

LECTURES

UPON

THE HISTORY

OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR  
JESUS CHRIST.

BY THE

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P R E F A C E.

IN undertaking the present history, the author felt more anxiety, and in committing it to the press he still feels more hesitation, than on any former occasion. The narrative of the life of our divine Lord and Master forms the sum and substance of the Gospels. To comment upon this, in a manner at all equal to its acquirements, is far beyond the author's powers; to comment upon it plainly, and scripturally, and usefully, is all at which he aims; but for this, much labour, and prayer, and time are needed.

If every incident in such a life is to be noticed—and where is the Christian who would willingly part with a single line in the portraiture of his divine Master?—years must pass away before its conclusion. In ordinary times, and the present are not ordinary times, many are the vicissitudes which would occur during the period that such a history, if we are permitted to conclude it, needs must occupy. Many a youthful reader, now entering upon life, perhaps too full of his approaching prospects to give much heed at present to instructions such as these, will, ere they close, be sobered by the stern realities of life, and softened by the influences of God's good Spirit, to an attention to "the things belonging to his peace." While many an aged Christian, who now delights in the narration of all that "the Beloved" of his soul said, and did, and suffered while on earth, will, per-

haps, before this simple illustration of it is concluded, have ceased from human teachers and their imperfect ministrations; will have exchanged the written for the living Word; will be dwelling "in the light which no man can approach unto," and hearing these passages of the mortal life of his Redeemer, perhaps from the lips of those who witnessed them, but certainly in the immediate presence of him, "whom not having seen, ye love."

To the sincere Christian, reflections such as these will be productive of anxiety; it is enough that no holier subject can occupy him here below; no higher subject even in eternity, than to dwell upon the precious words, the mighty deeds, the almighty love of the infinite, the adorable Redeemer, the co-equal, co-eternal Son of the living God.

May the prayers of the reader so accompany the efforts of the author, and the grace of God so "prevent and follow" both, that he may not disgrace the matchless theme, but be enabled to speak of the divine Saviour as one who, although he has never learnt where the favoured son of Zebedee delighted to lay his head, has not been denied "the crumbs which fall from the Master's table."

Upper Chelsea,  
January, 1834.

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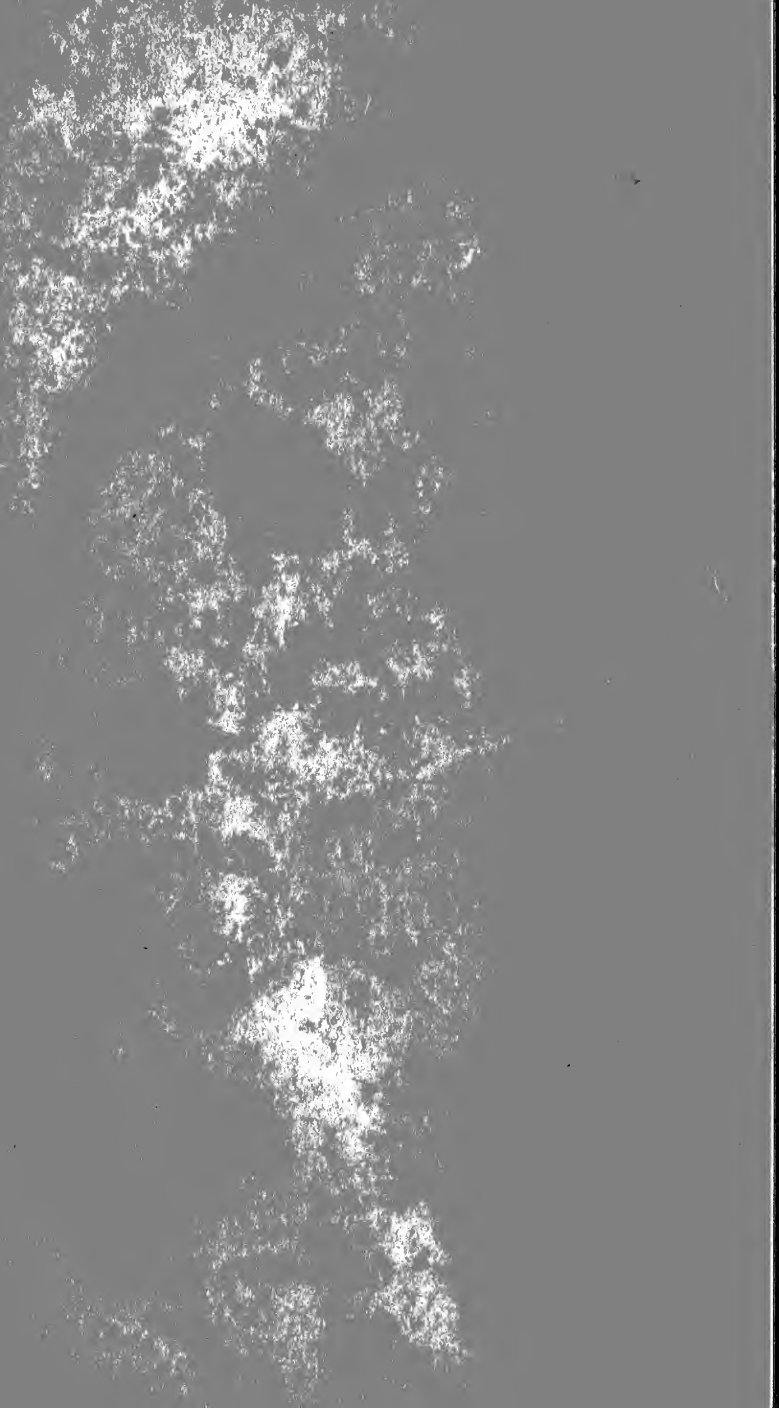
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**THE HISTORY**  
**OF**  
**OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR**  
**JESUS CHRIST.**

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**SECTION I.**

**FROM HIS BIRTH TO THE FIRST PASSOVER AFTER THE  
COMMENCEMENT OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.**



# LECTURES.

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## LECTURE I.

ST. MATTHEW i. part of the 18th verse.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise.”

IN opening to you the subject of the Lectures for the ensuing season, as has been usual with me upon this day, I confess I never felt so much oppressed by the difficulty of the undertaking as at the present moment. My plan has heretofore been to bring before you for “reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” the lives of some of the eminent servants of the Most High, as recorded in holy Scripture, and to point out, according to the ability which God has given me, the striking features of their history, either for your imitation or avoidance. If we have felt, and I confess that I have often deeply felt, that there was a degree of presumption in one so ignorant and so imperfect taking upon him to comment with all freedom upon the language, and actions, and tenor of life of these most holy men of old, how must this feeling be increased, when we approach, for a similar purpose, not the servants, but the Master—

not those who, with their highest degrees of holiness, were still but the poor, sinful followers of the great Jehovah, but the co-equal and co-eternal Son!

Often have I desired to minister to you upon this high and holy theme, and as often have shrunk from it dismayed at the arduous task, and fearful of laying an unhallowed hand upon this greatest mystery of godliness, the true Ark of the Covenant. That I now address myself to it with the greatest diffidence and distrust of my own powers to do justice to it, it is unnecessary for me to add; and but for one important object, I would not hazard the imputation of egotism, by alluding thus to my personal feelings; but that object constrains me: I need not name it to you who are united to your ministers "in one hope of your calling,"\* who love them as the helpers of your joy and the pastors of your souls, for the "spirit of prayer and supplication"† will have already suggested it to you; and I shall not name it to others; for to those who know not the value and the blessedness of a throne of grace for themselves, how can we say, "Brethren, pray for us."‡

Hoping, then, to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,"§ and to be strengthened and supported by the prayers of God's people, while engaged in the highest subject which can occupy the heart and tongue of man, I shall, without further remark, commence upon the undertaking.

No history of the Lord Jesus Christ would be complete without some reference, however brief, to the cause of his advent from the bosom of the Father, to live, and travail, and agonize, and die, in a world of sin;

\* Ephes. iv. 4. † Zechariah xii. 10. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 25. § Coloss. i. 9.

or without some mention of the manner in which that advent was effected.

The cause is revealed to us in the unerring word of God, when it declares, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" and is plainly recognised by our church, when she says that God's "blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life;"\* and still further that God has given him "to be unto us a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life;"† These were the motives of his advent, to "finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."‡

The manner of our Lord's advent was equally remarkable, and, until God's own word had revealed the mystery, equally incomprehensible.

"A virgin was to conceive and bear a son;"§ a new thing the Lord was to create upon the earth, "a woman was to compass a man,"|| that so a body was to be prepared for the incarnation of the eternal Son of God without spot of pollution, or taint of sin, in which he should do and suffer the will of his God. Our church, in her admirable Litany, has with peculiar propriety and precision called this the "mystery of Christ's holy incarnation;" and well would it be if her members were guided by the same spirit of deep humility which influenced her when she thus expressed herself. We should not then have been called to combat the fearful heresy of Christ's sinful humanity, or have heard language

\* Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

† Second Sunday after Easter. ‡ Daniel ix. 24. § Isaiah vii. 14.

|| Jeremiah xxxi. 22.

applied to the immaculate Jesus, which cannot but lead us to tremble for the spiritual welfare of those who use it. It is enough for the humble-minded Christian to be assured that the incarnation is a mystery, and a holy mystery; that the miraculous conception of the Virgin was, as the angel of God had pronounced it, a "holy thing;"\* that he who was born of her was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," partaking of all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and of none other. So much God has been pleased to reveal even of this high mystery, and therefore this is the believer's portion; over all beyond, the same God has thrown an impenetrable veil, and the true child of God will sit down in faith and patience before that veil, waiting contentedly for the coming day when it shall be drawn aside by God's own hand, and the inscrutable secrets as well as the unutterable glories which lie within it, shall be made the subject of the clearest vision.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." Joseph, his reputed father, having been warned by the angel of the Lord that Mary, his espoused wife, had been selected from among all the daughters of men to be the mother of the Messiah, and that that holy thing which should be born of her should be called the Son of God, no longer feared to take unto him Mary his wife. While they were dwelling together in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, in holy expectation of that great event, which was the "desire of all nations,"† a decree was passed by the Roman emperor, that all persons throughout the empire, then embracing the larger portion of the known world, should be enrolled. In consequence of this de-

\* Luke i. 35.

† Haggai ii. 7.



crec, Joseph and Mary, as the lineal descendants of David, left Nazareth, and journeyed to Bethlehem, his native city, a small town distant about sixty miles from the place in which they were then resident: thus fulfilling, under the most improbable circumstances—circumstances over which they themselves had no control—the important prophecy of Micah, that out of Bethlehem should “He come forth who was to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”\*

Remarkable evidence have we here of the manner in which the prophecies of the Most High are brought to pass! The Roman Emperor, seated upon his throne, knowing nothing and caring nothing for the God who placed him there, issues a decree, the result of his own vainglory, to enrol the names, and occupations, and properties, of the widely-spreading myriads who acknowledged his authority; and all for what purpose, and for what high and mighty end? That a poor carpenter should be obliged to undertake a journey of sixty miles, at a time when nothing but compulsion would have induced him, that so the Church of God throughout all ages might have unquestioned and unquestionable evidence to the identity of the child now to be born, with him “of whom Moses and the Prophets did write.”† Blessed be God, brethren, that we have this “more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.”‡

Having arrived at Bethlehem, they found, as might naturally have been expected, that this little town was

\* Micah v. 2.

† John i. 45.

‡ 2 Peter i. 12.

crowded to excess by the influx which the decree of the emperor had occasioned. "And so it was," says the inspired historian, "that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." We sometimes hear the Christian, and the true Christian speak in tones which appear not wholly destitute of self-gratulation, of having renounced the world, forgone its vanities and its splendours, and given up, it may be, some one of the thousand comforts and luxuries with which their cup is filled, for the honour and glory of God, and for the sake of the Redeemer. Some of you, perhaps, can recollect the manifestation of no very dissimilar state of feeling, even by an apostle, by one whose heart beat high with love to his Redeemer, and who rejoiced in the prospect of attending his career of poverty and suffering, and yet who could not so completely silence the feelings of the natural man, as to repress the vainglorious exclamation, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee."† Turn, then, for a moment from such examples, from the very highest example which man can offer, to this, of "the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords;"‡ see him voluntarily descending from the most exalted throne in heaven to the lowest, poorest, humblest station upon earth. Dwell for a moment in imagination upon this amazing scene, upon this wondrous effort of redeeming love, and then say, are you not ashamed of the manner in which you over-rate your sacrifices and your self-denials of the cause, or for the sake of Christ! Behold the Ancient

\* Luke ii. 6, 7.

† Luke xviii. 28.

‡ 1 Timothy vi. 15.

of Days, whose goings forth have been from everlasting, condescending, for you, and for your salvation, to become a child of a span long; look into the manger at Bethlehem, and see him lying there a little helpless babe; you need not carry on your thoughts to the thirty years of misery which awaited him, while thus "coming unto his own, and his own receiving him not;"\* bearing their rejection, suffering their contempt, perishing from their cruelty. No! this opening scene is sufficient to convict us all. We have need to blush and be ashamed for the poor, miserable pittance of self-denial, devotedness, and love, which we are returning for this costly sacrifice. At such a sight, the language of our hearts should be, "Lord, nothing which I possess is too good for thee; nothing which thou hast ever given shall be withheld from thee, if thou demandest it; myself, my soul, my body, all, all are at thy disposal, my best but a blemished sacrifice, and myself an unprofitable servant."

But I would yet once more call you to look for a passing moment into the stable at Bethlehem, and draw from thence another lesson. I do not refer to this humble and obscure abode, that the view may exalt your ideas of the infinite humility and self-abasement of the Incarnate Son; for to have been born the noblest potentate that earth has ever seen would have exhibited as large a share of humility, and have been in itself as deep a degradation for one so unspeakably glorious, as to pass for the son of that poor carpenter, and to lie in that obscure and humble stable; but I call upon you to view him there, that you may rightly estimate the value of

\* John i. 11.

all earthly distinctions in the sight of God. They are, doubtless, for wise and admirable purposes not only permitted, but appointed by himself; but when we see him thus in the person of the only-begotten Son selecting from them all, the poor man's lot, in which to visit us, we must surely feel, that there is naturally in our minds, and in our hearts, an over-weening attachment to the great things of the world, its glittering follies, and its splendid lies, which ought to be uprooted and subdued before we can, as we are bound, resemble him whose name we bear. Surely the first faint and feeble cry which issued from the manger of Bethlehem said, in language which cannot be misunderstood, "My kingdom is not of this world."\* "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."† Surely we cannot be, in heart and in life, the followers of this self-denying Saviour, unless we are content with the portion of this world's good which he sees fit to bestow upon us, however small; unless we are willing to lay down, without repining, our worldly blessings, however dear, and to acknowledge, heartily and sincerely to acknowledge, that we had rather be "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom,"‡ than rank among the wealthiest, or take our place among the noblest of the world.

We pass on to the first incident recorded by the inspired writers, after the birth of our divine Saviour. "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the

\* John xviii. 36.

† 1 John ii. 15.

‡ James ii. 5.

glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”\*

How inscrutable are the ways of God! Of all classes of men, thus to select those who were least favoured by outward circumstances; of all orders of intellect, thus to choose those least enlarged by education or culture, to whom first to communicate the wonderful intelligence of the salvation of a world! O, what honour was that day poured upon the humble and the lowly among the sons of men, who gain their daily bread by daily labour, when crowned kings and mitred priests were passed over, and the poor shepherd at his midnight watch was selected to be the first depositary of the glorious intelligence.

My poorer brethren, here is much in this little incident for your encouragement and comfort. You are, perhaps, sometimes tempted to believe that, in placing you in the station in which your lot has been cast, your heavenly Father, so bountiful to others, has dealt unkindly and unjustly by you. There are, undoubtedly, privations to which you are peculiarly exposed, and from which your wealthier brethren are exempt. It is vain for me to tell you, although it is unquestionably true, that these are far fewer and less important than you imagine; for we are aware that it is an inseparable principle of our fallen nature to multiply our own woes, and to magnify our neighbour's happiness. I will not, therefore, occupy

\* Luke, ii. 8-11.

your time in the fruitless endeavour: but of this, as a minister of God, and upon the authority of God, I may assure you, that "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him;"\* that as you to whom I am now speaking—the laborious poor—were the first to whom the advent of the Saviour was revealed, the first to whom the gospel was proclaimed, and that by the lips of the angel messengers of God, so in all ages have you been the first to receive and to obey, and to delight in, these good tidings; while the very privations and restrictions of your lot are instrumentally among the motives which induce you to lend a willing ear and an open heart to their reception. Many efforts are making at the present time, unhappily, to rob you of this marked and blessed superiority. The sabbath-breaker, with a cruelty which few can equal, is striving, by every means in his power to tempt you to the desecration of this day of heavenly rest; the politician to engage your thoughts and attention upon subjects which cannot profit you, and which, perhaps, have never really profited, as an immortal being, a single individual who engaged in them; the infidel, to seduce you to the perusal of blasphemous and irreligious publications, which, injurious as they are to all, add a refinement to their injury when they address themselves to you, destroying not only your hope of joy hereafter, but the only possession of joy which has been vouchsafed to you here. Before you listen, even for a moment, to those who would thus deprive you of the most invaluable prerogative which God has, as a compensation, affixed

\* James ii. 5.

to the poor man's lot, ask yourselves, "If this be taken from me, what have I left?" Others may, amid the transient pleasures, and joys, and wealth of this world, revel for a time in forgetfulness of all that is to follow, but you have not even these "miserable comforters."\* In taking from you your belief in God, your trust in Christ, your hope of glory, your sabbath peacefulness and holy joy, they are robbing you of that which alone can make the hovel of the pauper happier than the palaces of princes; and if they succeed, they will inevitably leave you "of all men most miserable."†

But why should I confine the application of this instructive incident to the poor? The language of the angel to the shepherds was, not only "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy," but, "which shall be to all people." Yes, brethren, "to all people:" for all was the Saviour born, for all did the Saviour die, to all is the Saviour preached, and to all and to each, without exception and without reserve, is the Saviour most freely offered.

We would, therefore, say to every individual of every class and rank in society—from the king upon the throne to the prisoner in the dungeon—Here are, if you will receive them, "tidings of great joy" to you, the way to the Father freely opened, reconciliation and pardon fully offered. For when that angel choir united in the heavenly anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men,"‡ then was the joyous hour that, in the person of the babe in Bethlehem, a Deliverer was found by God himself, and the "everlasting gates" were lifted up, and a passage was opened

\* Job. xvi. 2.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 19.

‡ Luke ii. 14.

for all kindred, and nations, and people, and tongues, into the eternal kingdom and joy of our Lord.

Turn we now from the announcement of this great mystery by the angel, to its effect upon the shepherds. No sooner had the last of that angelic company winged his flight back to those regions of bliss from which he came, and the last notes of the heavenly anthem died upon the gale, than we find the shepherds saying to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us."\* What a remarkable evidence of faith, and zeal, and love! "Let us now go;" not to-morrow, but to-day, this very hour, this moment, although they had been watching their flocks throughout the livelong night; no feelings of fatigue, no consideration of personal inconvenience, could delay them for a single hour! And observe; not, let us go and see whether this thing *be* come to pass, which the Lord hath made known; but, let us go and see this thing which *is* come to pass. They never for an instant questioned the certainty and the reality of all that had been revealed to them. What an instance of that true faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,"† which believes God so implicitly as to take him instantly at his word, and to think nothing too great, nothing too good, to be true, which he has once plainly declared. Brethren, this is the faith of which we all so greatly stand in need. We are for ever disposed to question, and to doubt, and to reason, where we ought in all child-like simplicity to believe and act. Our feeling should be, God has himself of his unspeak-

\* Luke ii. 15.

