitate him with alarm, or to sink him into dejection and despair. His enemies were inveterate in their hostility, and formidable by their numbers. They consisted of his own people whom he had ruled with equity, and treated with kindness and indulgence. They were headed and led on by a child on whom he doated even to weakness, and in whom he trusted as he would have trusted in himself. The object at which they aimed with determined purpose was his dethronement and his death. And so unable did he seem to defend himself from their assaults, and so inevitably devoted to destruction, that they could not refrain from saying in the language of mockery and exultation, "There is no help for him in God."

In these circumstances, however, David was not cast down. He could not fail indeed to experience much cutting disappointment, many painful apprehensions, numerous hardships and privations. But still he did not give way to despondency; he placed his confidence, and found his refuge in the protection of Almighty God. On that great and good Being he had

hitherto relied ; and he had known experimentally too much of his willingness and his ability to save, and partaken too richly of his precious promises, to suspect that he would desert him now, in the season and under the pressure of his utmost need. From all that he had been taught to believe, and from all that he had been privileged to feel respecting the ways of his Providence, he was fully persuaded that light would rise out of darkness, and order out of confusion, and safety out of peril. And in the very midst of his trials, severe and complicated as they were, and menacing as was the aspect which they assumed, he steadily addressed himself to God as his God, and stayed himself on the assurance that he would be “ a shield ” to guard him from all the attacks of his adversaries ;—that he would be his “ glory,” his honour and his boast, amid the reproaches they were heaping upon him, and the degradation in which they were attempting to involve him ;—and that he would be the “ lifter up of his head,” his deliverer from those troubles by which, for a time, he was to be harassed, and his restorer to that dignity and authority of which, for a time, he was to be deprived.

Thus was it with David ; and thus must it be, and thus will it be, with all who have that deep and enlightened piety by which he was distinguished. The time of affliction is the time for trying your faith and your patience, for ascertaining your possession of these virtues, for giving them a salutary exercise, for manifesting the energy and perfection which belong to them, and for enjoying the consolation which they are so well fitted to impart. And as ye all have need of them, so you have reason to be thankful that they are warranted by every view that Scripture gives you of the character and government of God, and by every one of his dealings with those who have made him their "stronghold in the day of trouble." Such are his attributes, such are his promises, such has been the whole course of his administration, that there is no degree of trust which you may not safely repose in him, and no degree of resignation which you may not cheerfully yield to him. It matters not what your trials and your sorrows be ; your support and your solacement remain unchangeably the same. His assurances of protection and deliverance make no distinction between the greatest and the smallest evils that

can enter into your lot ; the infinitude of his perfections enables him to perform all that he has said respecting their mitigation, or their removal ; and if there be one case, rather than another, in which he demonstrates the facility wherewith he can accomplish these ends, it is that in which the tribulations of his servants have been multiplied even to utter hopelessness. You may not be called to suffer what the Psalmist suffered ; but though you were ; though like him you had your hearts pierced by the disobedience and undutifulness of beloved children ; though those who had been indebted to your guardianship and your beneficence had requited you with base ingratitude ; though you had met with enmity where you expected nothing but friendship ; though your foes, being of your own household, and of your own kindred, were increasing every day in numbers, in malignity, and in power ; though they had robbed you of your just dominion and your dearest rights ; though they had not only laid your honour in the dust, but were seeking to deprive you of life itself, and to load your memory and your name with unmerited obloquy as the last effort of their hostility, and the last gratifica-

tion of their malice ; and though to these were added, every other calamity with which your mortal existence can be afflicted,—what then ? These are as much within the reach of God’s sovereign and absolute controul, as is the most inconsiderable evil that can possibly befall you ; and in proportion to the burden which they lay upon you, and the anguish which they occasion you, and the dangers to which they expose you, will be his care that you be not overwhelmed and ruined by them. If he is for you,—this is your comfort, that he is greater than all that can be against you. Is it requisite for you that he have goodness ? His goodness prompts him to compassionate you in all your distresses, to send you the help and the relief that you need, and to visit you with “a joy that is unspeakable.” Is it requisite for you that he have wisdom ? His wisdom is such as to fathom and to defeat the most artful devices of them that seek to hurt you,—to extricate you from the most perplexing difficulties in which you can be involved, and to make the most untoward circumstances and events conducive to your highest advantage. Is it requisite for you that he have power ? His power is irresistible :

he has only to say to the storm of persecution that rages around you, "peace, be still," and all its elements are hushed into silence; he has only to will it, and calumny departs from your reputation, and disease from your body, and grief from your spirit; he has only to put his everlasting arm around you, and you are beyond the reach of woe. Is it requisite for you that he give the promise of gracious and mighty interposition in your behalf? This promise is given by him explicitly and emphatically; it is repeated in every various form; it has respect to all the circumstances of your pilgrimage, to all the vicissitudes of your warfare; and it partakes of the truth and unchangeableness of the source from which it has proceeded. Is it requisite that you have a practical proof of its fulfilment? This proof is to be found in the life of every afflicted saint, from the beginning of the world to the present moment; they have had recourse to it in every hour of trial, and it has never failed them, nor disappointed them; and the Psalmist speaks the sentiment of them all, when he says as the result of his own experience, "I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my

foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.”

But we shall suppose your case to be still more discouraging than it has been just now represented. We shall suppose your distresses to be the result of your transgression—not merely the effect of sin, as all suffering may be justly considered, but an immediate and visible consequence of some particular demerit—a punishment inflicted upon you for certain specified iniquities, as was the case with David when he composed this Psalm;—still I would exhort you not to despond or to allow your confidence in God as your God to be impaired. Just cause, indeed, would you have for despair, if having disobeyed God, and enduring a penalty for that disobedience, you yet hardened yourselves against him, and continued in a state of rebellion. In that case every evil to which you were subjected would be a token of divine vengeance, and the beginning of that more insupportable condemnation with which the finally impenitent must be overwhelmed in a future

world. But your circumstances are totally different, if, like the Psalmist, you have become sensible of your guilt, and have felt contrition and self-abasement on account of it, and have cast yourselves upon God's covenanted mercy, and have returned to him with renewed affection and devotedness. Having done this, you may be satisfied that God will not give you up to destruction; that he will not permit the calamities with which you are visited to crush you; that he will not allow a single pain to harass you for one moment longer than what is requisite for the vindication of his own ways, as connected with your moral corruption on the one hand, and with the advancement of your spiritual well-being on the other. He is neither vindictive nor relentless. He has no pleasure in your sufferings or in your death; but is rather willing that you should come to him, and be forgiven, and live. He appointed his own Son to "make peace by the blood of his cross" between you and your offended God. This end is actually accomplished in behalf of all them that believe. And looking up to him in faith as not only full of compassion, but as reconciled to you, and reconciling you to himself,

and “not imputing to you your trespasses,” you have no more to fear from his indignation. That is overpast; and, beholding you in the face of Jesus Christ, he becomes your father, your protector, and your friend. And being the objects of his redeeming love, can you suspect for a moment that he will at any time abandon you to the malice of your enemies, or leave you a prey to the difficulties and the dangers with which you have to struggle? O no; you must not, you cannot entertain such hard and unjust thoughts of “the Lord God merciful and gracious.” Doubtless he hates sin, and can have no complacency in those who commit it. Doubtless you have provoked his displeasure by your manifold and aggravated transgressions. Doubtless the supreme and holy ruler of the universe cannot clear the guilty, without an adequate satisfaction to the demands of his righteous and violated law. But this satisfaction having been made by the obedience of your divine surety, and your interest in it secured by the instrumentality of a true and cordial faith, there is nothing to prevent the love of God from following the impulse of its own inherent energies, and sending forth upon you all the blessings that

can contribute to your safety and your happiness. From the riches of his grace, and the promises of his word, he is as much pledged to do you good, as if you had never swerved from the way of his commandments. And though you cannot be exempted from the ills that are incident to fallen humanity; and though, in the course of his Providence, you may have to bear many a heavy burden, and to feel many a bitter pang; and though you may have to undergo special inflictions of adversity in consequence of special aberrations from the path of duty,—still the Lord is on your side; he will guard you in your most perilous hour; he will support you under the pressure of your severest trials; he will ultimately deliver you from all your sorrows; and he will overrule the very chastisements which he lays upon you for your forgetfulness of him, or your disobedience to him, as the means of bringing you nearer to himself, of elevating your Christian character, and of rendering you fitter for that world where you shall never offend him, and never be afflicted by him any more.