† Hebrews xi. 1.



able mercy offered to me, a miserable sinner, pardon and peace; he has told me in the plainest and most unquestionable language, that they who come to this Saviour shall in no wise be cast out. This, then, is all that you require; if you cannot remember, if you do not know another offer of salvation, another promise of acceptance throughout the Bible, you do know and can remember this; and one such promise "which the Lord hath made known," is sufficient for you in life and death, in time and in eternity. You may at once, God's grace enabling you, receive and act upon it; you may at once betake yourself to that Saviour, and with all your numberless transgressions, which you desire deeply to deplore, and truly to forsake, cast your soul unhesitatingly upon him to justify you and to sanctify you here, and according to his most gracious promise, to glorify you in the world to come. This is realizing the shepherds' faith, and must draw down the Shepherd's blessing: you shall, like them, "return glorifying and praising God,"\* for your eyes will have seen, and your heart will have felt, his salvation.

One more consideration, and I have done. While these poor shepherds, who entered into the stable and sought and found the Saviour, received the blessing, many among the Bethlehemites, no doubt, passed and repassed the stable door, but never thought of entering in, or of inquiring after him who lay there. Brethren, see that it be not thus with yourselves during the ensuing season. You who have sufficient time at your command for many an hour of frivolous occupation during the day, remember that these doors will be open—that your

\* Luke ii. 20.

ministers will be at their post—that if God bestows upon us health and grace, the Saviour will be here presented, in all the important circumstances of his mortal history, to the minds and hearts of his people. You need no angel messenger to tell you where to find him; if you pass unheeding by, you will find no angel monitor to charge you with indifference and neglect. And you, my Christian brethren, let me entreat, to unite your prayers to mine, that many poor, and blind, and ignorant wanderers, may be led, during the course of lectures which we have this day commenced, to receive the offers of salvation as freely as they will be freely tendered; to draw near with a true and lively faith to the great Deliverer of their souls, and ultimately to leave this house of God, as the shepherds left the stable, rejoicing in the sight and in the knowledge of him, “whom truly to know is everlasting life;”\* glorifying and praising God, and enabled to say from a broken, a contrite, and believing heart, I have oftentimes before heard of thee. “by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.”†

\* Collect for St. Philip and St. James's Day.

† Job. xlii. 5.

## LECTURE II.

ST. LUKE ii. 21.

“When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”

WE continue the narrative this morning, as recorded by the same evangelist, from whom we derived the account of the shepherds' visit; and we commence with the first act of obedience and of suffering to which the infant Saviour was summoned—the rite of circumcision.

It may, at first sight, appear matter of astonishment, that the pure and sinless Jesus should be subjected to a rite which pre-supposed impurity and sin. It is indeed obvious, that for one at least of the purposes for which all the other children of Abraham received this rite as a symbol of the renewing of a corrupt nature, and the putting away the lusts of the flesh, it was to our Lord wholly unnecessary; for what purpose, then, did he, the spotless Saviour, subject himself to this painful, and, as regarded his own person, if we consider him individually and not federally, unnecessary rite?

The reason, brethren, was doubtless this. The Lord Jesus came to fulfil the whole law of God, that he might work out a perfect righteousness; as he came to suffer the whole penalty for sin, that he might offer “a perfect sacrifice.”

Now the rite of circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Jewish religion, just as baptism is the initiatory rite of the Christian. When, therefore, upon the eighth day of his mortal life, the infant Saviour submitted to this important rite, it was in effect saying, as plainly as actions could proclaim, that he was willing to be made in all things like unto his brethren—that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. And this, it is evident, would be perfectly intelligible to the Jews, however it may need explanation to us; for it was most clearly understood that, as St. Paul expresses it, every man who was circumcised was “a debtor to do the whole law.”\* Circumcision, therefore, was the gate by which the holy Jesus entered the temple of the Mosaic Covenant, and having so entered, he could not leave the house, but as a voluntary bondsman whose ear had been bored to the door-post,† he became bound to its ordinances for ever.

Here then was the commencement of that active obedience, by which the law of God was to be honoured in every part, and the precepts of God fully and entirely obeyed, and an everlasting righteousness brought in as a justifying righteousness for his redeemed people; “that as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one should many be made righteous.”‡

But important, deeply important, as this consideration is to the spiritual life of the Christian, there is yet another deduction to be drawn from the rite of circumcision, to which, in this place it may not be unprofitable to allude. Observe how powerful an argument the

\* Galatians v. 3.

† See Exodus xxi. 6.

‡ Romans v. 19.

circumcision of infants offers for the baptism of infants. Is not the most frequent objection which we hear urged against this valuable sacrament, the fact that the child knows nothing of the truths involved in it, or the obligations enforced by it; and does not the same objection apply with equal force against the rite of circumcision? Can we imagine, then, that the children of the Jew were to be allowed, as they obviously were, that “sign of the righteousness which is by faith,”\* and to take upon themselves the obligations of that covenant to which it was initiatory, and to be partakers of its blessings and its privileges; and can we suppose for a moment that the children of Christian parents were to be robbed of these comforts and advantages? No, we cannot but believe that if, as the word of God assures us, Christ in all things was to “have the pre-eminence”† over Moses, then can there be no blessing, no privilege, no immunity, granted under the old dispensation, which is not retained, with at least its full endowment of Old Testament blessings, under the more gracious dispensation of the New; “else,” as the apostle emphatically declares, “else, were your children unclean, but now are they holy,”‡ that is, else were they debarred from entering into covenant with God, but now are they free to be admitted. Else, as we may fairly add, did the pious Jew live under a happier and more benign dispensation than ourselves—for he was repeatedly assured that the promises were to him and to his seed—while we, if debarred from the privileges of infant baptism, have no such assurance, but must leave our dear children to the uncovenanted mercies of God.

\* Romans iii. 22; iv. 11. † Colossians i. 18. ‡ 1 Corinthians vii. 14.

At the time of his circumcision, our Lord, according to the Jewish custom, received his name, and "was called Jesus! which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb."\*—"Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel to our Lord's reputed father, "for he shall save his people from their sins."† Then was that name bestowed upon the incarnate Son which has now for eighteen centuries been the watch-word of peace, and joy, and strong consolation, to the Church of God. That name of power, of which the Holy Spirit has declared that God had given him a name which is above every name, that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." That name of mercy, of which the evangelist declared, "signs, and wonders, and healings, were done by the name of the holy child Jesus;"‡ at the sound of which the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, and the very dead were raised. That name of love, of which the church of old declared, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."§ All of power, all of mercy, all of love, which the weak, and wounded, and bleeding heart can need, is treasured up for it in that blessed name.

My brethren, have you experimentally found that there is virtue in the name of Jesus? Have you ever suffered from deep depression of spirit, when all around you was dark and lowering, and no single ray of hope from earthly objects came struggling through the gloom,

\* Luke ii. 21.

† Matthew i. 21.

‡ Acts iv. 30.

§ Canticles i. 3.

when you have felt as if all had forsaken you, and “no man cared for your soul;”\* at such an hour have you never experienced the matchless power and efficacy of that name of love? O, there is in those short syllables a sound more soothing than the fanning of a seraph’s wing, more musical than the melody of an angel’s harp. For that name alone is able to sustain the sinking spirit, to bind up the broken heart, and to bring peace and comfort to the despairing soul. Nay, more, that name can bring, what no other name which the lips of man have ever uttered can aspire to bring, pardon and acceptance to the most hardened, most rebellious, most God-forgetting spirit among us all. He was called Jesus, because he came to save his people from the guilt, from the power, from the consequences of their sins.

Has, then, that name no charms for you? Have you heard it often, and repeated it often, and does it convey no pleasurable feelings to your heart? We do not usually hear unmoved the name of one we love; the quickened ear catches the sound amidst a thousand voices; and of a thousand names hears that and that alone; the throbbing heart beats faster and higher when that name is mentioned, for it comes laden with the recollection of past joys, and hopes of future happiness. So is it to the true children of God with the name of Jesus, their Saviour, Redeemer, Friend; it reminds them of all that God has done for their souls; of all the assurances of pardon and peace which that blessed name has sealed to them; of those short and transient moments of close and intimate communion with him who

\* Psalm cxlii. 4.

bears that name, which they have already realized; of those ages, those eternal ages of happiness and joy, which they yet hope to spend in the Redeemer's presence, and amidst the endearments of the Redeemer's love. Blessed, thrice blessed is every soul among you, who can in that holy name recognise one who has saved you from your sins, who is the best-beloved of your soul now, and who, when your heart and your flesh fail you, shall be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.

The next incident in the infant history of our Lord, to which the evangelist calls our attention, is his "presentation in the temple:"—"They brought him to Jerusalem," says St. Luke, "to present him to the Lord."\* This was again an act of obedience to the ceremonial ritual of the Jews. I need scarcely remind you that the custom originated in an express command of God, when he preserved the children of Israel, but slew all the first-born of Egypt. At that most remarkable instance of the Divine interference, God declared, "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast: it is mine."† "And all the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem."‡ In pursuance of this command, the parents of the infant Jesus brought him, when he was forty days old, to the temple, probably to redeem him by offering in his stead the sum of money, five shekels, required by the law, but certainly to "present him to the Lord." The first act, then, which his parents performed for the infant Jesus, was this,—*they presented him to the Lord.* Many are the Christian

\* Luke ii. 22.

† Exodus, xiii. 2.

‡ Exodus, xiii. 13.



parents whom I am now addressing: many who delight, far above all other gifts with which the Lord has blessed them, in the thought of those young heirs of immortality who are so especially commended to their regards, and entrusted to their guardianship. May I not, then, venture to ask all such, have you imitated the example of this holy pair, by presenting your little ones as a free-will offering to the Lord! How beautiful to the Christian mind is the picture of a mother receiving for the first time her babe into her arms, and while pressing it to her bosom, and raising a silent thanksgiving to him who gave it, freely presenting it to the Lord, giving it back again to the Author of all her mercies, and declaring from the very ground of her heart, that, as her first and dearest petition, she asks for it neither health, nor fortune, nor power, nor fame, but a portion in the love of God and a place in his kingdom. I trust there are many among you in all ranks, who have realized these Christian feelings, and have already had reason to believe, by the opening indications of Divine grace visible in the first dawnings of your children's minds, that your offering has been accepted. Some of you, perhaps, there are, who have seen even more than this, who have lived to see the Lord, to whom you presented your offspring, prepare by the more than ordinary outpourings of his Spirit, their young hearts for the enjoyment of himself, and you have mourned over their early grave, where you should, perhaps, rather have exulted over their early blessedness, and have praised God that some of the best and dearest have been removed from the coming evil, and safely housed before the tempest has set in. And are there not a few who in all sincerity and devotedness of heart have presented

your children to the Lord, and yet are called to exercise much faith and patience while awaiting his decision, who see no signs of early grace, no evidences that he has condescended to accept your offering. Christian parents, be of good courage, continue to bear your children upon your heart before the Lord; he will not disdain a mother's offering, he will not despise a mother's prayer. You may never yet have had reason to know that your offering has been accepted; but if you are conscious that it has been sincerely, and faithfully, and heartily made, there is every encouragement which revelation and experience can supply to lead you to believe, that your Father will yet be their Father, and your God their God.

It was while Joseph and Mary were in the temple, presenting their first-born to the Lord, and making the accustomed offering for the mother's purification, that one of those strikingly touching incidents, which so often adorn the gospel history, took place. An aged man of God, who had long been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and whose footsteps even now lingered upon the brink of eternity, entered the temple. He had been living for many years in a humble dependence upon an express revelation from God, "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."\* That long-expected day had now arrived; and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he was led to enter the house of God at the very hour when the great prophecy of Malachi, concerning "the glory" of this "latter house"†—"The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple"‡—was fulfilling. How inexpressi-

\* Luke ii. 26.

† Haggai ii. 9.

‡ Malachi iii. 1.

ble must have been the feelings of this aged saint, when the Holy Ghost revealed to him his incarnate Saviour, "the Lord's Christ,"\*—in the person of the babe of Bethlehem. If, like many among his brethren, he had been expecting a temporal kingdom, and a Messiah from among the great ones of the world, what would have been his disappointment at the sight of this poverty-stricken couple and their helpless infant! Yet, nothing doubting, the old man received the child in his arms, and blessing God for a mercy of which he felt himself undeserving, burst forth into that hymn of praise which has since been, in all ages, the delight and solace of the Church, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."† While at the same instant, Anna, a prophetess, a widow of fourscore and four years, coming in, and hearing Simeon thus declaring by Divine revelation the dignity and glory of the holy child Jesus, united her praises also to the God of their salvation, that the prayers of Israel were answered, and the long-looked-for redemption of Israel was achieved.

How great an honour did the Almighty here put upon these aged saints, that, of all the dwellers in Jerusalem, of all the worshippers in that temple, they, and they alone, should be selected for this first interview with the Lord of the temple. There were many wise, many learned, at that time in Jerusalem, some even of those who often trod the courts of the temple, and who had well read and understood the prophecies of the Messiah; for we shortly afterwards find that they were able with great accuracy to inform Herod where the Christ should

\* Luke ii. 26.

† Luke ii. 29.

be born; and yet no one of these was led to the temple upon that day and hour, to behold the infant Jesus, and participate in the joy of which Simeon and Anna were partakers! And why, brethren, speaking after the fashion of men, why did God select this humble pair for this high honour? Surely it was because they were pre-eminent among those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel;"\* whose prayers, and thoughts, and affections, were continually going forth to meet the coming Saviour, who acted up to the degree of light which God had vouchsafed to them, and prayed fervently, and sought diligently, and waited patiently for more. Therefore were they guided to the temple on that auspicious day, and on that happy hour.

Now let us inquire what is there similar to this, in God's dealings at the present day with ourselves? The generation among whom our lot has been cast is, unquestionably, an intelligent generation, a wise and understanding people. "Many," as the prophet Daniel foretold, "run to and fro, and knowledge is increased;"† men of wisdom, men of learning, men of science abound; but, alas! how often are all their thoughts and meditations engaged upon subjects which, if they do not necessarily exclude God, certainly do not necessarily lead to God; who, if they, according to the false reasonings of a natural religion, profess to pay some respect to the God of nature, are lamentably ignorant of a God of grace, of the triune God of the Christian, of him who has said that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."‡ And what is the consequence? The Holy Spirit of

\* Luke ii. 25.

† Daniel xii. 4.

‡ John v. 23.

God passes by these learned and these scientific men, and delights in bringing to the temple the man whose heart, like Simeon's, overflows with love to God, and whose mind and thoughts are filled with desire after his name; the woman, who, like Anna, departs not from the service of God night or day; persons like these, who in the sight of men have little, perhaps nothing, to recommend them, but who possess that which, in the sight of God, is above all price; who, in the quiet, unobtrusive duties of a lowly Christian walk and conversation are daily waiting upon God; and amidst the toils and business of life, are looking anxiously forward to the day when the Lord Jesus shall appear unto their complete salvation, seeking more of that light which cometh down from above, and of that peace which passeth all understanding. These, and such as these, the Holy Ghost still leads to his temple, at those blessed seasons, and those favourable opportunities, when the necessities of their souls can be the most abundantly supplied. Yes, we scruple not to say, for we believe that the experience of some who hear us will fully bear us out in the assertion, that many are the times when you, whom we have now described, have come to the temple of God with your minds anxiously inquiring after some of the great and saving truths of his word, and you have found your doubts cleared up, your difficulties removed, your fondest expectations more than realized. Or you have come weighed down with the consciousness of sin, or oppressed with sorrow, or tried by temptations, and have found in the temple of the Lord, that a word in season has been prepared for you, so peculiarly adapted to your wants, that had you yourself selected the subject,

you could have chosen none better calculated to bring peace and consolation to your souls. Or, again, the time has been, when you were beginning to inquire respecting heavenly things, and were groping your way painfully and erringly amidst much apprehension and mistake; and your feet have been led by the Spirit of God to the temple of God, and there, before you left those walls, your search has terminated; the hope and "consolation of Israel," even Christ the Lord, has been revealed to you; and, like the holy persons of whom we are speaking, you have seen what many prophets and kings desired to see, and have not seen. And, brethren, even more than this is prepared for you; the same who is engaged in leading you into all truth, will lead you into all peace and all consolation, until he present you blameless before the presence of him "whom not having seen, you love."\*

Finally, if you can experimentally testify to these things, bless God who has so graciously and so bountifully fulfilled to you his promise that "they who seek shall find."† And while you rejoice, as you have reason to do, and in gratitude are bound to do, for what the Lord has done for your soul, keep in mind the closing testimony which Simeon bore to the Saviour whom he loved, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."‡ It is as essential a part of the revelation of Jesus that he should be "set for the fall," as for "the rising of many in Israel;" his Gospel has ever been, and must ever be, a "savour of death unto death," as well as a "savour of life unto life;"§ and he will in all ages of

\* 1 Peter i. 8. † Matthew vii. 7. ‡ Luke ii. 34, 35. § 2 Corin. ii. 16.

the church, be to many “a sign which shall be spoken against.”\* Be not, then, discouraged, if there are those who view not the Lord Jesus Christ as you view him; be not cast down, if there be those who even dare to “speak against”† the Lord of glory. Simeon foretold, even while he held that innocent babe in his arms, and with prophetic eye foresaw the full-grown man walking in his innocency as perfect as that spotless infant, that all would not secure him from the breath of calumny, the tongue of slander, the language of contempt, and mockery, and hate; and while he announced the painful truth, he as plainly divulged the reason for which a God of justice would permit it—“that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.” In this our time of trial, brethren, the tongue of the enemy and the blasphemer must remain unbridled, that “the thoughts of their hearts may be revealed” before men, and may find a passage upward to the throne of God, and be entered in those books of his remembrance, out of which we shall be called to an account for every guilty word which we have spoken. Be not, then, cast down, that the Saviour whom you love is still “a sign which shall be spoken against;” but O, let the recollection of this painful fact render you unceasingly watchful that no part of your own conduct, no tempers, language, actions, words of yours, shall justly give occasion to the enemy to speak against the Saviour whose name you bear, and whose example you profess to follow; lest, as regards your enemies, you are instrumental in increasing their guilt and their condemnation, and, as regards your Redeemer, you compel him to say, “I was wounded in the house of my friends.”‡

\* Luke ii. 34.

† Numbers xii. 8.

‡ Zechariah xiii. 6.

## LECTURE III.

ST. LUKE ii. 51.

“ And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.”

ONE of the many difficulties which present themselves, while endeavouring to give a connected view of the history of our blessed Lord, is to ascertain the order in which the different circumstances related by the different evangelists, took place. There are, it is true, many excellent harmonies of the gospels, but these vary frequently from each other, and are not infallible even when they agree; so that the careful inquirer must be content, at the best, with adopting that arrangement which appears the most probable, although aware that there will still be many points upon which the arguments which have influenced his own mind in the decision he has arrived at, can scarcely be expected to have equal weight with those who hear him.

These observations have arisen from considering at what period the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, mentioned by St. Matthew, but omitted by all the other evangelists, occurred. We are generally in the habit of considering it almost simultaneous with the visit of the shepherds; and in this opinion some of the earlier biblical critics agree; but, upon the whole, there appears more



reason for inserting the incident, as we are now doing, after the return of the parents of our Lord to Bethlehem, upon the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple.

Probably, therefore, our Lord was about a twelve-month old when the following remarkable incident took place. Certain wise men, or Magi, the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which borders upon Judea, came from the east of Jerusalem. They had been directed from their own country by the appearance of a star, in all probability of a meteoric nature, which, it is reasonable to conclude, had been connected in their minds, by some direct revelation from God, with the birth of the Messiah.

As soon as they entered Jerusalem, their first inquiry was, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."\* Whatever might be the manner in which it had pleased God to reveal this astonishing fact to them, one thing therefore is certain, that they implicitly believed the revelation; for they never thought of asking, Is the King of the Jews born? but, Where is he born?

How ought such an inquiry, proceeding from such a quarter, to have put to shame the inhabitants of Jerusalem. That Gentile strangers should be inquiring in the streets of the holy city for him who was born to be her King, while her children possessed so little desire, so little anxiety upon the subject, that not one could answer the important question! After some little time, the zealous search established by the strangers reached the ears of the king, and Herod, even at his advanced

\* Matthew ii. 2.

age, for he was then more than seventy years old, still dreading a rival, took immediate alarm at the birth of this native prince, and assembled the chief priests and scribes, to ascertain from them in what part of his dominions such an event might be expected to take place.

So accurate was the language of Divine prophecy upon this important point, that they had no hesitation in declaring, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it was written by the prophet. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.\*" All knew by the wisdom of their books where the Christ should be born; but none, it appears, had prayed, and thought, and dwelt upon the blessed subject;—none had been waiting, and looking, and longing for the event, as one in which they were deeply and individually interested; and therefore none, like Simeon and Anna, had seen the infant Jesus with their eyes, and embraced him in their arms, and pressed him to their hearts. O, how little is there of comfort, of spiritual life, of soul-encouraging, heart-enlightening views of the Lord Jesus, to be found in a mere book knowledge of him: we may speak of him with the tongues of men, or even angels, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but if we have not love—that love to Christ which seeks him as the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the Saviour of our soul—we are nothing. One poor woman, like Anna, who can come into the temple of God, and there find the Saviour to be all-sufficient for her necessities, and all-precious to

\* Matthew ii. 5, 6.

her soul, is more, infinitely more blessed, than whole colleges of the most learned doctors who, without such feelings, ever propounded the mysteries of science, or the mazes of prophecy, to their wondering disciples. Brethren, while you are careful not to despise even a verbal knowledge of the Scriptures of God, which has its residence only in the mind and in the memory, remember there is something far beyond it; that that same word has said, "With the HEART man believeth unto righteousness;"\* that all knowledge of religion which does not centre and settle there, and through the heart influence the life and conversation, however accurate or however perfect, can neither sanctify nor save—can neither enable us now to delight ourselves in the presence of the Lord, nor hereafter in the fruition of his glory.

The Magi having ascertained in what direction they should search for the new-born King, took their departure from Jerusalem, that they might without delay fulfil the great object of their journey, by paying their adorations to the Messiah. Of all that large and populous city, not a single individual appears to have accompanied them; not one was there in whose breast sufficient anxiety, or even sufficient curiosity, had been aroused to induce him to seek the Star of Bethlehem. Yet was the indifference of all around them no hindrance to these truly "wise men;" Gentiles, though they were, they left the holy city alone, as they had entered it alone; and though none of the nominal people of the Lord went with them, neither the pleasures nor the business of that city could detain them, while their

\* Romans x. 10.

hearts and hopes were set upon him whose presence they so ardently sought;—an instance, surely, of no common faith and no common perseverance. It is easy in religion, as in every other pursuit, to go with the crowd, to seek the Lord Jesus Christ when and where all are seeking him; but to come boldly out from the multitude, to seek him steadfastly, resolutely, and alone, when no other members of the society in which we move, of the family in which we live, are seeking him, when none will accompany us in our search; this is a great and distinguishable test of a spirit of inquiry which cometh down from above, and which God will most fully and abundantly prosper.

Yes, brethren, if there be among you but one poor, blind, ignorant sinner, who is anxious to arrive at the knowledge, the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, let him take this incident to himself for his encouragement and comfort. Though all your neighbours, all your friends, all your family, be in ignorance of the Saviour, and unable to help you, or in enmity to him, and unwilling to do so, rather than you should miss your way to the Lord of your salvation, or “your feet should stumble upon the dark mountains,”\* God himself will lead you by a way which you know not; sometimes simply by the secondary means which abound within the reach of all, sometimes by the more especial aids and influences of his Divine Spirit; but whatever be the method, and this will vary according to your need, and according to his unerring wisdom, lead you, yea constantly, surely, and at last triumphantly, he most unquestionably will, even though it were necessary to

\* Jeremiah xiii. 16.

create a new star for your guidance, until he has planted your trembling feet in safety upon the Rock of your salvation.

Thus did Jehovah now act towards the wise men of whom we are speaking. No sooner had they left Jerusalem, than the star, which had disappeared while they were among the habitations and haunts of men, the supernatural aid ceasing while natural aid was sufficient, now re-appeared, and “went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was;” and “when they saw the star”—it is the beautiful addition of the evangelist—“they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”\* How readily can we enter into these feelings, how fully understand the heartfelt pleasure, which that safest, surest guide, dropt as it were from the hand of God himself, to be a light to their feet and a lantern to their paths, must have awakened. Something not wholly dissimilar to this is the feeling with which the inquiring soul, after wandering with much of darkness, much of separation from God, during the week, hails with delight the day which God has sanctified and blessed. On that hallowed day, while waiting upon God in his temple, and hearing of the pardoning love and abounding mercy of the Saviour—of all that can be told, alas! how little, of him who is “the chiefest among ten thousand,”† that inquiring soul is, as it were, gazing upon the star which leads to Jesus. You, therefore, who know experimentally the happiness and the blessedness of the feeblest means which bring you nearer to your Lord, will readily conceive the meaning of the declaration, “When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”

\* Matthew ii. 9, 10.

† Canticles v. 10.

And now the Magi had arrived at the long-looked-for dwelling, surprised, we may well imagine, that so bright a star should set in so lowly a hemisphere: and yet, strong in faith, no sooner did they find the young child, than they "fell down and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."\*

All uninstructed as these Gentile strangers were, how well had they learnt the character of him whom now, for the first time, they approached. They began by offering, as a freewill offering, themselves, and then ventured to lay at his feet their treasures, which, costly as they were, were in comparison of themselves but little worth. Many have been the fanciful interpretations which have been affixed to these wise men's gifts; the myrrh—because he to whom they offered them was a man, and myrrh was used in embalming, and therefore well marked mortality. The gold—to testify that he was a king; gold being a regal offering. The frankincense—to demonstrate that they acknowledged him to be a God; incense having been in all Eastern nations an accompaniment of divine worship. These, perhaps, are the most plausible of the many interpretations which have been offered; but the natural and unexceptional method of accounting for these gifts, is simply that they were the produce of the country from which the wise men came; and as in the East, men never approach a superior without a present, they marked the sense of the Magi with respect to the kingly pretensions of the Messiah, and were not only permitted, but appointed by God, to afford a suitable supply for the necessities of the holy family.

\* Matthew ii. 11.

Are there none who hear me who are half inclined to envy the lot of those who were permitted to enjoy so high an honour, as to bring an acceptable offering to the infant Saviour? none who are inwardly saying at this moment, there is nothing which I possess that I should consider to be too great, too good, too rich to offer to my Lord; but I have nothing which he would not from his soul abhor, for all is polluted, worthless, and insignificant! "my best is nothing worth?"

Brethren, we are permitted, nay encouraged, to say even to the most sinful among you, you have that to offer which far surpasses the most splendid present of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. You have that which the Saviour will certainly condescend to receive, for he has condescended to ask for it, when he said, "My son, give me thy heart;"\* yea, he has condescended to die for it, when he "laid down his life for the sheep." Carry him this offering, bring him this poor, polluted gift, a heart stained with sin, a broken, contrite, and yet a believing heart, and at the moment you make him that worthless present, there will be joy among the angels of God, there will be notes of thanksgivings and praise throughout the mansions of eternity, which all the gold of Arabia could not have produced. O, then, how countless in the sight of God must be the value of one sinner's soul! of one poor broken heart!

While the wise men were passing through Jerusalem, Herod had desired that when they had found the newborn King they should bring him word again, that he might go and worship him also. This it pleased the Almighty to counteract, by directing the Magi not to

\* Proverbs xxiii. 26.

return to Herod; while, at the same time, the omniscient Jehovah, foreseeing what would be the conduct of the king, desired Joseph to take the young child and his mother, and to flee into Egypt. No sooner had the holy family thus providentially removed into a place of safety, than the wrath of Herod manifested itself by the destruction of all the infants "from two years old and under,"\* who were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof.

To dwell upon this dreadful incident would carry us too far away from the more immediate subject of our history; it may be, however, as well to remark, that instead of the fable of fourteen thousand children having been thus destroyed, which appears to have been an early tradition in the Church, it is probable, from the population of Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, that not more than fifty could have been thus inhumanly sacrificed. A number fearfully large, indeed, when we consider the agonized parents and wretched families of these murdered little ones; and still more so, when we think of the awful weight of guilt accumulated upon the soul of the wretched Herod, who shortly after this deed of blood, closed a life of unusual depravity by a death of no common horror.

When this event had taken place, the Almighty recalled the holy family from Egypt, and they "dwelt," says the inspired historian, "in a city named Nazareth,"† "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."‡

After this period, the only incident which has been recorded during the childhood of our Lord, is, that at

\* Matthew ii. 16.

† Matthew ii. 23.

‡ Luke ii. 40.



twelve years of age, when he went up with his parents to Jerusalem at the feast of Passover, he tarried behind, unknown to them, in the holy city, after they had left it, upon their return home. Travelling, as men have always done in those eastern countries, in caravans, where many families are united, the parents of Jesus journeyed during a whole day without discovering their loss; and then, sorrowing and disconsolate, they retrace their weary steps to Jerusalem. There, after three anxious days of solicitude and search, they find the holy child Jesus, "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions,"\* affording so wonderful a display of his divine knowledge, that "all who heard him," even the most learned doctors of the Sanhedrim, "were astonished at his understanding and answers."†

Now for the first time do we hear his mother's voice; she who had kept all the former incidents which shed a ray of glory upon his infancy, and had "pondered them" prayerfully and silently "in her heart,"‡ could not restrain the feeling of pain and anguish which his temporary loss had inflicted upon a mother's heart. What was it to her that he was exciting the astonishment of the assembled Sanhedrim—that he was speaking as never child before had spoken—she would far rather that he had been running at her side in all the harmless glee of happy childhood, and gladdening the eyes of his fond parents, than attracting the applause of the wisest sages in the world. Yet how meekly, how tenderly, does she address herself to her supernatural child, as if she felt, while asserting a parent's authority, she was trenching upon some high, though undefined pre-

\* Luke ii. 46.

† Luke ii. 47.

‡ Luke ii. 19

rogative,—“ Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”\* —words which, although in after days as clear as light itself, were now so dark, so unintelligible, that the evangelist expressly adds, “ They understood not the saying which he spake unto them.”† They knew not yet the wonderful relationship in which the boy of twelve years old stood to the awful Being who inhabiteth eternity; they knew not the manner in which the child before them was filled “ without measure” with his Spirit whose goings forth were from everlasting; that his Father, to whose business he was now called, was the Father of the universe, the Father of time, yea, the Father of eternity, and of heaven itself; and that he, that wonderful and blessed child, could truly say, “ Before Abraham was I am.”‡ But though they might not comprehend his present words, well did they understand and appreciate his after conduct,—“ He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” How peculiarly striking is this subsequent conduct of our Lord, when viewed in connexion with his own declaration, that he, “ must be about his Father’s business;” and what a lesson does it bequeath to us! Surely that Spirit who never indites one line to gratify curiosity, one word to satisfy even what we might imagine a natural inquiry, never would have mentioned this simple fact, were it not to encourage filial obedience under the new dispensation, by the example of our Lord, as it had been before encouraged under the old, by the promise of our God. “ Honour thy father and thy

\* Luke ii. 48, 49.

† Luke ii 50.

‡ John viii. 58.

mother, which is the first commandment with promise." It is painful at the present day, to see in all classes, how often both the command and the example are alike neglected. Go into the cottage of the poor, and there behold the self-willed children, unrestrained even by the appearance of parental authority, beyond the hasty blow, or the harsh, unkind, and unholy word; see them soon outgrowing the momentary effects of such poor substitutes for a high religious principle, looking and acting defiance, where there ought to be only obedience and submission. Go into the palace of the rich and you will find no change, except in the tinselled gloss which courtesy can throw even over opposition the most determined, and insubordination the most complete. We need not scruple to affirm, because every day is more entirely establishing the fact, that the habit of disobedience to all constituted authorities, which is so widely spreading in this country, and which will at no very distant period, unless God of his mercy interfere, not only loosen the bonds of society, but as with an iron hand break them into ten thousand fragments, has been born, and bred, and nurtured within our domestic walls, and at our own firesides. Yes, it is the self-willed, disobedient child, never from earliest infancy subjected upon principle to a steady obedience to the parents' word and command, who becomes in after life the violent opponent to all the constituted authorities of man, and, not unfrequently, the rebellious subject of God. Think not then, my younger brethren, that you are advancing in religious knowledge, or in spiritual attainment, if you are refusing to render honour where honour is due, and where God commands you to pay it, even to your earthly parents; or if you are unkindly and un-

gratefully, I might add unholily, throwing off your subjection to them. As the ungrateful man has well been said to possess but one crime, for all others are but as virtues in him, so the undutiful child possesses but one sin; but that one sin is like the one plague spot of antiquity, which spread, and widened, and festered, and destroyed, until, from the top of the head to the sole of the foot, all was disease, corruption, and decay.

And to you, Christian parents, I would offer an affectionate admonition. If the tide which has now set in against the powers which are ordained of God for the preservation and comfort of society, can be stemmed, I believe, however paradoxical it may appear, that it must be stemmed in the nursery; that it is to be done by the early implantation of the most decided habits of obedience in the hearts of your children, an obedience founded in love, and regulated by filial fear, and consistent with the truest and tenderest affection. It is by teaching them to be subject to you, as God's representatives to them, that the great principle of Christian subjection can alone be implanted, without a return to which, it requires no prophetic eye to see, no prophet's voice to declare, that our days as a sober-minded, obedient, Christian nation, are numbered; that the most valuable institutions which the world has ever seen, will be like the vine of Israel, trampled beneath the feet of the wild boar of the forest; we ourselves, with suicidal hand, having torn up her hedges and levelled her walls, and encouraged the marauder to come in.

The fact of our Lord's subjection to his earthly parents, is the only circumstance which any of the evangelists have recorded from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of the life of Jesus. We have, therefore, eighteen

years of our Lord's mortal sojourn during which not a single incident has been bequeathed to us!

How often in reading sacred history do we long for more minute details of the lives of the holy men which are there presented to us; and, if this be the case with regard to others, how much more ardently do we experience it with respect to him who is now the subject of our meditations. We cannot but feel that every incident of the days of his boyhood, every transaction of his youth, every word and sentence of his matured manhood, would have been a treasure to the Christian, for which he would readily have sacrificed the brightest volumes of Roman oratory, or of Grecian song. But God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; doubtless he has permitted all to be handed down to us which the necessities of the Church required, and we must await another day and another place for more. What time has concealed, eternity perhaps will tell; but eternity itself will not be long enough to disclose all the infinity of a Saviour's perfections, and of a Saviour's love. Still, as it is permitted to the Christian to look forward even now, amidst the trials and troubles of earth, to that "rest which remaineth for the people of God," it cannot surely be wrong to anticipate those delightful moments when, dwelling in the bowers of light, and seated it may be at the feet of the companions of our Lord's earthly pilgrimage, we may perhaps receive from their lips, or even from the lips of that Lord himself, many a passage in his earthly history, full of interest, and instruction, and delight, which no pen has chronicled, but which shall rejoice our hearts, and swell our praises into louder and louder anthems to the glory of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and of the Lamb for ever and ever.

## LECTURE IV.

## ST. MATTHEW iv. 3.

“ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

WE mentioned at the close of the last lecture, that holy Scripture observed a remarkable silence respecting eighteen years of the life of our blessed Lord. From the twelfth to the thirtieth year no single event is recorded, no observation made, except that upon which we have already commented—our Lord’s subjection to his earthly parents.

It has been a tradition from time immemorial in the Church, that during these eighteen years the death of Joseph, the reputed father of our Lord, took place, and that Jesus himself maintained his mother during a portion of this time, by working at the trade of a carpenter. Both these circumstances are rendered extremely probable, from the internal evidence of the gospels; the fact of our Lord himself working at his paternal trade receives great countenance from the appellation applied to him by the unbelievers in his own country, recorded in Mark vi. 3: “ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary ?” While the probability of his father’s death may be gathered from his name not being mentioned or alluded to in this inquiry. Indeed, the certainty of his decease during some period of our Lord’s life, seems to

be established by the fact that Jesus, while on the cross, committed his mother to the beloved apostle; which, had her husband been still living, would surely have been an unnecessary precaution. Mentioning these things merely as interesting probabilities, without attempting to insist upon their certainty, we pass on to the "more sure word of God,"\* where all that is recorded is, to the very letter, unquestionable and true.

The first incident which is there narrated, after what is usually but improperly termed, our Lord's "disputation in the temple," is his baptism; the time of which is thus determined by St. Luke, "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age."† We shall quote the narrative of this wonderful event, as it is recorded by three of the evangelists, each supplying some minute circumstance which the other has omitted.

"It came to pass in those days,‡ when all the people were baptized,§ that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee,|| to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him, but John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus, answering, said, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him; and he was baptized of John in Jordan."\*\*

This was, in all probability, the first time that the holy Baptist had ever seen his Lord and relative, Jesus. For it had pleased the providence of God that John should dwell in the wilderness, while our Lord abode in the resorts of men; that thus, in after times, no collusion might even be suspected between them, and that the testimony of John to the Messiahship of Jesus might,

\* 2 Peter i. 19.

† Luke iii. 23.

‡ Mark i. 9.

§ Luke iii. 21.

|| Mark i. 9.

\*\* Matthew iii. 13.

to his own disciples, be most satisfactory and conclusive. We find John's ignorance of our Lord expressly stated in the first chapter of St. John's gospel, where the Baptist declared, "I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."\*

Most natural was it, therefore, for the Baptist, knowing that he who now offered himself for this holy rite was one "whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose,"† that "he was the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world,"‡—most natural was it for him to feel that Jesus had no need of such an ordinance as baptism, or that if he had, no mortal man was worthy to administer it. Therefore, "John forbade him!"§ Observe, brethren, in what widely different channels nature and grace are for ever running.