Amidst all his sins and all his sufferings, the Psalmist had recourse to the exercises of devo-

tion,—he retired into his secret chambers, or he went into the public sanctuary, and addressed himself to God in prayer and supplication. This he knew to be his duty, and felt to be his privilege; and he not only exemplifies the practice, but gives his testimony to the divine goodness and faithfulness towards those who observe it, when he says, “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.” If, indeed, we are animated with the spirit of real piety, and if we have acquainted ourselves with God, with our dependence upon him, with his ability and readiness to save us, and with the encouragement he gives us to draw near to him,—then, in all situations of perplexity, and danger, and distress, we will be irresistibly carried to the throne of his grace. That will be our resort in the ordinary course of our lives, and in the ordinary events of our lot; but surely we will hasten to it, and we will dwell before it, and we will plead at it, when labouring under strong convictions of sin, or exposed to peculiar hardships and calamities. What else can we do in such circumstances,—in what other way can we consult our welfare,—how can we otherwise do homage to

the hearer of prayer? The divine character, as unfolded in the Scripture, holds out a broad invitation to every humble and suffering worshipper; and he to whom that character belongs, has expressly said to every one of his people, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver *thee*, and thou shalt glorify *me*." And it is nothing more than exercising that reverence which is due to the word of truth, and yielding to that lesson which is taught us by universal experience, when we cry unto God from the depths, and cry unto him, with the settled confidence, that he will listen to our petitions, and grant us according to our heart's desire. To be successful, however, in our application, we must be careful to make it in the appointed way. The Psalmist speaks of God's hearing him "*out of his holy hill*." His holy hill was mount Zion. There the ark of the covenant was deposited. That was the ark of God's presence; from it he was pleased to give his answers to those who sought him by prayer. And David had respect to this institution, as originating in the wisdom and authority of the Being to whom he offered up his supplications, and trusted to it for obtaining the blessings which he asked.

Now, in like manner, *we* must look to God as seated on a throne of grace, made accessible to us by the blood of Christ. He is to be approached only by that "new and living way" which he himself has appointed. Every petition we prefer to him must be preferred in the name of Jesus, in a dependance upon the merits of his death, and the efficacy of his intercession. If we neglect to take refuge in this ark, when the floods of divine wrath, and of temporal adversity, are setting in upon us, most assuredly we shall perish; and all the methods of deliverance we can have recourse to will be of no avail to our salvation. But if, agreeably to God's revealed plan of mercy, we regard it as the resting place of our hopes, and seek to it with confidence in its sufficiency, as well as its necessity, to rescue us from the surrounding deluge, then the overflowing of the waters will pass by, and we shall be safe amidst the perils which sink the unbelieving and the ungodly into perdition. Relying on the atonement and righteousness of our mighty Redeemer, we may "come with boldness to the throne of divine grace, and there implore," with the expectation of receiving, "mercy to pardon, and grace

to help us in our times of need." Thus crying unto the Lord, and thus praying to him in faith, he will hear us, as he heard the Psalmist, out of his holy hill. And in answer to our believing entreaties, he will impart to us support, and consolation, and deliverance; so that though we be "troubled on every side, we shall not be distressed; though perplexed, we shall not be in despair; though persecuted, we shall not be forsaken; though cast down, we shall not be destroyed."

But while the Psalmist refers with emphasis to God's extraordinary interpositions in his behalf, when his foes increased, and his situation was full of danger, he does not forget to make mention of the divine care exercised over him in the common habitudes of his life. "He laid him down and slept; and he awaked, for the Lord sustained him." Habits of piety in the mind, and correct views of providence, will lead us to acknowledge our obligations to our Heavenly Father, even in our most tranquil hours, and in our least considerable mercies. It is not only when we come safe out of the ensanguined field, or escape from the dreadful shipwreck, or are raised to unexpected honours and affluence,—it is not only