The holy Baptist, like the ardent and affectionate Peter, could agree to any thing more readily than to the supernatural humility and condescension of his Lord; this, even the humble Baptist could not understand. How utterly unable are the holiest, humblest of the fallen sons of Adam, fully to appreciate, or even perfectly to conceive the perfections of their Lord! Alas, then, brethren, at what an infinite distance must our imitation of his graces be, when even our imagination and conception of them lag so far behind!

One blessed purpose will be fully answered by the history before us, if by such obvious truths as these, we are led more rightly, though still imperfectly, to know

\* John i. 33.

† John i. 29.

‡ Luke iii. 16. John i. 27.

§ Matthew iii. 14.



the length, and depth, and breadth, and height of the character of Christ, which passeth knowledge; for every increasing ray of light which is thrown upon it, will tend, by God's grace, to humble us the more deeply as sinners, and to exalt the more highly our blessed and adorable Redeemer.

In the instance before us, our Lord at once corrected the misapprehension of the Baptist by the single observation, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."\*

We are, perhaps, while reading the account of our Redeemer's baptism, very little, at first sight, aware of the pain and the degradation by which this fulfilment of righteousness was in the present instance accompanied. It is not as if John's baptism had been a rite acknowledged and honoured by all the members of the Jewish church; very far was this from being the fact; the baptism of John was, although essentially of God, despised and rejected by all those (a very large and influential body) who followed only their own traditions; for we are told expressly by St. Luke, "The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."† To form, therefore, any adequate idea of this instance of the humility of the blessed Jesus, we must behold him coming down to the banks of Jordan, undistinguished from his fellowmen, following the publicans and harlots, who were crowding to the water's edge, confessing their sins, and desiring to be renewed unto repentance. We may easily imagine the scornful and contemptuous bearing of the chief priests and elders who rejected John's bap-

\* Matthew iii. 15.

† Luke vii. 30.

tism, although they attended, from curiosity, upon his preaching; the insulting ribaldry of the open and presumptuous sinner, while the meek and lowly Jesus was approaching the water for the purpose of partaking of this despised ceremony. At once would he be stamped, for this very act, by all the class of persons of whom we have been speaking, as some poor degraded sinner, who, like the rest, had been deceived by the statements of the Baptist, and had come down to swell the crowd of fanatics and enthusiasts. And, brethren, do you think that these things carried with them no pang to the heart of Christ? Do you think that because he was removed, immeasurably removed, from every taint and capability of sin, he was equally far removed from the innocent infirmities of our nature? No, be assured that he knew and felt—how often and how bitterly, during his earthly sojourn, did he know and feel them all. Else what means the language of prophecy, which represents every suffering of Jesus as aggravated by those feelings which aggravate our own. “All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head at me;”\* “shame hath covered my face.”† This is the way in which the Psalmist, speaking in the person of Christ, foretels his sufferings; while many other instances will occur to your own minds, which will demonstrate that the feelings of our Lord were as certainly wounded by the “despitefulness of the proud and the scornful reproof of the wealthy,”‡ as his side in after days was lacerated by the Roman spear. Bear these things in mind, and you will see that the baptism of Jesus was not one of the least bitter of the

\* Psalm xxii. 7.

† Psalm xliv. 15.

‡ Psalm cxxxiii. 4.

ingredients in his most bitter cup. No! at the very moment of thus entering upon his public life, he entered upon its penalties and its pains. He filled that cup on the banks of Jordan, which he never afterwards laid down until he had drained its very dregs: he there placed that cross upon his shoulders, which he bore, and bore contentedly, until he planted it as a tree of life upon the summit of Mount Calvary.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”\*

Deep and grievous had been the humiliation of the only-begotten Son, and great and glorious was the testimony of the eternal Father. These things were so with a remarkable uniformity during every stage of our Redeemer's life. Never did he submit himself to more than ordinary degradation, that he did not receive more abundant honour. Was he, for instance, cradled in a manger, and did not Eastern princes, led by a new-made star, pay even there their adoration to him? Was he, in after days, so troubled in spirit, as to manifest the timidity and weakness of our nature, in the cry, “Father, save me from this hour!”† and was it not at that hour that “a voice from heaven” spake unto him? Did he, in the garden of Gethsemane, show more than common apprehension of his dreadful lot; and was it not in that same garden that angels comforted him? So was it even now; the baptism of Jesus was one of the lowest

\* Matthew iii. 16.

† John xii. 27, 28.

points of his humiliation; and the glory which followed it, perhaps without exception, "the most excellent glory"\* of which he was partaker while on earth. For it was then that his heavenly Father honoured the opening ministry of the only begotten Son, by pouring down upon him, without measure, the anointing of the Holy Ghost; and by the glory of the Shechinah hovering over him, and by the voice from heaven publicly acknowledging him, demonstrated before all Israel, that the promise of God made unto their fathers was fulfilled, and that in the person of the carpenter of Nazareth, "God had visited his people."†

Learn one lesson at least, brethren, before we leave the consideration of this important incident. Are you the followers of the Lord Jesus—are you his baptized and professing people—and are you slaves to the fear of man? Do you shrink from duties, plain, unquestionable duties, because your fellow-men, the great, or the rich, or the noble, look with no favourable eye upon them? Is this "the mind that was in Christ Jesus,"‡ when, that he might "fulfil all righteousness," he mingled with the crowd of common sinners, content to be mistaken and misrepresented, and it might be ranked among them? Away with this false shame and dread of human censure; never will you be enabled to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,"§ until by God's grace you are content to endure obloquy, reproach, and ridicule, while endeavouring to "fulfil all righteousness" which your heart approves; never will you be rendered meet to reign with Christ, until you are well content to suffer with him.

\* 2 Peter i. 17. † Luke vii. 16. ‡ Philippians ii. 5. § Rev. xiv. 4.

It is scarcely necessary to point out to you the well-known demonstration which the baptism of our Lord affords of the Holy Trinity; God the Holy Ghost made manifest "in a bodily shape like a dove;"\* God the Son ascending from the waters of Jordan in that body which had been prepared for him; and God the Father, "whom no man hath seen or can see,"† manifesting himself by the voice from heaven; the three persons but one God of the Christian Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal. Most blessed, glorious, and unquestionable truth! the most important and all-pervading truth of the Bible! Until you receive it, Christianity has not even effected an entrance into your mind. Until you are able, in a clear and scriptural manner, to appreciate the three distinct offices of the three distinct persons in the ever-blessed Trinity, Christianity has done but little for your soul. It then, and then only, has its perfect work within you, when you are enabled to have near access to God the Father, through the mediation of God the Son, and by the grace of God the Holy Ghost. When you acknowledge how the three persons in this glorious Godhead are engaged in the salvation of your soul, God the Father freely bestowing it upon you, God the Son as freely purchasing it for you, and God the Holy Ghost as freely applying it to you—each of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity engaged in all the different parts of your salvation, and yet all the persons engaged in each—then do you comprehend as much of this high mystery as can be learnt on earth: the remainder you shall know hereafter.

And now the incarnate Son, "being full of the Holy

\* Luke iii. 22.

† 1 Timothy vi. 16.

Ghost, returned from Jordan,"\* spending, as it appears, not even a day with the blessed Baptist, but so intent to "be about his Father's business,"† that he retired at once into the wilderness, under the guidance of the Spirit by which he was filled, to prepare himself by prayer, and fasting, and spiritual exercises, for the stupendous work he was commencing. For forty days did our Lord endure a wonderful and supernatural fast,‡ and "in those days he did eat nothing;"§ while during the whole of the period he was tempted of the devil; not, as we most certainly know, by any inward temptation, by any even the remotest solicitation to evil from the inner man; for did he not himself declare, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,"|| and had not the word of God just pronounced that he was "full of the Holy Ghost,"\*\* so full that no single thought or wish of evil could find an entrance into that pure and spotless mind? Therefore do we most certainly know that there was no "lusting of the flesh against the Spirit,"†† no possible injection of any evil feeling or desire. All that the devil could do against such a heart as the heart of Jesus, was to propose external temptations, to show to the outward senses what in any other case might have captivated the mind, and eternally ruined the soul of the tempted; but in the case of our Lord could gain not even a momentary access. Every attempt of Satan to inject a temptation there, must have been (if it be not a derogatory simile) like the attempt to thrust a lighted torch into the exhausted receiver of an air-pump; the moment of its

\* Luke iv. 1.

† Luke ii. 49.

‡ Mark i. 13.

§ Luke iv. 2.

|| John xiv. 30.

\*\* Luke iv. 1.

†† Galatians v. 17.

entrance would necessarily be the moment of its extinction.

When the forty days and forty nights were finished, our Lord "was afterward an hungered;"\* then commenced the series of temptations which two of the evangelists have recorded for the benefit of the church and people of God, and from which we may gather the nature of those which are not recorded.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

It seems extremely probable that Satan was not, at the time of making the proposition before us, aware of the real dignity and divinity of our Lord. We do not know to what extent the power and the sagacity of that evil spirit extend, but we can deduce from Scripture that he is neither omniscient nor omnipresent, although he is able, probably from the incalculable number of his agents, to imitate both these attributes of Deity in such a manner, that man cannot detect the counterfeit.

Satan, then, had certainly either himself, or through some of his attendant spirits, heard the miraculous attestation to the Sonship of the Messiah vouchsafed from heaven at his baptism; and he now approached him for the purpose of ascertaining his identity, and sifting his pretensions, as well as, if possible, to lead him into sin, and thus ruin the scheme of man's redemption. For had the second Adam once sinned, he could not have repaired the ruin of the first, because he could not have offered a perfect obedience and an unblemished sacrifice. Satan begins by grounding the

\* Matthew iv. 2.

temptation entirely upon the declaration of the heavenly voice, "This is my beloved Son;" saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." "And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."\* How remarkable an answer to flow from the lips of Jesus himself, the fountain of all wisdom and all knowledge,—an answer from the written word of God. Had, then, our Lord no reply to the word of the tempter, which could be drawn from the infinite treasury of the eternal mind—no resources within himself, from which to baffle and to overthrow the evil one? Yes, brethren, but then, whence would have been the example and the comfort to be derived by us, when we are called to conflict with this great enemy? Should we not have said, "The Saviour resisted Satan successfully, because he drew from the resources of his own infinite wisdom, but where shall I seek a weapon against such a foe?" How encouraging, then, that we can answer, "From the same armoury in which your Lord sought and found one; from the written word of God!" There is no temptation which can assail you, that may not, God's grace assisting you, be met and vanquished by "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God."† The feeblest Christian among you, with that word in his hand and in his heart, is invincible.

The text which our Lord here quotes is from the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and was addressed by Moses to the Israelites, when reminding them that though God had suffered them to hunger, he had fed

\* Luke iv. 4; Matthew iv. 4.

† Ephesians vi. 17.



them miraculously with manna, to show that he had other methods of sustaining man than by bread alone. Our Lord's intention in quoting it seems to have been, to have put a firm and decisive negative upon the devil's proposition. Satan says, "You are an hungered, here are stones, which, if you are the Son of God, you can transform into bread; demonstrate your right to the title, therefore, by your acquiescence." Our Lord's reply infers, My Father of old sustained six hundred thousand persons for forty years without a single loaf of bread; I have been sustained for forty days without it; I shall still rest as Mediator upon my Father's love, and upon my Father's power. Thus did he, who was shortly about to turn water into wine, refuse at Satan's bidding to turn stones into bread! thus did he, who, in after times, to supply the exigencies of the multitude who had fasted three days, create bread for five thousand people, refuse, after fasting forty days himself, to create a single loaf to satisfy the tempter, or to supply his own pressing necessity. How blessed an example of the infinite forbearance and self-denial, the meekness and wisdom, of him of whom we speak. He brings no railing accusation against the destroyer; he does not even vindicate his own questioned authority; but committeth himself to him who judgeth righteously, knowing that "God will provide."\* My brethren, there is not a more frequent or a more successful temptation by which the spirit of evil endeavours to destroy your souls, than by tempting you, as he tempted the Redeemer, first to distrust God's providential regard for you, and then to supply improperly your own neces-

\* Genesis xxii. 8.

sities. When, for instance, your worldly calling is unsuccessful, when it appears to the eye of sense as if your heavenly Father, instead of bread, was giving you a stone; withholding the needful supplies from yourself and family; then it is that Satan plies the heart most strongly with temptations such as these. "Turn your stones into bread;" be not over-scrupulous as to the means, where the end is so obviously necessary and unexceptionable. You must be fed; a trifling act of dishonesty, a mere overcharge, a little overreaching, or equivocation, a short measure, an unjust balance, or even a little Sunday trafficking, will do all that is needful; and surely, if you are a child of God, your heavenly Father will not be offended at such a trifling act of disobedience for so pressing a necessity. At seasons such as these, brethren, remember the answer of your Lord, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Bread alone, without God's blessing, cannot nourish you, while with God's blessing, the want even of bread itself cannot starve you. "God will provide;"\* if "he feedeth the young ravens which call upon him,"† "shall he not much more feed you, O, ye of little faith."‡ Yes, truly, even in regard to temporal things, you "shall want no manner of thing that is good,"§ for so has his immutable promise declared, and so will his parental love abundantly fulfil. If you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, his word is pledged to you that "your bread shall be given you, and that your water shall be sure."||

And as in temporal, so in things spiritual and eternal.

\* Genesis xxii. 8. † Psalm cxlvii. 9. ‡ Matthew vi. 30; Luke xii. 28.  
§ Psalm xxxiv. 10. || Isaiah xxxiii. 16.

Is your mind enfeebled by anxiety, or your body weakened by disease, then is it that your spiritual enemy urges the most distressing doubts of the love of your heavenly Father to you, or of your relationship to him. These are then often his suggestions,—If thou wert a child of God, would it be thus with thee? would there be such coldness of affection, such wandering thoughts, such poor, and rare, and transitory glimpses, of a Father's love? If thou be a son of God, cast off this sadness, remove this spiritual famine of the soul, establish your right to the blessed title, and act for yourself. Precisely the same rebellious suggestions which he offered to our Lord,—Help yourself, since your Father refuses to help you. In hours like these, (and where is the true child of God who has never known them?) take refuge in the written word, lie down in peace on many a blessed promise; reply to the tempter, that though God withhold for a time the spiritual bread which strengthens and the wine which cheers, “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God,”\* and that you have enough, and more than enough, in that blessed word to subsist upon, until God shall again comfort you with the light of his countenance and the fulness of his blessing. Trust as simply and entirely to God, during the famine of the soul, as your blessed Redeemer did in the famine of the body; and in the darkest hours and most trying deprivations, say of spiritual things as the prophet Habakkuk said of temporal things, “Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field

\* Deuteronomy viii. 3.

shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation."\*

The powers of darkness cannot make head against feelings such as these; they are not walls of untempered mortar, but impregnable ramparts thrown up by the Spirit of God himself; and though Satan with all his hosts may sit down before the fortress, yet so resisted, he shall flee from it, and in the end you shall be more than conquerors, through him that loveth you.

† Habakkuk iii. 17.

## LECTURE V.

ST. MATTHEW iv. 8, 9.

“Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

IN the last lecture we reviewed the first of the three temptations to which our blessed Lord was subjected at the close of his miraculous fast in the wilderness. We left the history at that point where, by quoting a passage from the written word of God, the Saviour had silenced the tempter. Satan, however, determining not to be thus easily foiled, resolved upon making another effort. For this purpose, he carries our Lord out of the wilderness, and “taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.”\* Satan had seen in the first temptation, that the dependence of Jesus upon God was unlimited; that even at the risk of starving, he had refused to change stones into bread, so entirely confident was he that his heavenly Father possessed both the power and the will to supply him. Imagining that now he had discovered the weak point of the Messiah’s character—that he possessed more love than prudence, more zeal than wisdom, more ardour than discretion—Satan arranges his new temp-

\* Matthew iv. 5.

tation accordingly; and having placed him upon this high and dizzy elevation, the extremest point of the temple, "he saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee;"\* he does not add, as the Psalmist from whom he quotes the verse has added, "to keep thee in all thy ways"†—all the ways which God had appointed him to walk in—for this did not suit the devil's purpose; he, therefore, misquotes the passage as if it were a general promise of safety in all ways, whether ways of duty, or ways of folly and of sin; and "in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."‡ As if he had said, You were willing to trust God for your food, although he must have worked a miracle to supply that food; now show that you can trust Him equally for your safety; throw yourself boldly over into the courts of the temple, and there, amidst its thousand worshippers, proclaim by this act at once the strength of your faith, the completeness of your dependence, and the reality of your Sonship; thus tempting our Lord, as it were, by the very excess of that Christian grace which he had before so beautifully exhibited. Observe, then, the consummate wisdom and holy meekness of our Lord's reply,—“Jesus answering, said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”§

He who, as we have seen, could trust God with all the confidence with which a child can trust the most affectionate father while in the plain and obvious path of duty, and therefore would not help himself super-

\* Matthew iv. 6. † Psalm xci. 11. ‡ Psalm xci. 12. § Matthew iv. 7.

naturally even to a loaf of bread, but left it to God to help him, now would not, for the sake of appearing more abundantly to trust him, incur danger where no duty called; and therefore refused to lift a foot from off that pinnacle at Satan's bidding. How valuable a lesson to the Christian! You cannot trust God too simply or too exclusively, or too largely, when in the assured path of Christian duty. If the ocean itself lay before you, you might boldly advance; for God would sooner divide the sea for you, as he did for Israel, or harden it into a solid pavement as he did for Peter, than that it should impede your progress to the promised land, or hinder you from going to Jesus. But, if it lie not in the path of duty, expect no miracle, look for no help from God; that same sea would be to you, if you dared to enter it, as it was to the Egyptians, a destroyer and a grave.

Mark well, my brethren, the difference thus exhibited between faith and presumption. To expect the largest degrees of help from God when plainly following a direct command, is only a justifiable exercise of faith; to expect even the smallest when contrarily engaged, is an unwarrantable act of presumption. Bearing this distinction in mind, how obviously does it mark the separation between the enthusiast and the sober-minded child of God. An enthusiast would have been delighted with such an opportunity of evincing his unbounded dependence upon God; and had Satan presented him with the temptation with which he tried our Lord, would have sprung from the pinnacle, and have been dashed to pieces. The wise and sober-minded child of God would have seen that the call of Satan was not a call of duty—that the promise of protection, misquoted by the

devil, contemplated no such acts as these, and offered no protection for them; and would, therefore, as his divine Master did, have descended by the stairs, and have been safe. It is at the present time, brethren, especially desirable to attend to these distinctions; for while the people of the world are disposed to treat all simple child-like faith in God, as mere presumption, a large party in the church are equally disposed to mistake the wildest flights of presumption, only for higher degrees of acceptable faith; forgetting that true and scriptural faith can never travel beyond the record of God's promises, and that the moment faith terminates presumption begins.

We cannot leave this second temptation of our Lord, without endeavouring to derive from it a lesson of encouragement, as well as of instruction.

Take comfort then, brethren, from the assurance which it offers, that the power of Satan is limited, far more limited than many at the present day are apt to imagine. Can we suppose that if Satan had possessed the power to have compelled our Lord to cast himself headlong from the pinnacle, that he would have been content merely to have tempted him to do so? Assuredly not; nor was the inability of the tempter to be more than a tempter, limited to his attacks upon our Lord; for all scripture declares that his power is equally limited to every human being whose faith hath made him the child of God; he cannot compel the weakest follower of Jesus into the smallest sin. He may entice you, beguile you, delude you, but compel he cannot. He must have the consent of your own will, the aid of your own inclination, before he can possibly succeed. He may, indeed, have power to place you, without any



fault or crime of yours, as he placed Joseph of old, upon the very brink of sin, upon the extremest verge of the precipice of temptation; but there he has reached the length of his chain, and can advance no farther; there, even on the topmost pinnacle of danger, one fervent heartfelt cry to God, "Lord help me"\*—one faithful appeal to the written word, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"†—one look to him for succour, who was himself tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,"‡ and you are safe.

Satan, however, had not yet finished his infatuated enterprise. Silenced, as he was the second time, by the unanswerable appeal of our Lord to the word of God, he had yet one arrow remaining in his quiver, the strongest, fleetest, and most deadly of them all. He had tried the Saviour, in the hope of finding some defect in his love to God, some flaw in his dependence upon his care, but all in vain. He had tried him again, in the hope, that as he had found an infinity of dependence, he might at least discover one grain of presumption, but still in vain. "The prince of this world came, but had nothing in Jesus."§ The second Adam stood, where the first had fallen, and all the wiles of the deceiver were in vain. Satan, however, although conquered, was still unwearied, and returns again to the charge, but now bringing with him a temptation which, since time began, has seldom failed; the world's pomp, the world's luxuries, the world's glories. "Again," say the inspired historians, "the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the

\* Matt. xv. 25. † Gen. xxxix. 9. ‡ Heb. xii. 2. § John xiv. 30.

kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time." Spreading before the eyes of our Lord, as it were upon a map, one vast and splendid picture, not only of all the empires of the globe, but of all their glories; all of nature's beauty and of art's magnificence; all of pomp, and luxury, and splendour, which the eye of man has ever seen, or the imagination of man conceived, were crowded into that stupendous vision.

The arch deceiver, the master painter of sensuality, he who so well knows how to paint a carnal picture for a carnal heart, no doubt portrayed the perishable joys of earth in their most glowing colours, with all the bright but transitory hues which sparkle over them; while he as carefully drew a thick, and, to the eye of man, impenetrable veil across the misery and the wretchedness, the heartburnings and the jealousies, the disappointments and the treacheries, which lie beneath.

To the view of sense, and to the worldly apprehension, it must have been a gorgeous vision, but to the eye of Jesus; of him whose world the globe on which we dwell most surely is, who had beheld it in its days of innocency, when no cries of sin were rising from the thousand altars of the everlasting hills, and no tears of suffering were mingling with its eternal oceans, surely the whitened charnel-house, the painted sepulchre, could not have been a less enticing or a more repulsive object. Little could the tempter have conceived the feelings which were kindling in that pure and spotless breast, while he was dwelling, as he doubtless did, upon all the value and the magnificence of the bribe which he was proffering: "All these things will I give thee,\* all this

\* Matthew iv. 9.

power will I give thee and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it.”\*

Base and miserable deceiver! a liar, and as Jesus himself denominated him, “the father of lies.”† With a lie he had ruined the first Adam, “Ye shall not surely die;”‡ and with the same barefaced departure from truth, did he now attempt to ruin the second. Satan’s world! No, before time began, that world had been made over in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten, to the incarnate Son; “Thou shalt have the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”§ Fallen, degraded though it be, there is but one dark corner of it which can with truth be called the world of Satan, and that—the impenitent sinner’s heart; there, indeed, he dwells, and revels, and commands, but even there, in that his only fortress, blessed be God, a stronger than he is often present, who binds the strong man, and casts him forth, and takes possession in the name of the Most High; and when the enemy attempts to return like a flood, lifts up a standard against him. All else upon the wide world’s surface, though “cursed for man’s sake,”|| has ever been, and ever shall be, the purchased possession of the Messiah of God; subject, indeed, for a time, to the prevalency of sin, and vanity, and sorrow, but described in a strong metaphor of the apostle, as groaning and travailing in pain to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and panting to be a participator in the glorious liberty of the children of God. While even of its power and glory, which Satan so expressly claimed,

\* Luke iv. 6.

† John viii. 44.

‡ Genesis iii. 4.

§ Psalm ii. 8.

|| Genesis iii. 17.

and over which he no doubt strews his poison far more thickly than over any other portion of the Lord's vineyard, yet even of these poor substitutes for better and more enduring possessions, has not the word of God declared, "The Most High alone ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will?"\* Miserable indeed would be the feelings of the Christian, especially in the days in which we live, if the wild convulsions of the moral world, or the vast and hourly changes of the political world, were to be regarded as the mere pastime of this bad and reckless spirit; if, instead of believing with the apostle that "the powers which be are ordained of God,"† we were for a moment to credit the lying declaration of Satan, that the powers which be are ordained of the devil. But, blessed be God, we know the fallacy of such an assertion; we know that not a change takes place, not a sparrow falls without our Father; and that the worst of this world's vicissitudes are ruled or overruled by him that loveth us, and are brought by his almighty power among the "all things" which shall work together for the temporal, the spiritual, the eternal good of every child in his redeemed and ransomed family.

But, brethren, what anguish, what a degree of mental suffering, must this temptation have wrought in the Lord Jesus Christ, when his eye pierced through that beautiful picture of "all the kingdoms of the world and the glories of them," and looked down into the hideous depths of sin beneath. Surely never, but in Gethsemane, could our beloved Redeemer have felt more deeply, more acutely, the agony of a ruined world, the

\* Daniel iv. 17.

† Romans xiii. 1.

infinite weight of the sins which he came to bear, the sorrows which he came to carry, than while gazing upon that sad and fearful vision. Had the Saviour of mankind required one feeling to brace his resolution, to arm him with tenfold strength against the tempter, the sight of all the splendid misery lying at his feet, the presence of that guilty and wretched being, its parent and its cause, standing at his side, would most abundantly have supplied it. But when to this we add the horrible proposition which succeeded it, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,"\* words cannot describe our feelings at the reckless audacity of that fallen spirit. The meekest man who ever lived would have been sorely tempted at such a moment to speak "unadvisedly with his lips;" none but the incarnate Son of God himself could have come clear from such a trial, ruffled by no word of passion, tainted by no feeling of sinful animosity. We know not whether meekness, dignity, or power, predominate in his reply—"Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."†

Then did the devil practically learn the truth which he appears so anxiously to have sought, viz. whether the son of the carpenter of Nazareth were the son of the living God. Banished thus by a single word, humbled and debased from the presence of his eternal Conqueror, he learnt that the second Adam would assuredly repair the ruin of the first, would bruise the serpent's head; and that the Lord Jesus Christ in that meek and lowly guise was as much his superior, as completely

\* Matthew iv. 9.

† Luke iv. 8.

his conqueror, as when seated upon his Father's throne, and crowned with many crowns, he had, before time began, driven "Satan like lightning"\* from his "first estate," and committed him to "the blackness of darkness for ever."†

And now, brethren, let us gather something more entirely and exclusively for ourselves from this wondrous story. Think you that this was the last time that Satan has striven to urge the same temptation with the same falsehood? the last time he has pressed the worship of himself, by proffering the wealth, and power, and glory of the world? Would to God that it were. But what then is that evil spirit now doing around us and within us? Is he not still holding forth the same temptation and the self-same bribe? With what does Satan still gild the bait with which he lures his victims to their ruin? Is it not with the power and glory, the wealth and vanity, of the world? Are not these the baubles with which he tempts the rich, the noble, and the great? And are they not still the most attractive features in the dazzling vision which he spreads before the eyes of men of every degree and order in society, to win them to himself? Is there that man living, so high, so immeasurably advanced, in this world's goods, as to be above the solicitation to place his foot but one step higher on the eminence of worldly dignity, to gain, as it were, but one more handful of that indefinable, that baseless vision, for which men are content to sacrifice their time, their eternity, their lives, their souls? Is there that man living, so low, so depressed in the scale of society, as to be beneath the same temptation, when

\* Luke x. 18.

† Jude vi. 13.

modified, as the devil well knows how to modify it, to each man's peculiar disposition, and temper, and station, and wants? It requires but little knowledge of the world to see that, "All this will I give thee," is still the promise by which Satan acquires, one by one, throughout all time and all generations, his countless worshippers: the lying promise! for Satan has nothing real, nothing substantial to bestow; his brightest gifts are but what he spread before the feet of Jesus, a gilded vision, an unreal pageant, an empty show; like those fair scenes of verdant pastures and cooling streams, which Eastern travellers, amidst their faintness and their thirst, see, or believe they see, while traversing the arid desert, but which for ever fly before them, and leave only the burning sand and suffocating dust. If such be the nature of the bribes which Satan offers, is it more difficult to tell the price at which he offers them? I might not dare to tell you that Satan never offers his rewards except at the price for which he offered them to our Lord, that you should fall down and worship him; but what does experience tell you, as you ascend higher and higher up the giddy eminence, following the fleeting shadow of worldly power, and glory, and distinction, which for ever keeps in advance, always near, but always, like the horizon, just beyond your reach, does the love of God, does spirituality of heart, does holiness of life increase within you? Does fervency of faith, or warmth of affection to him whose name you bear, kindle yet brighter in your soul? Alas! does not every day's experience justify us in saying, that the very reverse of this is the fact, that the man who was humble and holy while in obscurity, becomes proud, and sensual, and time-serving as he advances. That every increase of

worldly power, and wealth, and splendour, brings with it, too often at least, an increase of indifference to the things of eternity, and to God's honour, and to God's will? And if so, what is there in the worship of Satan to which the men living only for this world are strangers? There is no need, while worshipping that subtle spirit, of building altars, and burning incense, and bending the knee, and outward and visible prostration of the body in his service. No, give him but the unseen heart, your thoughts, and your affections, and you may pay the outward worship, the lip service, to whom you will and where you will. For every prayer, distracted and deadened by feelings such as these, and thus stolen from the service of God, is really given to Satan; every affection thus alienated from the love of God, is made over to Satan; every act of obedience thus wilfully refused to a command of God, is yielded to Satan; every heart, therefore, not fully, freely, devotedly given to God, is, I do not say entirely, but just by so much, given to Satan. And then, brethren, if, as our Lord declares, "Ye cannot serve two masters, ye cannot serve really God and mammon;"\* if you are even engaged in this partial service of Satan, whose will be your hearts on that day when the Son of Man makes up his jewels?† God will reject the blemished offering, for he must have a whole heart or have none; and Satan will claim that as his own, wholly and entirely, of which he now appears so well content to be considered only as the joint proprietor. How solemn a reflection for all, of whatever rank or station, who are conscious at this moment, of a divided empire within their breast, a

\* Matthew vi. 24.

† See Malachi iii. 17.



divided worship in their hearts! May the Spirit of God bless the consideration of it, to our full and complete acquiescence with his most merciful command, and most condescending request: "My son, give ME thy heart;"\* that our hearts may be his only, and his entirely, and his for ever, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

\* Proverbs xxiii. 26.

## LECTURE VI.

ST. JOHN i. 49.

“Nathaniel answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the king of Israel.”

SATAN having concluded the temptation of our Lord, and angels from heaven having ministered to his necessary wants, we find him immediately returning to Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The day that Jesus arrived, and while he was approaching the spot occupied by the Baptist and his hearers, St. John announced his arrival to the assembled multitude, in these remarkable words: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!”\* How simple, yet, to the heart of the true Israelite, how touching a testimony to the person and office of the Messiah; “Behold the Lamb of God!” I need scarcely remind you that every morning, and every evening, throughout the year, a lamb was offered as a burnt-offering before the Lord for all the congregation of Israel. Every pious and well-instructed Jew had been taught to consider that lamb as a type of the far more precious sacrifice which God would one day accept for the sins of the whole world. When, therefore, the Baptist pointed out Jesus of Nazareth, as “the

\* John i. 29.

Lamb of God," he spake a language perfectly comprehensible, adapted to the understanding and to the wants of all who heard him; for all who believed the testimony of John, would know that in "the Lamb of God" they beheld their promised Messiah, "the Consolation of Israel."\* We are not, therefore, surprised to find that upon John's repeating this testimony on the day following, two of his disciples immediately left him, and followed Jesus. In the Baptist they had no doubt found a teacher whom they revered and admired, but men want something more than this—they want something which they can fully, freely, safely love. There was a degree of harshness about the person and manners of the Baptist, very characteristic of his ministry, which, though it must have commanded men's respect, does not seem peculiarly calculated to have drawn forth their affection; but when they beheld Jesus, when they heard of him at once under so tender, so endearing a character as the "Lamb of God," we can readily imagine that the first feelings of their hearts would be, to seek and follow him. And if there was a difference even in the manners of the teachers, how great was the difference in their dignity and power. He who was "least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John,"† while Jesus was higher than the highest there; John, at the best, was a mere preacher, who, while he preached remission of sins, could not bestow it; Jesus "himself hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,"‡ and was the very Paschal Lamb which "taketh away the sins of the world." In the first, the disciples found an instructor, but in the second, a Saviour! If there were a desire in John's heart for which he was

\* Luke ii. 25.

† Matthew xi. 11.

‡ Isaiah liii. 4.

really anxious, it must have been to have seen every disciple whom he loved, following Jesus.

My brethren, if there be a desire in our hearts concerning you, it is identically the same; that you should not content yourselves with human teachers, but should be led, through the instrumentality of their instructions, to follow him, the only Divine. This is our best, our highest reward, our most ardent desire on this side heaven, that you should see him whom John's disciples saw, and in the character in which they saw him, and with the same effect; beholding him as the "Lamb of God which taketh away" your sins, even yours, and from that hour, faithfully and perseveringly, closely following Jesus. Would that it might please our heavenly Father that we might more often enjoy this desire of our souls. It is indeed a blessing, and one which we would by no means undervalue, to behold the temple of our God filled with attentive worshippers; but what is this, compared with the delight of knowing that but one poor sinner has really fled to the Saviour; that one lost and ruined soul has found life, and peace, and eternal redemption in him. O, brethren, if you stop short of this, all else is nothing; the hearing ear without the convinced and converted heart, is nothing worth.

Our blessed Lord, whose omniscience told him that these disciples of John had left their master and were coming after him, and whose affectionate kindness could even in the days of his flesh suffer none to follow him in vain, immediately turned to meet them, and said unto them, "Whom seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see."\* Attracted, as they well might be, by the frank-

\* John i. 38, 39.

ness and courtesy of such a reply; and, doubtless, feeling by every moment of intercourse with such a being, their hearts drawing nearer to his own, "They went and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour,"\* *i. e.* two hours before night. One of the disciples which thus followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."† The other disciple, who accompanied Andrew, has usually been supposed to have been St. John. In the calling of these three humble followers commenced that little company, that weak and feeble band, which, under the directions and in the power of the Holy Ghost, regenerated the world. Men chosen from the lower walks of life, without wealth, without learning, without much of talent either natural or acquired, and yet who succeeded in a few short years, to use the language of their opponents, in "turning the world upside down."‡ O, if these humble-minded men could have foreseen upon this first memorable evening, when they walked home with Jesus to his abode, and spent the night in heavenly intercourse, in hearing him dilate upon all the wonderful mysteries of his blessed gospel—if they could have foreseen the hour when they should "be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake,"§ and brave the assembled Sanhedrim, and testify to him in the high places of the earth, and finally seal his doctrines with their blood, how would they have shrunk, alarmed and daunted, from the appalling undertaking. Happily for the world

\* John i. 40. † John i. 41. ‡ Acts xvii. 6. § Luke xiii. 9.

and for the Church, they were permitted to possess no such fearful forebodings; unconscious of the mighty destinies which hung upon that hour, the evening passed away in blissful intercourse, and while it sealed their fate, sealed also the fate of thousands who are now with them “shining as stars”\* in their firmament of glory.

Blessed be God, brethren, that what was in mercy hidden from them is not, in our own case, revealed to us! I know not how it may be with others, but, as regards my own feelings and my own experience, I cannot but testify, that had I, when I first entered upon the duties of our holy office, been endowed with a prescience of its future responsibilities, and had I known and felt its trials and its difficulties, the weariness of spirit from efforts constantly making for the souls of others, and yet as constantly frustrated; the disappointments from those who “did run well,”† but have turned back again to folly; the fruitless labour for those “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;”‡ and above all, the deep and awful anxieties lest the blood of some untaught, unwarned, and unforgiven sinner should be required at our hands;§—I say, had these things been presented to me in the distant vision, *unaccompanied* by the consolations which no eye but God’s can see, and no hand but his can minister, I believe no earthly power, I fear no heavenly inducement, would have been sufficiently powerful to have placed me where I am. But, praised be the name of our God, he holds back the storm, and restrains the billows, and tempers the wind, until the vessel be fairly put to sea, and then, though the waters rage and the tempest roar, he who

\* Dan. xii. 3.    † Galatians v. 7.    ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 7.    § Ezekiel iii. 18.

has charged himself with her safety will never leave her, never forsake her, until she has ridden out the storm, and arrived at the "haven where she would be."\*

The day following, our Lord, going into Galilee, called a fourth disciple, whose name was Philip, a fellow-citizen with Andrew and Peter. Peter was, as we have seen, called by his own brother Andrew, as Nathanael was afterwards called by Philip, but Philip was called by Christ himself, for the inspired historian says expressly, "The day following, Jesus would go into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me."† How various were the means by which this little party was assembled! How various, will it appear hereafter, have been the means by which the countless multitude who will fill the everlasting mansions shall have been congregated; one through the instrumentality of some dear relative, who prays, and strives, and reasons, and invites, until he is blessed with the gift of his brother's soul; another by the teaching of some spiritually enlightened friend; a third, by the more immediate, though not more undoubted operation of our Lord himself, who "came to seek as well as to save them that are lost," and who speaks with power by his holy Spirit to the heart, and says, "Follow me." Still, brethren, however varying be the means, the end and object of this blessed work are and must for ever be the same, the following Jesus here on earth, and the enjoying Jesus in the kingdom of his glory.

"Philip," continues the inspired historian, "findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of

\* Psalm cvii. 30.

† John i. 43.

Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.\* The invitation of the Master re-echoed, and wisely re-echoed, by the servant. Nathanael, though "an Israelite without guile,"† was clearly not an Israelite without prejudice. Upon the very first hearing of the Messiah, his inquiry was not, What is he? but, Whence is he? and no sooner was he told, "of Nazareth," than the very name of the place aroused his inveterate prejudices, and he concluded, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold men should conclude, that there was "no beauty in him that they should desire him."‡

Such has ever been, such will ever be, the effect of prejudice. Is there any one feeling of the human mind so discreditable to its boasted enlargement, and at the same time so indiscriminately prevailing? Is not a man without prejudice quite as difficult to be discovered as a man without guile? It is truly wonderful, we will not say, in these days of religious improvement, though we trust that we might with truth so designate them, but even in these days of intellectual advancement, that prejudice should still possess so universal, so unaccountable a sway; there is scarcely a subject, or a person, who does not suffer from its distorted vision and unjust decisions. Only for a moment mark its effects upon a single topic; and although this will not remedy the evil, it will go far to convince you of its existence even in your own bosoms. Take, for example, some of the peculiar doctrines of divine grace. You do not understand them; you do not affect to understand them; you

\* John i. 45, 46.

† John i. 47.