then that we should confess a present and wonder-working God, and give praise to him for such striking manifestations of his mercy : the wonders of his mercy and his power are just as real and just as worthy of praise, in our preservation from day to day, and from hour to hour, when every thing in our condition looks so peaceful and secure, that we are apt to think, we need no protector, and have no injury to fear. “ We laid us down, and we slept ; and we awoke ; ” but it was “ the Lord that sustained us. ” It was the great “ shepherd of Israel who slumbereth not nor sleepeth ” that watched over us ; that allowed “ no evil to befall us, and no plague to come nigh our dwelling ; ” that kept our vital functions in play while we were all unconscious and utterly helpless ; and that brought us in health and comfort to the light, and the duties, and the privileges of another day. How many of our fellow creatures were there who, from poverty and misfortune, had no place on which to lay their aching head, and stretch their wearied limbs,—while we were blessed with the sheltering roof and the bed of repose ! How many have been all night long tossing with agony, or lan-

guishing in sickness,—while we have enjoyed undisturbed and refreshing sleep ! How many have shut their eyes never to open them again on this world,—while we have been permitted to continue in the land of living men, to rise in the full possession of all our faculties, and still to engage in our work of preparation for eternity. And is not all this to be ascribed to him who careth for us, even when we are incapable of remembering him ? And does it not call for our warm and unceasing gratitude ? And should it not be daily acknowledged in the language of devout and cordial thanksgiving ? Yes, my friends ; if we are sensible of the relation in which we stand to God as our constant preserver, and if we feel as we ought to do under the experience of his minute and mighty guardianship, we will say with the Psalmist on another occasion, “ My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer to thee, and will look up.” “ Every day that I rise I will bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.”

And if God is pleased to sustain us in our midnight slumbers, and give us the comforts of quiet and unbroken repose, even when the storm of

adversity is raging around us, (which is probably what David here particularly alludes to,) still warmer than should be our gratitude, and still louder our song of praise. Staying ourselves upon his grace and power, and maintaining a good conscience towards him, we shall find that his loving kindness extends to all the circumstances of our lot, and neglects nothing which is conducive to our personal comfort, or our ultimate safety. And having seen what he has done for his suffering people in this respect, or, it may be, having realised it in our own case, let us give glory to him for his goodness in the time that is past, and continue to trust in him for all the time that is yet to come. “Why should we be afraid of ten thousands of people that may set themselves against us round about?” They are as nothing when they dare to contend with the Almighty, by assaulting and persecuting his servants. He will arise and take to him his great power, and save us out of their hands, and scatter them as chaff before the wind. He is able to “smite all our enemies upon the cheek-bone,” so that they shall no longer be capable of harassing us with those bitter reproaches, and cruel calumnies

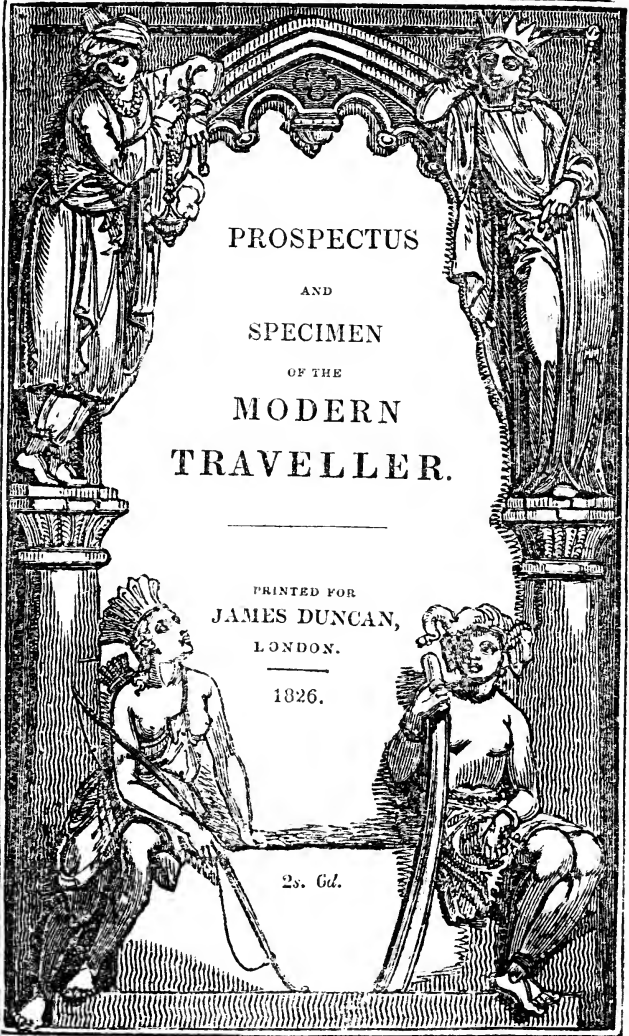
by which they have hitherto endeavoured to wound and to destroy us. He is able to “break the teeth of the ungodly,” so that with all their rancorous hostility, and all their demonstrations of malice, they shall not have the power of inflicting upon us any severe or lasting mischief, or of carrying into effect one of all the schemes which they have laid for our ruin. He is not only able to do these things in our behalf, but he has often accomplished them in the history of his persecuted church. They are recorded “for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.”

This hope, then, let us cherish amidst all the vicissitudes of our life, and even in the darkest hour of tribulation. Whatever be the evils that we suffer, and whatever be the evils with which we are threatened, let this great truth be constantly remembered, and firmly believed in, that “salvation belongeth unto the Lord.” He is mighty to save, let our enemies be as formidable, and our circumstances as desperate as they may. It is his prerogative to save; for there is salvation in none other. It is his good pleasure to save; “judgment is his strange work,” but he takes delight in the exercise

of that mercy which rescues from the pressure of calamity, and from the jaws of death. And it is his promise to save; he has assured us that he will deliver them that put their trust in him out of all their troubles, and the fulfilment of this assurance is as certain as his faithfulness is unchangeable, and his strength omnipotent. Let us only be among the number of his people, and all will be well with us; his blessing will be upon us, and his is a "blessing which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow." Men may revile us, our spiritual foes may assail us, all external things may seem to be against us, and not one feature of our condition may indicate that there is any hope for us; but, being the people of God, justified by his grace, sanctified by his Spirit, and devoted to him in the affections of our hearts, and in the obedience of our lives, we shall be the objects of his tender regard,—a regard which will increase in proportion to our necessities; and being blessed of God, we shall be blessed indeed. "All things shall be ours;" whether prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow, life or death, things present or things to come. Every coming day will find us enjoying that "peace of God which

passeth understanding," and which depends not on the favour of men, or on the wealth of the world. And at whatever time it shall please our heavenly Father to remove us, the blessedness which he gives upon earth will be exchanged for the blessedness which he gives in heaven; and as a gracious recompense for all our services, and a happy termination to all our sorrows, we shall enter into the regions of immortality, and into the felicity of "the just made perfect."

FINIS.



PROSPECTUS
AND
SPECIMEN
OF THE
MODERN
TRAVELLER.

PRINTED FOR
JAMES DUNCAN,
LONDON.

1826.

2s. 6d.

PROSPECTUS OF A NEW WORK
ENTITLED
THE MODERN TRAVELLER;
OR,
A Popular Description,
GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, & TOPOGRAPHICAL,
OF THE
VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE GLOBE.

Compiled from the latest and best Authorities.

THE extensive and indefatigable researches of European Travellers during the last five-and-twenty years, in almost every country of the globe, have given in some instances quite a new aspect to our maps, and have furnished the most important accessions to geographical science. They have at the same time equally extended our acquaintance with the physical habits, political institutions, and domestic manners of the several nations of both hemispheres, some of which were previously known only by name. The Travels, for example, of Clarke, Dodwell, Eustace, and Hughes, in Europe; of Morier, Elphinstone, Buchanan, Fraser, Pottinger, Gore Ouseley, Kinneir, and Porter, in Asia; of Belzoni, Lord Valentia, Burckhardt, and Richardson, in Egypt and the adjacent countries; of Lewis and Clarke, Pike and James, in North Ame-

rica; of Lucock, Mawe, and Von Spix, in Brazil; of Humboldt, in Mexico; and of many others, too numerous to mention: comprise an immense mass of curious and valuable information, diffused through costly works, inaccessible to the generality of readers, and forming collectively a moderate library. The transactions of the various Missionary Societies, also, include a very considerable portion of novel information of a strictly geographical and scientific kind, frequently presenting to us savage and uncivilised man under a new and interesting aspect.