‡ Isaiah liii. 2.



have never devoted any one whole day throughout your life to endeavour to understand them ; you will not take the trouble to read, and to meditate, and to pray for further light ; you are content to rest upon an inward persuasion that they are false, although you have no real ground, no one single argument, to justify such a conclusion. And yet you scruple not to pronounce dogmatically upon them, “ this is wild,” “ that is false,” “ this is inconsistent with God’s goodness,” “ that is unfavourable to man’s holiness.” Surely it must make the very angels weep, to behold such unspeakable, such ruinous folly, in the poor, miserable, half-witted beings they look down upon. The word of God declares that the angels actually “ desire to look” \* into these things, which the prejudiced man most authoritatively decides upon, without looking into, and without even an effort or a wish to do so. Again, are you prejudiced not only against the doctrines, but against the people of God ? The same thing holds good ; every action they perform, every word they speak, is distorted and misrepresented ; you do not try them by the same rules as other men, you shut out all conviction, you will listen to nothing in their favour, you deny them even common justice, and a common hearing, and are as determined that nothing good shall proceed from those men, as Nathanael was that no good thing could come out of Nazareth. Happily for Nathanael, he had a friend too wise to argue with him, and too affectionate to leave him to the ruin which his own prejudices were preparing for him ; in reply to one of the most bigoted objections ever raised, therefore, Philip simply says to him, “ Come and see.”

\* 1 Peter i. 12.

He knew that there was that in Jesus which required only to be seen, and all dislike, and all opposition, all hatred and even suspicion, would fall before him. With regard to your prejudices against the *people* of God, brethren, we have no such remedy to offer; were you even to "come and see," you would find them men of like infirmities with yourselves, and although, probably, not as you at present consider them, weak, enthusiastic, hypocritical, or designing, still there is nothing in them, as there was in Jesus, instantly to convince the heart of the candid inquirer that they are all they ought to be, or even all they desire to be; therefore we must leave them, for the present, to suffer from that which is a portion of their trial and their cross; they must commit themselves to him who judgeth righteously; be content to bear a burden with which few can be so grievously laden as their Lord himself was, and take refuge in one of the most comforting and often repeated promises which ever flowed from the lips of their Master, "Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."\* But with respect to your prejudices against the *doctrines* of God, here we encounter no such difficulties, here we may content ourselves with simply saying, "Come and see." Inquire for yourselves, read the word of God for yourselves, "asking wisdom of him who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not," and the event will assuredly be, that there is not that truth in the divine word which is necessary to salvation, from

\* Matthew v. 11, 12.

which the mists of prejudice shall not be dispersed, and in which you shall not be enabled to believe to the saving of your souls.

Nathanael thus invited, accompanied Philip at once to the Saviour. The inspired writer thus continues, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." How kind and merciful a salutation! As easy would it have been for him to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, to have evinced his own omniscience by convicting Nathanael at once of bigotry, by repeating to him those words of prejudice, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" as thus to fix at once upon the favourable point in his character, and so freely and so kindly to acknowledge it. Nathanael, astonished at this address from a total stranger, "said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."\*

Most commentators suppose that Nathanael was then engaged in prayer; but this is merely conjecture, there being nothing in God's word to authorize it, nor is it the least necessary to conclude it, since it is evident that our Lord mentions the circumstance to demonstrate his own omniscience, and not his approval or disapproval of Nathanael's employment. There was something in the very minuteness of the circumstance, in the naming the tree under which he had been sitting in the privacy of his own garden, where no eye had seen him, which would have subdued the most prejudiced, which evidently brought instantaneous con-

\* John i. 48.

viction to the mind of Nathanael. He felt that the knowledge of such a fact, trifling though it were, surpassed the efforts of all human wisdom; and he burst forth into the acknowledgment of the text, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." On that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, how will it shame those who with tenfold, yea, ten thousand fold, Nathanael's evidence, have not attained to Nathanael's faith; who doubt the omniscience and the divinity of Jesus, although every page of the history we are pursuing is as replete with these great truths as the incident before us.

My brethren, you I trust doubt none of these high and important doctrines: it is well; but let me ask you what effect does their knowledge possess upon you? You believe that you have to do with a Being who reads the heart; who was acquainted with you long before you were acquainted with him; who "knows of your down-sitting and your uprising, and who understands your thoughts afar off."\* Never do you retire from the busy world, that the eye of that Being does not follow you. Never do you mix with the giddy throng, to waste that time in idleness and dissipation which God has given you for the great work of your salvation, without being followed by that all-seeing eye, and listened to by that all-hearing ear. Look back, then, only upon the past days of the present week, and see whether this consideration is well pleasing to your soul. Hear our Lord saying to you, as to Nathanael, Before that thou camest to my house of prayer, when thou wast engaged in such or such a pursuit, occupied

\* Psalm cxxxix. 2.

in such a pleasure, partaking of such an enjoyment, as hidden from the world perhaps as the fig tree of Nathanael, "I saw thee." Are there none to whom such would be a most painful declaration? none who would be covered with shame, if they even thought that their nearest relatives, their dearest friends could utter it? And will you feel less that your most secret acts, most hidden transactions, are all "naked and open unto him with whom we have to do?"\*

Brethren, it is no trifling thing to fall into the hands of a holy and heart-searching God; to stand for one hour before his judgment seat, who has stood for twenty, thirty, forty years, "about our path, and about our bed, and spied out all our ways."† Whither should we fly, where should we betake ourselves, if he who shall come to be our Judge, had not already come to be our Saviour, had not already partaken of all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and were not therefore peculiarly qualified to sympathize with us, even in the most guilty? Unless he is our friend, unless we have sought, and found, and followed him—for without this he cannot be our friend—there is no attribute of Jesus so overwhelming as his omniscience. Heaven, earth, and hell, are equally open to his eye, while our most secret sins are written in the light of his countenance; and with this perfect knowledge is blended the most perfect and unerring justice, a justice with which his mercy cannot interfere; or one attribute would be exercised at the expense of the other, and the perfect God would be imperfect like ourselves. Well might the Psalmist exclaim, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye

\* Hebrews iv. 13.

† Psalm cxxxix. 2.

perish! if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little: blessed are all they who put their trust in him.”\*

No sooner had Nathanael made the avowal of his belief in the Messiahship of our Lord, than “Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”† So bountifully will our Lord recompense the faith which he himself bestows,—“You shall see greater things than these.” Yes, brethren, if you are now enabled by divine grace, with Nathanael, to see Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel, the Saviour of your soul, you shall see greater things than even his omniscience or his omnipotence; you shall see his love employed in blotting out every sin which you have committed, his wisdom in enlightening and instructing your mind; his strength in supporting your weakness; his blood in cleansing your pollutions; his spirit in sanctifying and renewing your soul. All this you shall see even here below; while this is but a glimpse of that prospect which you shall see hereafter, when you shall behold “the King in his glory and the land that is very far off,”‡ the angels of God who are for ever rejoicing in his presence, and “the spirits of just men made perfect,”§ who have “overcome by the blood of the Lamb;”|| all these things you shall see, all these things you shall partake of, all these things shall be yours, as “ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”\*\*

\* Psalm ii. 12.

† John i. 50, 51.

‡ Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

§ Hebrews xii. 23.

|| Revelations xii. 11.

\*\* 1 Corinthians iii. 23.

## LECTURE VII.

ST. JOHN ii. 1, 2.

“ And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.”

THE interview between our Lord and Nathanael, with which the last lecture concluded, was of so satisfactory and decisive a nature, that Nathanael, converted to the new religion, appears to have become one of the constant followers of our Lord. In company with this new convert and the other four disciples, Jesus arrived at Cana in Galilee, the native town of Nathanael,\* and about a day's journey from Capernaum. Upon the third day after our Lord's arrival, there was a marriage, probably of some relative of Jesus, since his mother appears to have been a resident in the house, while “ Jesus and his disciples were called”† to the wedding.

No particulars of the marriage feast are furnished us by the inspired historian, until it was drawing towards its close, and the wine, which had no doubt been amply provided at the commencement, had begun to fail; then, as we are told, the mother of Jesus, who had kept all the presages of his future greatness and pondered them in her heart, bethought herself that this might be the time, and now the opportunity when, if he really were

\* John xxi. 2.

† John ii. 2.

the great and exalted personage she believed him to be, he should manifest his supernatural power by an act that would be peculiarly gratifying to their assembled family and friends. Filled with these high imaginings, she drew near to our Lord, and called his attention to the circumstance by saying unto him, "They have no wine." Our Lord, subject as he had ever been to the authority of his parents in earthly matters, but acting entirely irrespectively of their control, when "about his Father's business,"\* replied, "Woman what have I to do with thee," or literally, "What is that to thee and me; my hour is not yet come." His mother apparently understanding this, (as indeed it was no doubt intended, rather as a postponement than a denial,) said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." "Now there were set there," continues the inspired historian, "six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim. And he said, draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast; and they bare it."† How striking is the perfect simplicity, the absence of all pretension or effort, with which our Lord addressed himself to this, his first great and supernatural work. Equally removed from every appearance of doubt and of display, he does not ask to taste, or even to see the wine himself, to ascertain the certainty of the success of his command, but tells them at once to carry it to the governor. "When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the servants which drew the water knew,

\* Luke ii. 49.

† John ii. 4—8.



the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."\* The governor, ignorant whose word had spoken that water into wine, or whence it came, praises its excellency, but neither knows nor inquires its origin: too accurate a transcript of the conduct of the generality of mankind with respect to the gifts of God. We taste and see them to be very good, and we are satisfied; we ask not from whose treasure-house they come, or by whose exertions they were procured for us. It is enough for us that the wine is good; we feel neither surprise nor gratitude that it is not water.

While if the conduct of the governor portrays our behaviour towards God, how does the conduct of our Lord exemplify God's merciful dealings towards us. Kindness and compassion, tenderness and love, are stamped upon all his gifts to us; but perhaps their greatest value, and their most exquisite delights, flow from the fact, that they are for ever on the increase in number, in value, and in power; and that as surely as they delight us now, so surely shall they acquire a richness and a blessedness which eye hath not seen, nor heart conceived, hereafter. How contrary to all the nature of this world's pleasures and the experience of this world's votaries; while the wearied and sated follower of sinful joys is daily drawing more and more closely from the dregs, and the stream which used to delight and gladden his eyes now runs thickly and uninvitingly, the children of God, as they approach the nearer to the end of their course, find all their pleasures

\* John ii. 9, 10.

brightening, and all their joys increasing; the water running the clearer because they are drawing closer to the fountain head. You, my Christian brethren, who know by blessed experience the love and the compassion of your God, will acknowledge that it is thus he is even now dealing with you. "Surely goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life;"\* but as you grow old in the service of your divine Master, as you advance nearer and nearer to the close of this world's sojourn, you are constrained to cry out, "Thou hast indeed kept the good wine until now:"† your union with your Lord is more complete, your communion with him more frequent, your dependence upon him more simple; while his manifestations of himself to you are more abiding, and the joys of his felt presence more satisfying and more exhilarating to your souls. And, in addition to this, how cheering is the thought that what you are now enjoying is but a poor and imperfect foretaste of what you shall enjoy hereafter; that as time rolls on, the wine of his consolations and his love will be for ever on the increase, until it shall be perfected in that day when you shall drink it new with him in the kingdom of his Father.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him."‡

If we may venture to offer a conjecture, upon what were the objects to be attained by our Lord in selecting a miracle of this nature, and in performing it upon this particular occasion, we should say that they were twofold.

1st. His object in selecting a miracle of this nature

\* Psalm xxxiii. 6.

† John ii. 10.

‡ John ii. 11.

was in the most conclusive manner to “manifest forth his glory.”

And 2dly. His performing it upon this particular occasion, was to honour his own institution of the marriage state.

For the first, it will, we think, appear, that although many miracles were more striking in their operation, and more splendid in their results, no miracle was better calculated to convince the gainsayer, to satisfy the inquirer, and to establish the believer than this before us. It was an act of divine power exercised over inanimate and senseless matter, and as such was infinitely more convincing than any effort of a similar kind could have been, if practised upon a living subject.

So powerful, and yet so subtle, is the influence of mind upon matter, that wherever these exist in union, it is most difficult for the common observer to pronounce what is natural and what is supernatural; and the caviller might truly say, that for all he can prove to the contrary, the sick man restored to health by a word might have been restored by some occult but natural process, without that word: that the lame, or the halt, or the helpless, who at a word take up their bed and walk, might be, for such unquestionably have been, enabled so to do by some powerful impulse of mind upon matter, without the intervention of any miraculous or supernatural power; but never did five barley loaves feed five thousand persons—never did the liquid waters of the deep support the trembling footsteps of him who walked upon them—never did water blush itself into wine, but at the presence or the bidding of the God who made them.

By commencing, therefore, with such a miracle, our

Lord in his infinite wisdom selected that which would tend most to “manifest forth his glory,” and to silence all doubts and all objections; and the result was, that “his disciples believed on him.”

Our Lord’s second object we have supposed to have been, to honour his own institution of the marriage state.

That marriage is a divine institution, need scarcely be insisted upon to those who read the word of God which reveals it, and belong to the Church of England which so clearly proclaims it.

The great duty which we would rather endeavour to press upon you from the fact, that God the Father in the days of man’s innocency instituted this holy state, and that God the Son in the days of his flesh so highly honoured it, is to bear continually in mind that it is as our Church denominates it, “an holy estate,” intended to promote the well-being and happiness of God’s people, by promoting the honour and glory of God; while, that it may deserve this high appellation, and contribute to these great ends, the word of God has bequeathed to us this most important injunction, that they who marry, should marry “only in the Lord.”\*

If, then, taking these words for our guide, we examine the generality of unions in this professedly Christian country, we shall be at no loss to determine to what to attribute the great mass of miserable marriages which pervade and disgrace society. They are not undertaken “in the Lord;” God’s guidance, and God’s blessing, and God’s honour, have never entered into the calculation, and how can such a state deserve the name or inherit the blessing which God has promised upon

\* 1 Corinthians vii. 39.

“the holy estate of matrimony?” No, brethren, be assured, that however inclination or convenience may promote, or rank or fortune adorn, your marriage, if the approving presence of God be not sought, if the Lord Jesus Christ be not a bidden and a welcome guest, there is no lesser power, no mortal agency, which can turn the bitter waters of this world’s trials into wine.

With the hope then, under God’s blessing, of rendering this state a more holy, and therefore a more happy state to some, than they have hitherto found it, I would offer a few plain and practical observations to three classes of married persons to be met with perhaps in every Christian congregation.

I. First to you, I trust a small proportion, who have not married “in the Lord,” and are not at the present moment living “in the Lord.” The marriage state to you cannot be a state of permanent happiness; the motives which first drew you to each other, the qualities which first endeared you, are weakening and diminishing every day. From worldly motives, and from worldly motives only, you entered into a union which God has promised to cement and bless; but God bestows no blessing, not even a promised blessing, unsought; “Ask, and it shall be given,”\* is his reiterated command. You asked not his blessing upon your union, his guidance in undertaking it, for he was not then, nor is he now, the object of your thoughts or your desires. What, then, is the prospect which lies before you, and what the termination to which you look? We will not advert to those unhappy conclusions which too frequently terminate unions such as these—separation, or hatred, or sin. We will suppose your lot to be far more

\* Matthew vii. 7.

favourable, as favourable as the happiest lot where all is earthly can ever be; and still we say, What is your prospect? A life, perhaps a long life, to be passed with one who has no qualification, the charms of which will not sensibly and unquestionably decline; while as years advance, and there will flit across the mind from time to time some painful forebodings of an hereafter, some fearful suggestions of a coming eternity, there is no solace, no comfort, no counsel to be found in your one, your only partner; no one at home when life's evening approaches, and the dark clouds are gathering around the western horizon, to cheer that twilight hour, and to speak of hope beyond the grave, and of joys which will never fade, and of suns which will no more go down; no one, when the heart is heavy, and the body bowing beneath increasing infirmities, and the spirit sorrowful, to shed that blissful ray of heavenly contentment and spiritual peace throughout the family circle, which marks the presence of a faith which shall not fail, and of a love which cannot die. Brethren, it is a desolate and a dreary prospect, and at present it is your own; but there is time, there is grace, there is power to change it. God waiteth to be gracious. Christ standeth at the door and knocks; the choice is this day with yourselves! whether you will live cheerlessly, and die hopelessly, or live, "unto the Lord" and "die unto the Lord,"\* so that living or dying you shall be the Lord's, partakers together of his grace here, and of his glory hereafter.

II. But there is yet another class, to whom I must apply myself while on this deeply interesting subject. I allude to you who are thus circumstanced: one part-

\* Romans xiv. 8.

ner in the marriage state has become impressed by the power of God's good Spirit with a deep and heartfelt knowledge of the value of eternal things, while the other remains careless, indifferent, unawakened. It may be that there was this difference at the time of your union, if so, you have deep cause for repentance that you transgressed that express command of your God, which says, "Be not ye unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?"\* Indeed, there is no subject against which the wrath of God has been more uniformly levelled than against such unequal unions as these! as you will find manifested in a remarkable manner by a reference to the 9th chapter of Ezra, and the 13th chapter of Nehemiah.

But, in the majority of cases, this distinction has taken place since your union; one has been brought by the teaching of God's good Spirit, to attend to the "things belonging to his peace,"† and the other is yet unacquainted with them. Yours, then, is a very difficult path, one which requires much counsel, much reflection, much prayer. It may, perhaps, in some degree tend to simplify your course, if I remind you of the special obligations under which the marriage contract has brought you. If you are a husband, you have promised to "love your wife as Christ also loved the Church,"‡ that is, with the most costly love, the most self-denying love, that the world has ever witnessed. Even though she differ from you in these great and inestimable essentials, this promise is altogether binding upon you; there is no modification of which it is capable, no appeal from it, which the word of God has ever recognised. Now

\* 2 Corinthians vi. 14.

† Luke xix. 42.

‡ Ephesians v. 25.

with such a love as this in your heart, every prayer, every effort, will unite her welfare with your own; you will not be satisfied with carrying one soul to heaven, you will be for ever striving with a holy violence with God, for the soul of her whom you love; and such will be your faithfulness, and your fervour, and your perseverance, that you will say with Jacob of old, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;"\* and, in the end, how know you not but that, like him, you shall "have power with God, and shall prevail," to the salvation of her soul.

If you are a wife, your situation becomes far more difficult, because your relative duty is a very different one. Hear what God's own word has said to you: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."† These, brethren, are the words of God; time, fashion, custom, inclination, cannot alter them; they form one of the most uncompromising commands throughout the whole canon of scripture; not only, "submit yourselves," but submit yourselves "in every thing;" and not only so, but "as the Church is subject unto Christ," that is, in the most absolute and unqualified manner. This is so entirely at variance with the spirit of the age in which we live, that it will appear to many to be both harsh and unnecessary; but a little reflection will convince you that it is in reality the very reverse of this; that it is, like every command of our heavenly Father, most needful and most kind; that it offers to the wife a

\* Genesis xxxii. 26.

† Ephesians v. 22-24.



refuge which nothing else could afford her, and which no other relationship of life can give.