With a view to compress this fund of entertaining matter within narrower limits, different collections have been made of the more popular works, on a reduced scale. The series of voyages and travels published in 1300 by Dr. Mavor, extended to no fewer than twenty-eight volumes; and were the collection brought down to the present date, more than twice as many on the same plan would be insufficient to include the works of reputation which have since appeared. Pinkerton's collection forms seventeen volumes in quarto. But, besides the objection to such collections, which arises from their bulk and costliness, they are necessarily liable to that of incompleteness. Some of the best works are the exclusive copy-right of individuals. Others, which may be of too scientific a character to be generally interesting, or which may be excluded as of inferior merit, contain details of the most important kind. And there is this further objection to collections, that, in giving the journals of more travellers than one over the same territory, repetition is inevitable; and sometimes conflicting statements occur, which require to be investigated, in order to determine which is the more correct, or how far they may be reconciled.

To obviate these difficulties, and, at the same time, realise the object of compressing and arranging this various mass of information in a popular form, it is proposed to publish a digested account of each separate country, comprising its geographical features, its manners, customs, polity, &c., as they may be gathered from the collective works of the best English and Foreign travellers. The labour employed in such analysis will obviously be immense, and the cost of the materials considerable; but the Proprietors have resolved to spare neither pains nor expense to render the work as comprehensive and complete as possible,—so that it may form, in fact, a depository for the collective stores of our modern explorators and topographers; and present, if the expression may be allowed, a series of *cosmoramaic* views of the actual state of the various countries. The publication is obviously designed to be of a popular and useful, rather than of a scientific character; and with this view, authentic anecdotes, serving to illustrate national character, and other amusing details, will be freely admitted. At the same time, the most studious attention will be paid to topographical accuracy; and it will be an object carefully kept in view, to rectify the mistakes which are to be found in the most popular geographical works. Maps will be given on a small scale, but modelled on the best authorities, so as to include the latest discoveries. Brief historical notices will also be prefixed to the description of every country, including its ancient geography, its supposed aborigines, and the principal revolutions of which it has been the theatre. And, with respect to the uncivilised portions of the habitable continent, the sketch will exhibit the progress of discovery. So far as possible, its natural history, botany, geological features, vol-

canic phenomena, and other natural curiosities, will be fully described; together with the costume, physiognomy, and domestic habits of the natives; their traditions, religion, and literature; their public buildings, arts, and ancient monuments: in fact, all the multifarious information for which we are indebted to the indefatigable researches of modern Travellers.

It might, perhaps, give attraction to the work, to throw the whole into the form of fictitious narrative and imaginary travels; and the seductive model of the Travels of Anacharsis has led many modern writers to attempt this plan. But it has been judged, in the present instance, far more expedient, as well as more consistent with the design of the work, to adhere to literal fact and real authorities, and not to aim at imparting a fictitious charm to descriptions and observations intrinsically interesting alike to the physiologist, the politician, and the general reader.

CONDITIONS.

I. The Work will appear in Monthly Parts, price Two Shillings and Sixpence each. It will be printed on the finest Paper, and the Type will be the same as is used in this Prospectus. Two Parts to form a Volume.

II. Each Country will occupy a Part or Parts, according to the interest of the subject, so as to form a distinct Work.

III. Every Number will be illustrated with a Map of the Country, compiled from the best and latest Authorities, or some other elegant embellishment;* and occasionally, when the subject requires it, additional Plates will be given, without charge.

IV. The Countries will not be published in strict geographical order; but directions will be given, together with general Titles, at the conclusion of the Work.

* Hitherto two have been given, and the Publisher is happy to say, from the encouragement he has met with, he is enabled to promise that, in general, each Part will continue to have two Plates.

The following have been selected from numerous notices of the MODERN TRAVELLER, all of which have recommended the plan and execution of the Work:

[FROM THE NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR
FEBRUARY 1826.]

“Of this valuable little work (still in course of publication) ten volumes have been produced; the last being an account of Russia* — which at the present moment comes rather opportunely. Judging from the portion of the series which we have read, namely, the volume just mentioned, and the description of Palestine, we are induced to recommend the work as a very agreeable compendium of all that has been brought to light by the enterprise of modern travellers for the last five-and-twenty years. This, it must be confessed, is a most desirable thing; and the sphere of its usefulness is greatly enlarged by the very cheap rate at which the purchaser is enabled to acquire so much knowledge. Of all reading, there is none so interesting as Voyages and Travels. The imagination is stirred, and curiosity is stimulated, as by the marvels of a fanciful tale, while at the same time the mind is enriched by truth and by solid acquisitions, including a portion, more or less, of many species of knowledge; as for instance, of geography, geology, astronomy, history, botany, politics, morals, and of the character of man, as modified by difference of climate and government. Nothing, indeed, can be more fascinating than to become acquainted at one’s ease, and by the comforts of one’s own fire-side, with the strange scenery, and stranger inhabitants, manners, and customs of distant countries, over which the traveller, whose adventures you are reading, seems to wander with all the dignity, and not a few of the sufferings and vicissitudes, of the hero of a romance.