God has commanded you to submit to your own husband "in every thing;" to this there can, therefore, be but one limitation; when the command of the husband is distinctly and positively opposed to some direct command of God; then the prior obligation to "obey God rather than man"\* interferes, and the lesser duty is absorbed in the greater. But in every thing else, even in doubtful matters, even in cases in which, if you were unshackled by such an obligation, your more enlightened views of Christian duty would decide you to act differently, the obligation is still in force, the marriage duty of submission is still binding, and you are safer if "in faith"† you neglect a doubtful duty, or in faith perform a doubtful act, at the command of a husband, than you are if you pertinaciously refuse to submit, after having, in the presence and in the name of God, most solemnly taken upon you the vows of submission. There is no doubt that this is an unpalatable doctrine, to some, perhaps, even a startling doctrine; and many would be far better pleased to hear that the very fact of their having received clearer views of divine things than their husbands, is sufficient to justify them in erecting a new standard of duty for themselves, and in escaping from what may have become a very irksome obligation; but the word of God countenances no such alteration; the Spirit of God must have contemplated their case, for there must undoubtedly have been many wives among the Ephesian converts, whose husbands were still in unbelief when the command was given; yea, even in the very dark-

\* Acts v. 29.

† James i. 6.

ness and depths of heathenism, yet does that infinitely wise and holy Spirit make no exception; he says that all wives must submit to all husbands, and in all things. The universality of the command, with but the single exception to which I have already alluded, is indisputable; and the truly Christian wife has but one plain and obvious duty—to obey. But while you may not, and ought not, to resist, you both may, and ought, to state plainly and affectionately to your husbands what are your own views with respect to these things, which you have derived from God's revealed word and guiding Spirit. This you are bound to do in justice to them, as well as in love;—in justice, for if they insist on those things which are contrary to the will of God, they do so at their peril, even the peril of their immortal souls, and therefore ought to be allowed clearly to discern the reason of your objections, and the motives from which you act:—And in love, for if you love your husbands, you must desire as the first, best gift of God, next to your own soul, that “the unbelieving husband may be sanctified by the wife.”\* You will, therefore, avoid all concealment of the motives by which you are influenced. Nothing tends more to bring religion into disrepute, than the system adopted by too many religious people, of acting rightly, but giving false motives for their actions, from a false shame of avowing the true. This is quite contrary to the very spirit of gospel morality, where all is to be honest, and plain, and open: a religious professor without candour, is almost a contradiction in terms. You will, therefore, be careful to avoid concealment, even as to your enjoyment of religious ordinances; the end

\* 1 Corinthians vii. 14.

can never be valuable to you, when the means by which you attain it are questionable. Be open, be candid, be sincere; and if, in consequence, you are precluded from the enjoyment of any religious privileges, God will more than compensate for the heaviest loss you can sustain, by his approving smile and covenanted blessing.

I need add no more upon the certainty of the command of the wife's obedience; the mercy and the comfort of it, although equally true, may not be to all equally apparent. They will, perhaps, never be fully known, until the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, and then the day shall declare, how many actions which have now the appearance of inconsistency, were performed in obedience to the command of God, because in submission to the will of a husband; how much of penalty and self-denial, which the world never knew, there was in reality in those scenes of apparent pleasure, to which the command of a husband has carried a submissive wife; how many a secret tear has been shed, and how many a secret prayer has been offered at the throne of grace, for him who insisted upon these painful compliances; and, in consequence, how much more the hidden life of faith in the soul grew, and strengthened, and flourished, under all these outward hindrances, than in many a course which has never experienced their interruption or their pain.

III. Lastly, I would address a few closing words to you who have married "in the Lord," or who have, since your union, been together brought to the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and to a participation in the joys of his salvation.

It is scarcely too much to say that your lot—what-

ever be your station, unless you are suffering from great and pressing privations, or are at present under the chastening hand of your God—is the happiest which the sun can shine upon. Trials and troubles there will ever be, some drops from the bitter fruit of Eden will find their way into every cup; but, unquestionably, the higher the cup is filled with the grateful love of God, and with the holy love of each other, the less room will there be for the distillations of that worse than Upas tree to mingle with it.

There is little for the minister of Christ to say to you upon the duties and the obligations of the marriage state, of which you are not already conscious. One point, however, there is, which is seldom dwelt upon, and yet so material to a Christian union, and so powerfully productive of Christian happiness in that union, that I would affectionately press it upon your attention. It is this: Endeavour, both husbands and wives, to avoid, or to overcome, all reserve upon religious subjects between yourselves. You have one heart, and one hope, and one Saviour, and one heaven; you are engaged in traversing together the straight and narrow path which leads to your Father's kingdom, do not, therefore, walk sullenly and silently upon it, as if each were travelling by a different road, and going to heaven alone. There is, no doubt, a difficulty in conversing upon these high subjects with those who are the most closely allied to us, perhaps a greater difficulty than with those who are almost utter strangers; it may be, because we all feel that it is easier to talk well, than to act consistently; while those who know us best are, perhaps, the most conscious of our imperfections; but whatever be the reason, it is essential to your happiness

that you overcome it. Read the word of God together; converse upon it together; pray over it together; the fire of wedded love never burns so purely and so brightly as when continually rekindled from the living coals upon the altar of God. There is on record an instance of a very sincere Christian, whose only subject of lamentation upon his dying bed was, that he had conversed so sparingly upon these blessed truths, and read so little, and prayed so seldom with his wife. But it never yet was recorded that there was one who complained that he had occupied too large a portion of his time in these employments.

You must look forward to an hour of separation; although to you it will be but temporary, still it is the part of Christian wisdom and Christian prudence to extract every sting which God in mercy enables you; do not, therefore, leave this for a death-bed, or a parting hour. And if not this, then surely none of still sharper point, or still more poisonous. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."\* Days of darkness and hours of trial will come to you, my beloved Christian brethren, as well as to those whom I before addressed; but how different, how widely different, are your prospects. Would that we could place the ungodly man for one hour within the blessed enclosure, and upon that high eminence on which you stand; the sight of the prospect which lies before you, would surely avail to soften, if not to change and to convert his heart; but this cannot be. You may, however, rejoice in them yourselves, and fill your hearts with thanksgivings, and your lips with praise,

\* Galatians vi. 2.

that he who has made you to differ from others, has not only made your wedded life a holy state and a happy state, but a promise and a foretaste of a far holier and a far happier which is awaiting you. As years roll on, and as the enjoyments of this life are daily and hourly contracting into a still smaller compass; as the friends of your youth, and the companions of your maturer age, are called away, and few of those who have cheered and gladdened life remain, then do the blessings of a truly Christian union shine forth with a splendour rivalling the last rich rays of the setting sun. To see those whom you have loved through life, and still love dearer and more tenderly as life's tide is ebbing fast into the ocean of eternity, to see them standing with you upon the brink of time, and looking calmly upon those dark waters which have no returning tide, ready like yourself to enter into the valley of the shadow of death, with the same rod and staff to comfort them, the same Saviour to support them, the same eternal mansions to receive them; knowing that your truest enjoyments here have been those which have partaken the most largely of the occupations and delights of eternity; these are joys well worth the purchase of the longest and the happiest life which earth has ever seen, and these are delights which none but those who are "in the Lord" can ever know.

May God grant that all who now hear me, may one day experience the reality and the blessedness of these mercies here, and the still richer enjoyment of them in that kingdom where "there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but where we shall be equal to the angels of God, being the children of the resurrection."

*Beulah*

## LECTURE I.

ST. JOHN ii. 13, 14, 15.

“And the Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting; and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple.”

WE resume the history of our Lord at that period which immediately succeeds his first miracle at the marriage in Cana. No sooner had he given that remarkable evidence of his divine power, than, after a few days’ sojourn at Capernaum, he went up to Jerusalem to the Passover. There are few things more observable than our Lord’s undeviating attention to the ceremonial law of the Jews. So long as he continued under his parents’ roof, we are told that “He went up with them every year to the feast of the Passover.”\* And now, when he had commenced his ministry, when he was looking to the end of these things which were so shortly to be abolished,† we find him just as unremitting as ever, in his observance of them. Only four Passovers occurred during the course of our Lord’s ministry; this mentioned in the text was the first, and Jesus suffered at the fourth. If we are permitted to

\* Luke ii. 41.

† See 2 Corinthians iii. 13.

conclude the history, we shall see that he was present in Jerusalem upon every return of this great solemnity. I mention this circumstance, because it appears desirable, in following so vast a narrative, embracing nearly the whole of the gospels of the four evangelists, to establish certain points in our minds which may act as way-marks to assist us in obtaining a clear and connected view of the different portions of the history, harmonized according to the times at which they took place. The only marks of this kind which occurred, at least that we can distinguish, are the Passovers which happened during our Lord's ministry. To these, then, we shall from time to time refer, to mark more distinctly at what period of our Lord's life we have arrived. In the first section of these lectures, we have already reviewed the history of our Lord, from his birth to the first Passover, after the commencement of his ministry; with this we now commence.

In the present section we purpose investigating the incidents which took place between the first and the second Passover; then, at some future period between the second and the third Passover; and lastly, between the third and the concluding Passover, with which the ministry and the life of our divine Master together terminated. Jesus, then, intending to keep this first Passover which had occurred since the commencement of his public ministry, arrived in Jerusalem, and immediately went to the temple.

The temple at Jerusalem was divided into several courts and enclosures. First and nearest to "the Holy Place" itself, was "the court of the priests," in which the sacrifices were offered; then the court appropriated to the women; then that in which the Israelites alone



THE HISTORY  
OF  
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR  
JESUS CHRIST.

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SECTION II.

FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND PASSOVER.

THE MOUNTAIN

AT THE MOUNTAIN  
THE MOUNTAIN

THE MOUNTAIN

worshipped; and then, "the court of the Gentiles," or outward court, in which "the proselytes of the gate" performed their devotions, and which occupied the whole space from the buildings of the temple to the wall which divided them from the common ground of the city. The whole of these courts went by the name of the temple, although this outward enclosure was open to the air, and was free for the admission of people of every country and faith. It was here that, by the sufferance of the priests, and probably to answer their mercenary views, the Gentiles were permitted to bring cattle for sale for the sacrifices, and doves for the offerings of the poorer class of lying-in women, and money, that the foreign coin, which Jews from distant parts of the world brought with them, might be changed into the current coin of Judæa, the half-shekel which every Jew paid for the service of the tabernacle.\* Our Lord having then proceeded to the temple, and finding there "those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting; when he had made a scourge of small cords," in all probability from the ropes which were used to fasten the cattle, "he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence, make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."†

It is remarkable that almost the first action of our Lord, after the commencement of his ministry, and the last before its close, should have been precisely the

\* Exodus xxx. 13.

† Psalm lxi. 9.

same; viz. the cleansing the temple of God. Twice did he perform this miracle; for it is difficult to conceive it less than miraculous, that one unarmed and unsupported individual should enter the court of the temple, and drive before him the numerous profaners of its sanctity, and unaided, fulfil that striking prophecy of Malachi, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."\* It was thus that our Lord began to "purify the sons of Levi," by correcting the outward abuses of the temple, preparatory to his far more searching and sifting purification of its inward deformities and sins; bequeathing a lesson to the visible church of God in after ages, that as in the most sacred of all human edifices, so in the most holy of all human institutions, abuses may in time intrude themselves, and that it is the part both of prudence and of holiness, not to deny their existence where they indeed exist, but, after the example of our Lord himself, to be the first to discover and remove them. So differently do men, in general, reason upon this head, that even to hint at an imperfection, or an abuse, in any human institution, is considered too often, as an act, at least, of wavering friendship, if not of treason and hostility. The consequence of this is, that instead of striving to remove imperfections as they

\* Malachi iii. 1—3.

arise, we are led rather to endeavour to conceal them even from ourselves; to abstain, through some undefined dread of calling down a curse instead of a blessing, from all attempts to remedy even those defects of which we ourselves are conscious; to hesitate in removing, as it were, even the ivy which is disfiguring the column, lest we pull down the column itself. But, brethren, there is both cowardice and faithlessness in this false alarm. The temple of God at Jerusalem could only remain the temple of God, by being from time to time refined, and purified, and made meet, and kept meet, for its master's presence. Twice, as we have before observed, did our Lord in his own person cleanse the temple; the first time he contented himself with telling the buyers and sellers that they were making God's house a "house of merchandise;"\* the second time he told them, with increasing severity, and a stronger omen of approaching judgment, that they had made the house of God a "den of thieves;"† but the third time he came to that temple, it was in that awful coming when "the abomination of desolation" was seen standing in the place "where it ought not,"‡ when the Roman eagle fleshed its beak in the bodies of the priests, and flapped its wings over the smouldering ruins of the temple.

O, that men were wise, that they would consider these things! Truly scriptural, and truly apostolical, as is the admirable Church Establishment of this country; its dearest friends cannot feel assured that no evils, no deformities, have, in the lapse of centuries, crept in; that no imperfections are to be found even in the outer courts of the sanctuary! While every true and con-

\* John ii. 16. † Matthew xxi. 13; and Mark xi. 17. ‡ Mark xiii. 14.

scientific Churchman must allow that the fabric of our Establishment, apostolical in its foundation, and scriptural in all its parts, stands forth pre-eminently in the circuit of God's visible temple, as "the Holy Place" of the whole earth; and while every enlightened Christian will agree that its liturgy, and its articles, and its homilies remain, like the "Holy of holies," preserved from contamination, by the Spirit of our God so visibly and all-pervadingly inhabiting them, there are those who wish well to our Zion, and yet believe that there is that on the exterior of the edifice, by the removal of which, the whole building would be incalculably improved, and beautified, and strengthened. And shall we refuse, because, thanks be to God, abuses have not found their way into the innermost recesses, and polluted the dearest shrines of our temple, shall we refuse to listen to those who are anxious to remove what they consider its outward deformities? or, fearful alternative! shall we wait until, not our friends, but our enemies, shall do for us what we might far more wisely and far more effectually, by God's help, have done for ourselves? Shall we wait until, under pretence of cleansing the outward courts of the temple, our assailants not only rend asunder the veil, and force their way into the sanctuary, and profane the Holy of holies, but ultimately destroy that which the Almighty has for so many centuries consecrated by his own immediate presence, and declared, by the blessings which have flowed from it to all the Protestant nations of the world, to be indeed, "the house of God, and the gate of heaven?"\*

In our Lord's reformation of the temple, brethren,

\* Genesis xxviii. 17.

there were two remarkable features, without the combination of which, no reformation can be either profitable or desirable. I allude to his zeal and to his discretion, one as obviously and as strikingly exemplified as the other. So great was his zeal, that even his disciples, when they beheld him alone encountering the enraged multitude of heathen traffickers, and driving them forth out of the temple, appear to have been alarmed either for his safety or his sanity, until they recollected that the Psalmist had foretold the wonderful fervour of the Redeemer's zeal; or, as it is expressed, until "they remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."\*

But if the disciples did not fail to observe the zeal of our Lord, we must not fail to remark his discretion. For while, as we are told, he drove out the oxen, which could easily be followed and regained, and poured out the money, which could as easily be gathered up again; you will observe, that he did not in a similar manner set at liberty the doves, for these, once upon the wing, would probably never again have been secured by their rightful owners; instead, therefore, of opening the cages, and putting the doves to flight, our Lord gently, though authoritatively, spoke to "those that sold doves, saying, Take these things hence."†

This, brethren, is the spirit, the only spirit, in which any really serviceable reformation of our temple can be conducted. There must be a steady, ardent, uncompromising "zeal for God,"‡ which will admit of no trifling, no compromise, with regard to the real corruptions of God's house, if any such there be; but at the

\* John ii. 17.

† John ii. 16.

‡ Romans x. 2.

same time, this zeal must be attended by a holy prudence, a moral courage, which will sacrifice nothing to the restless desire of change, or the weakness of timid friends, or the clamour of time-serving adversaries; but having removed those things which are really objectionable, and repaired what time\* or inadvertency may have injured, will take its stand upon the great and substantial excellencies of our spiritual edifice, and resist, even unto the death, all destructive interference with them.

“ Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What signs showest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things ?”†

When the Jews beheld our Lord thus boldly undertaking as a private individual the great work of reformation, it was not only natural, but praiseworthy, that they should inquire into the nature of his authority, and the extent of his commission. But when they who had heard him “speak as never man spake,”‡ saw him thus act as never man acted, with a power and success perfectly superhuman, it was the height of incredulity and folly to demand a sign. For what sign more conclusive than the prophecy of Malachi, to which I have before referred, “ Who shall stand when he appeareth ?”§ and the “ scourge of small cords,” by which most inadequate

\* We are expressly told in the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer, which was authorized by the House of Convocation in 1661, that “ the particular forms of Divine Worship, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and so acknowledged; it is but reasonable, that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the *various exigency of times and occasions*, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those that are in place of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient.”

† John ii. 18.

‡ John vii. 46.

§ Malachi iii. 27.



instrument so remarkable a fulfilment of the prophecy had been produced?

Our Lord, therefore, instead of a sign, to satisfy their scepticism, gives them a prediction, more perplexing than even the incident which they had just witnessed. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, the disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."\*

How "slow of heart"† were even the disciples of our Lord, in comprehending the gracious words which fell from his lips, if, as it appears, they never understood this simple declaration of the Saviour, until they were taught it amid the glories of his resurrection from the dead. Take courage then, my brethren, if there be many dark passages to you at the present moment in the revealed word of our God. If you are among the true followers of our Lord, you will not make them a cause of anxiety or distrust. While the Jews, loud in their cavillings, misinterpreted and condemned our Lord's assertion, the disciples in silence pondered it in their hearts; and what was the consequence? that in after days, when their views of divine truth became clearer, they remembered the words which Jesus had spoken, and believed. There are few advanced Christians who will not tell you, that those passages in holy writ which in the days of their uninstructed blindness, or at the commencement of their spiritual course, were their greatest stumbling-blocks, have now become, since

\* John ii. 19—22.

† Luke xxiv. 25.

their eyes have been opened, among their most precious and soul-encouraging views of divine truths; and with him of old who feasted upon the honey which the bees had made, even in the carcass of the lion which would have destroyed him, so can they say, "Out of the strong came forth sweetness;"\* for what were once the most perilous portions of God's word, are now "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb."†

The chapter concludes by informing us, that during this Passover at Jerusalem "many believed on his name, when they saw the miracles that he did."‡ When men are drawn more by Christ's wonders than by his words, their conversion is seldom real, seldom permanent. We should feel more pleasure in one follower who is drawn to Christ by a sense of his own misery, and helplessness, and sin, than in fifty who are allured by the sight of miracles, and wonders, and signs. Accordingly we are told, that Jesus "did not commit himself to them, because," as the apostle emphatically remarks, "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."§

We would urge you, brethren, as to the practical result of these concluding verses, to consider what should be the effect upon your own minds of this great gospel truth, "Jesus knoweth all men:" Jesus, therefore, knoweth you. As the Psalmist says, "The righteous God trieth the very heart and reins."|| If he, as he most surely does, knows what is in your heart, what does he discover there? Hear from his own lips, from the mouth of him who "knew what was in man," what he really sees in that sink of corruption. "Out of the heart," says the blessed Jesus, in the 15th chapter of St.

\* Judges xiv. 14.

† Psalm xix. 10.

‡ John ii. 23.

§ John ii. 24, 25.

|| Psalm vii. 9.