* On the 1st of March, Spain and Portugal were completed, forming two volumes.

How many wild and remote lands have been laid open, as it were, to the inspection of the curious, by the researches of such men as Clarke, Dodwell, Morier, Elphinstone, Belzoni, Buckingham, Lord Valentia, Henniker, Burckhardt, Lewis, and Clarke, Luccock, Mawe, Humboldt, and many others! yet their information being spread over books too costly and too diffuse, is beyond the reach of either the time or the money of the general reader. In the present work, however, the really valuable matter in the intelligence of these travellers has been collected, compared, and condensed by the Editor, and is laid before the Reader in a newly-written narrative, distinguished by great labour of investigation, and by a singularly clear and entertaining manner. It reminds us of the summing up of a skilful judge, when the various evidence in a case is simplified and luminously detailed in his own words, except in an occasional instance or two, where the identical expressions of a witness have been worthy to be preserved on account of their force and character, which might be injured by translation. The printing of the work deserves praise; and that nothing may be wanting, maps, and plates of views and costume (on a small scale of course), are given."

[FROM THE LITERARY GAZETTE, OCT. 16, 1824.]

"The Modern Traveller was mentioned in our Gazette of May 1st, as a truly valuable publication, neat in its form, useful in its plan, judicious in its execution, and cheap in its cost. Four monthly parts have since been added to the three upon which we ventured to offer that opinion, and they evince that encouragement is not thrown away upon the editor and publisher, for the merit of the work is increased and not diminished. The maps, on a reduced scale, continue to be worthy of the letter-press, and the

plates appropriate and well engraved. In short, there is no traveller of any authority who has not been laid under contribution to enhance the worth of this excellent work."

[FROM THE BRITISH REVIEW.]

"The press at this moment is pouring forth an abundance of volumes on South America, and the danger seems to be, that of perplexity as to those which are genuine and really useful. And on this ground we cannot but especially recommend the small but truly valuable work which stands last in our list. The plan of the *Modern Traveller* is good, but it is particularly useful in this instance. We have, in two small volumes — at the price of half-a-sovereign — the leading facts of the volumes of Southey, Henderson, Luccock, Maria Graham, Prince Maximilian, Mawe, Lindley, Koster, Von Spix and Von Martius, Beau-nelle, and Beauchamp; on Brazil: — and of Wilcocks, Brackenridge, Gillespie, Rodney, and Graham; on Buenos Ayres. And the whole is digested and condensed in a style which is admirably adapted to the task. The writer evidently takes a deep interest in the subjects on which his pen is employed, and therefore naturally excites a corresponding feeling in the mind of the reader."

[FROM THE UNIVERSAL REVIEW.]

"This is a very ingenious and useful work, apparently designed, by its size and simplicity, for the young, but from its extent of information, and accuracy of statement, perfectly fitted to be of value to the intelligent of every time of life. This is the age of travel, and much of the most popular and interesting reading of the country is now furnished by travellers. But as no individual, whatever his spirit of adventure

may be, can pervade every region, nor, whatever may be his perspicacity, can see correctly all that he sees, it is palpable that error and inadequacy of knowledge must be the frequent result of adhering to the exclusive statements of even the most accomplished wanderers over this parti-coloured world.

“ The present publication undertakes to obviate this formidable inconvenience. With a large command of materials, for it evidently draws from all authentic sources, and with no observable partiality for distinguished names, it compares and combines the solid knowledge of the whole, corrects the obliquities of one by the directness of another, and, as the result, tells us all that is actually known of the country in question.”

[FROM THE EXAMINER.]

“ To bring within a moderate compass, in regard to size and price, the valuable information spread through the many bulky and swelled-out volumes in which modern travellers have generally deposited their somewhat diffuse details, is a work of such obvious utility for all classes, and of such particular importance to those whose time and money are inadequate to the consulting of the original sources, that a compilation on this plan could not possibly fail of success, however indifferently done. Indeed, when we saw the announcement of the *Modern Traveller*, we felt some apprehension lest security of a profitable result might tempt the conductors to shur the execution, and that thus the demand might be in a great measure supplied by an incorrect and mischievous publication. We have, however, recently seen the volumes already published, and are gratified to find that there is no foundation for our fears. As far as we are competent judges, the *Modern Traveller* is compiled with in-

dustry and judgement,—giving ample details where abridgement would seriously diminish the interest of the narrative (as in the most delightful parts of the conquest of Mexico by Cortes), and taking a rapid view of the least instructive periods of history and the dryer details of description. The work is now in course of publication, a half-crown number appearing every month, and a volume being given to each country: and whether we regard the plan, the judicious compilation, the extremely neat printing, or the useful maps and illustrative prints of costume, &c., it may be emphatically called a ‘nice little book.’”

[FROM THE COURIER NEWSPAPER, APRIL 19, 1825.]

“ There is a work now publishing, in monthly parts, entitled the *Modern Traveller*, whose merits, we think, decidedly entitle it to patronage. It is not a mere reprint of former voyages and travels, but combines the character of an original account with the value of an authentic one, being drawn up from the latest and best sources of intelligence. To these sources references are constantly made, so that the reader knows upon what authority particular facts are related. Thirteen parts of this work are already published, the last three of which contain a description of Mexico, particularly interesting at the present moment. Some of the former parts contain similar descriptions of Brazil, and other portions of South America.”

[FROM THE ORIENTAL HERALD.]

“ We doubt not that these elegant little volumes will become exceedingly popular, and meet with that favourable reception which is justly due, not only to the plan and style of the work itself, but also to the peculiar neatness of its typographical execution.”

[FROM THE ASIATIC JOURNAL.]

“ We feel ourselves justified in recommending this work to our readers, as promising to be the most judicious and interesting publication of the kind that has ever fallen under our notice.”

[FROM THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE.]

“ The information is evidently gleaned from the most recent authorities, and from very expensive works. We hope the publisher will receive the encouragement which so useful a publication merits.”

[FROM THE NEW EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.]

“ We have seldom met with a publication which combines so many recommendatory qualities. The paper, the print, and the embellishments, are given in a style of corresponding excellence; and yet these are among the least important of its useful properties. The materials are judiciously selected, and skilfully arranged; the itinerary commences at one extremity of a country, and is continued to the other, till it exhibits a complete description of the whole territory. Thus the reader is presented with the observations and impressions of the travellers at each particular place, generally in their own words, with the most striking incidents by which their route was diversified. But its crowning virtue to many will be its extraordinary cheapness! The two parts now before us comprise the whole of Palestine, or the Holy Land; a country, every acre of which is connected with associations interesting to the antiquary, the biblical critic, and the Christian reader. They form a volume of nearly 400 pages, with a Map of the country, a ground-plan of the city of Jerusalem, an engraved view of the city, and another of Bethlehem, at the moderate cost of Five Shillings.”



THE
MODERN TRAVELLER.

PARTS I. and II., embellished with a Map and Three Plates, contain PALESTINE; or, the HOLY LAND; and may be had either in Parts, or in One Volume, price 5s. 6d. boards; or 6s. very neatly half-bound and lettered.

PARTS III. to VI. contain SYRIA and ASIA MINOR, with Two Maps and Six Plates, making Two Volumes, price as above.

PARTS VII. to X. contain BRAZIL and BUENOS AYRES, with a Map and Seven Plates, making Two Volumes, price as above.

PARTS XI. to XIV. contain MEXICO and GUATIMALA, making Two Volumes, price as above.

PARTS XV. and XVI. contain COLOMBIA, price as above.

PARTS XVII. and XVIII. contain ARABIA, price as above.

PARTS XIX. and XX. contain RUSSIA, price as above.

PARTS XXI. to XXIV. contain SPAIN and PORTUGAL, 2 Vols. price as above.

GREECE, BIRMAN EMPIRE, BRITISH INDIA, EGYPT, PERU, &c. will follow in succession.

The Work may be had very neatly bound, Calf Gilt extra, at 7s. per Volume.

1826.

J. MOYES, LONDON.