Matthew's Gospel, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile the man." And, brethren, these are the things, not indeed in the full growth of their frightful maturity, but in the malignant and hateful embryo, which our Lord beholds in every natural heart that he inspects. He sees the full-grown murder in the angry thought, the matured adultery and fornication in the infant lust, the ripened blasphemy in the first buddings of doubt. If, then, this righteous Saviour was so filled with holy indignation at the pollutions of God's temple, that he could not refrain himself until he had driven forth every offender, "of how much sorer punishment"\* shall not he be the minister of to those who cherish such corruptions in the living temple of their God. For "know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."† Rest, then, on no outward reformation, no partial cleansing of the affections and heart, but seek his presence who is "as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap."‡ Admit him fully and freely into your hearts, at the door of which he is so continually knocking, and he will do for the spiritual temple of your body what he did for the Lord's house at Jerusalem; he will cleanse, and purify, and sanctify, until every unholy lust, and debasing passion, and unworthy temper, shall be driven forth before him, and your "whole body, and soul, and spirit, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that hath called us, who also will do it."§

\* Heb. x. 29. † 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. ‡ Malachi iii. 2. § 1 Thess. v. 23.

## LECTURE II.

ST. JOHN iii. 1, 2.

“ There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night.”

WE have now been enabled to trace, by the light of God's word, the important incidents in the life of our divine Saviour, during more than thirty years of his earthly pilgrimage; and yet, strange as it may appear, we have not hitherto arrived at a single instance of his familiar conversation. One or two sentences which have fallen from his lips have, indeed, been preserved, precious gems in the treasury of Scripture, but we have yet had no continued discourse, no specimen of the manner in which our Lord delineated the great and wonderful scheme which he came to announce and to fulfil. We are this morning, however, to be admitted to this high privilege; we are to hear the great and leading truths of our holy religion developed by our divine Master himself; we are to follow him into his retirement, to listen to his most secret converse; and thus to ascertain from the gracious words which dropt from his lips, all that is most important for man to know on this side heaven. “ Take heed, therefore, how ye hear,”\* “ for to whom much is given, from him shall much be required.”†

\* Luke viii. 18.

† Luke xii. 48.

It was, then, at the time of the first passover, after the commencement of our Lord's ministry, and very shortly after the remarkable incident which we reviewed in the last lecture, during one of those nights which succeeded days of labour and of miracle, and in which our Lord withdrew himself from the society even of the most beloved disciples, to enjoy the fullest communion with his heavenly Father, that the following deeply interesting conference took place.

"A man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews," *i. e.* one of the members of the Sanhedrim, or great council among the Jews, came to our Lord. The evangelist mentions expressly that Nicodemus came by night, as a remarkable feature in the incident, and forming, no doubt, an evidence of the timidity of the inquirer's character, which we see very fully borne out by his subsequent conduct. But though the evangelist, writing by the Spirit of God, has seen fit to mention this proof of the new convert's cowardice, for our edification, our Lord never once mentioned it to Nicodemus himself, during the whole of their interview; so kindly, so mercifully considerate was he even to the most obvious infirmities of those who sought him in sincerity.

Would that Christians would attend more to these minute touches of character to be found in the life of the Lord Jesus, that they might walk the more closely in his footsteps. Were he their constant model, how differently would they act towards those who are anxious in sincerity to inquire into the things belonging to their peace, but over whom the fear of the world still possesses so large an influence, that, like Nicodemus, they cannot yet escape altogether from its thral-

dom. In dealing with all such, let the compassionate Saviour be your pattern: be willing to guide, and instruct, and counsel, even where much remains of that, which in a more advanced Christian would be a scandal to the name. How many an inquirer into divine truth has been driven back upon the world again, because he was expected at once to brave its ridicule and its scorn, before he had acquired that knowledge and that love, that depth of feeling and of interest in religion, which are indispensable to enable him to "rejoice" at the malice of his enemies, and to "be exceeding glad"\* when they revile him. Had our Lord closed his doors against Nicodemus, because he, who was ashamed to acknowledge the Messiah in the face of the world, crept to his lowly dwelling under the shadows of the night, how great would have been the injury to the infant Church, how unutterable the loss to the soul of this timid inquirer.

As soon as Nicodemus was admitted into our Lord's presence, he thus addressed him, "Rabbi," giving him that title of respect which, as the word of God informs us, the Pharisees so dearly loved, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."†

"We know that thou art a teacher come from God;" we, the Pharisees: what a confession! These very men, then, who dared, in after days, to ascribe the miracles of our Lord to Beelzebub; who dared to make a boast of their unbelief, and to ask, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?"‡ possessed, at this very time,

\* Matthew v. 12.

† John iii. 2.

‡ John vii. 48.

a positive conviction in their own minds that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of God! Proving, most unanswerably, that the sin against the Holy Ghost, with which our Redeemer charged them, was no sin of ignorance, no sin into which, unpremeditatedly and unconsciously, the hapless victim may be led; but the bold and intentional opposition of those who know the Saviour, and hate his pretensions, and defy his power, and blaspheme his Spirit.

Our Lord thus called upon, by one who in the single sentence upon which we have been commenting, may be said to have thrown aside the weapons of rebellion and acknowledged his allegiance to his rightful Sovereign, enters at once upon the developement of the great gospel-scheme of salvation.

Believing that this is perhaps, the most connected view which our Lord ever gave of these high mysteries, in those discourses, at least, which the Spirit of God has seen good to bequeath to us, I shall call your attention to its arrangement, before I offer a few brief observations upon it, only premising, that in these lectures, while we may slightly mark the more important portions of our Lord's discourses, it does not at all enter into our intention to expatiate upon every verse.

1st. In this conversation, our Lord distinctly lays down the doctrine of the necessity of an entire renovation of our fallen nature, in the case of every individual who shall enter the kingdom of God.

2dly. He preaches the gospel in the fullest and freest manner in which the gospel ever yet was preached to a fallen world; proving that a simple dependence upon himself, the everlasting Saviour, is the sinner's only hope; and, at the same time, that it is a full and suffi-

cient hope for every individual sinner who does not wilfully reject it, to the end of time.

And he then concludes by setting the matter home to the heart of Nicodemus, by a representation of the inevitable effects of unbelief, its cause, and its punishment.

1. The clear and convincing statements of the necessity of an entire renewal of our nature, in all and each who hope to participate in eternal blessedness.

With this our Lord commences, as the most simple, and as it were foundation-truth, of the whole edifice, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."\*

Plain and unquestionable as is this declaration, there are few, very few, which our Lord ever announced, that have given rise to so much opposition, and to such angry and bitter controversy; because there is no truth so mortifying, so humbling, to our fallen nature, and so improbable and unintelligible, till taught us by the Spirit of God. To tell the man who is boasting of his honour, and his rectitude, and his conscientiousness, and his benevolence, that there is still much, which God requires, to which he has not attained, would be in itself sufficiently displeasing to the natural heart; but to tell that man, as the Christian minister is bound to tell him, that with all the high and chivalrous notions of what he esteems the best and brightest virtues, that he must actually be "born again;" that he must undergo a great and visible change; that the virtues which he now delights in, and upon which he is contented to rest for his acceptance with God, are, as they at present grow, in

\* John iii. 3.



no degree better than weeds in the spiritual garden; that before they can please God, they must all be replanted in a different soil from that in which they have so long been flourishing; that the very heart and motives from which they spring must be altered; and that all which he has done, or is doing, from the love of self, or the love of man, must—not be left undone—but, before they can even be tolerated in the sight of the Most High,\* must flow from the love of God: this is indeed, at first, most unintelligible, and, when clearly understood, most offensive.

Nor have we yet reached the end of our difficulties, or the conclusion of the offence which this subject, when propounded as our Lord propounded it, almost invariably brings with it. We have to tell the man of the world, the virtuous, high-minded, benevolent, man of the world, that he needs this renewal of God's Spirit, as certainly as the most abject and degraded of his fellow-beings; that it was not more essential to the thief on the cross, to be thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, than to the most amiable and conscientious individual to whom we address ourselves. And even more; that this renewal is, from first to last, the work of the Most High, in which he who is the subject of it, has no merit, no claim, but is simply a recipient at the hand of infinite Power, and infinite Wisdom, and infinite Love.

There are few truths from which a preacher shrinks more sensitively than from this. He must, if he be understood, give pain to many, he may give offence even to more; and yet, if he desire to benefit their immortal souls, and to be as uninfluenced by every other feeling

\* See Art. XIII. of the Church of England.

as his divine Master was, this truth must be told, this axiom of the religion of Jesus Christ must be plainly, and strongly, and unequivocally laid down. It is because this and similarly painful truths are withheld, that our people "are destroyed for lack of knowledge,"\* and that on the great day we shall be ashamed to meet with those who, if we had been more faithful to our trust, and more regardless of human opinion, might have been "our joy and crown of rejoicing."† God forbid, then, that however painful to our own feelings, however contrary to your prejudices, or opposed to your practices, we should ever suppress, or modify, or pass slightly over, one of these great truths, so unutterably essential to your well-doing in eternity.

We repeat then, brethren, and may God write it as with a sunbeam on every heart here present, that there is no true Christianity without this new birth of the soul, this renewal of the heart, and affections, and motives, by the Spirit of God; for, as our Lord says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,"‡ or spiritual, and without this spiritual apprehension and spiritual feeling, you "cannot see the kingdom of God."§

Having in a late discourse spoken so very fully upon this high subject, and shown the perfect accordance both of our Baptismal Service, and the other accredited formularies of our Church, with this doctrine of an entire renewal of our fallen nature before we can see God, I shall not dwell upon it at the length which would otherwise have been requisite. But there is one portion of the conversation upon this point, to which it appears

Hosea iv. 6.

† 1 Thess. ii. 19.

‡ John iii. 6.

§ John iii. 3.

important to refer. Our Lord had said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and upon Nicodemus expressing his astonishment, and referring *that* to carnal things which Christ intended only to apply to spiritual things, he again repeats his assertion yet more plainly, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."\* Nicodemus, still dark and still wondering, again urges his inquiry, "How can these things be?"† and our Lord replies, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"‡

I confess that this inquiry of our Lord appears to me to contain a key to the whole mystery of this mysterious communication. If Jesus had now been proclaiming a truth which the Spirit of God had never breathed before, why this astonishment that a master of Israel did not comprehend it? But if, as it appears, our Lord was only referring to a truth which, however overlooked, or misunderstood, was still an undeniable truth of God, common to the Old dispensation as well as to the New, then, indeed, he might be surprised that a teacher of the law and of the prophets should be so "slow of heart"§ to learn it.

Let us then, for a moment, turn to the writings of the Old Testament, and see whether we cannot discover the reason that our Lord expected a Jewish Pharisee to understand the fundamental truth of the gospel. We shall there find the prophets, many centuries before, speaking just as clearly of the necessity of such a moral renovation or change, as our Lord now spake of, in the chapter before us. We shall find Moses speaking of the circumcision of the heart, without which the circum-

\* John iii. 5.    † John iii. 9.    ‡ John iii. 10.    § Luke xxiv. 25.

cision of the flesh was of no avail; we shall find Isaiah speaking of cities and nations being born again;\* and we shall find Ezekiel speaking of the Spirit breathing upon the dry bones of the house of Israel, and making them live unto the Lord:† and still more plainly in the well-known passage, referring to that identical moral change which Jesus preached to Nicodemus; “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”‡ In these passages there is so unquestionable a reference to a spiritual change to be effected in the heart by the power of God, that our Lord might well express his astonishment at the fact, that one who had himself learnt and himself taught, these Scriptures, should appear so lamentably ignorant of the spirituality of the truths which they contained.

If any thing, then, were wanting to induce you to weigh and to consider this great doctrine with the attention it deserves, surely you will find it in the fact, that it is a doctrine not drawn from a single text, or, as you may denominate it, a single hyperbolical expression in the gospel, but pervading every portion of God’s word; peculiar to no particular dispensation; prominent alike in the Old and in the New; emanating from the very nature of God, and from the fallen state of ruined man; and approving itself, when rightly understood, as completely to the conscience, as it clearly does to the reason, of every candid and reflecting reader of God’s holy word.

\* Isaiah xlix. 21.

† Ezekiel xxxvii. 9, 10.

‡ Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 27.

2dly. No sooner had our Lord removed those doubts and misapprehensions which arose in the mind of Nicodemus immediately upon the subject of the spiritual change being proposed to him, than we find the heavenly Teacher advancing from these "earthly things,"\* as he denominates them, to the more "heavenly things," or higher and more peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."†

Here, in these few verses, you may behold the entire gospel of Jesus Christ; and, brethren, mark well the claims which it possesses to your attention and respect. The gospel of Jesus, preached by Jesus, and in the very first discourse which he ever delivered! How is it possible to hear it with sufficient reverence, to receive it with sufficient gratitude, and to act upon it with sufficient promptitude, of determination and singleness of heart? We can conceive that many a well-meaning but incredulous attendant upon human teaching, might think within himself, when he leaves the temple of God, time after time, Men say that what they tell me is the gospel, and if it be the gospel, then, most assuredly, I know but little of it; but there are so many human systems, so much of human misrepresentation upon all these subjects, that I know not where to look for something plain, and simple, and intelligible, and strictly and literally true. If I could hear, though it were but one sermon from Christ himself, that I might know how he would address the perishing sinner, how he would proclaim the saving truths of

\* John iii. 12.

† John iii. 14-16.

his own gospel, then, like Thomas, I should really see and believe.

Brethren, at this day, this very hour, this desire is fulfilled; you have heard the gospel from the lips of Christ himself, unadulterated by human comments or human prejudices; you have heard enough for time, enough for eternity, in the gracious words of your Redeemer, which have now been repeated to you. Had you never heard one declaration of your Lord before, were you to never hear another, in treasuring up in your hearts the words, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," you possess the gospel; you have that which, if at once received as freely as it is freely offered, it is all you want, and all you ever can require. It speaks its blessed invitation to all ranks, all ages, all hearts, to the grossest and most hardened sinner upon earth, as freely as to the most moral, amiable, and unexceptionable character in this house of prayer; there is no single limitation, no one exception throughout a world of hearers and a world of sinners. If you believe in this matchless instance of the divine love, if you are willing at once, without waiting till you are more worthy, which is Satan's great snare in keeping men from Christ, but if you are willing at once, by God's grace, to believe that this is true, that there is sufficient and more than sufficient in Christ Jesus, to reconcile you to God; and if you will but cast your soul upon this all-sufficient Saviour for pardon and for life, "all things are yours;"\* Satan is vanquished, sin is pardoned, heaven is won.

Brethren, it is a fearful thing to hear the gospel of a Saviour's love; to incur the responsibility of such truths, such invitations as these now sounding in your ears; for the Spirit of God has declared that they must be "a

\* 1 Corinthians iii. 21.

savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death,"\* to every individual who hears them. Could I tell who would wilfully and ultimately reject them, I solemnly declare before God, that I would address that soul, and say—I beseech you to depart from us; listen not to these truths, if you have determined to resist them; if you come within the sound of them, I must speak of them, for “wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel;”† and you, therefore, must hear them; but, O, remember this, that every word of promise, every word of invitation, every word of a Saviour’s mercy and a Saviour’s love, which has this day fallen unheeded upon your ear, has dropt as a burning coal into your heart; to smoulder on, perhaps, through the few short years of remaining time, but to be rekindled with a flame which never shall be quenched, in the fires of eternity. For listen to the words with which our Lord closes his address: “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation,” *i. e.* this is the cause of their condemnation, “that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”‡ This is the cause of their condemnation, that the light of gospel truth has shone upon men’s paths, and that they have turned aside and struck off into the hidden ways of darkness, because their deeds were evil, and they resolved to persevere.

“He that believeth not, is condemned already.” Yes, brethren, these are the words of one who never willingly inflicted a moment’s pain, or spake one word of harshness. The sentence is gone forth, the sword is uplifted,

\* 2 Corinthians ii. 16.

† 1 Corinthians ix. 16.

‡ John iii. 18, 19.

it waits but the appointed moment to fall upon its victim. If there be a sight at which the angels of God must mourn and wonder, while they stand awaiting the signal for the destruction of the convicted unbeliever, it must be to see that unbeliever voluntarily placing himself within the sound of a gospel which he is resolved to disobey, and within the hearing of the voice of a Saviour whom he is resolved never fully and cordially to follow.

Do I say this, then, to deter any individual now present from seeking Christ? to drive away one humble inquirer who is stretching out a weak and feeble hand to touch if it were but the hem of the Saviour's garment? God forbid. There is no effort, no sacrifice, however dear, however costly, which they who know by happy experience the blessedness of a Saviour's love, would not most cheerfully make, to bring one such sinner to his Saviour's side. No, brethren, to you, and such as you, we can but repeat, what you have this day heard from the lips of our Master, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."\* Thanks be to God, for that one word, "WHOSOEVER:" it is a matchless word in such a context. I may fill it with my name, you with yours, each with his, all with theirs. May you who have never yet entered into a covenant with God through Jesus Christ, be led to do so this day, my beloved brethren; and may the spirit of our God grant to you, as he vouchsafed to Nicodemus, that the effect of these few sentences from the mouth of our Redeemer, may be seen in the renewed heart, and altered life, and fixed determination, by God's grace, to be "one with Christ and Christ with you,"† in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten.

\* John iii. 15.

† Communion Service.



## LECTURE III.

St. John iv. 10.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

AFTER the very interesting and instructive interview between our Lord and Nicodemus, which formed the subject of the last lecture, we find that Jesus departed from Jerusalem. The inspired historian says, “After these things,” probably referring to the conclusion of the Passover, to be present at which was the chief object of our Lord’s visit to the capital at that time, “After these things, came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.”\* It is computed, from a circumstance alluded to in the 35th verse of the 4th chapter, that our Lord remained in Judæa at this time for about six months; yet at this period, the spirit of God has furnished us with few details, beyond the facts which we gather from the other three evangelists,† that during this time the Baptist bore his last testimony to Jesus, and in consequence of his faithful reproof of Herod’s sin, was cast into prison.

\* John iii. 22.

† Mark vi. 17—21; Luke iii. 19; Matthew xiv. 3—5; John iii. 23 to the end.

No sooner had this event, the imprisonment of John, taken place, than the ministry of our Lord appears to have assumed a different and far more public character. The affecting words of the Baptist began now to be literally fulfilled, "He must increase, but I must decrease."\* As John's ministry was drawing to its close, and his voice becoming quenched in silence, the blessed accents of the Messiah were heard louder, and clearer, and more distinct, and the "fame of him went throughout all the region round about:"† and "from that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."‡

During six months, then, our Lord was thus engaged in building, if we may so say, upon the foundation which the ministry of John had already laid, and in converting to himself "a people prepared for the Lord" in Judæa, through the instrumentality of the preaching of his faithful servant.

The Pharisees, however, who had already manifested their hostility towards John, began to view with still greater suspicion and jealousy the preaching of Jesus; and the consequence was, that our Lord thought it prudent to withdraw for a time from their observation, and thus to elude the persecution that threatened. Men seldom require either precept or example upon the subject of consulting their personal safety, or withdrawing from the persecuting efforts of their enemies: still there are those to whom such advice is not misplaced, who from natural disposition, or from defective religious instruction, are led to court opposition as the test of their sincerity, or the necessary evidence of religious truth. To such we would say, this did not Jesus; he not only

\* John iii. 30.

† Luke iv. 14, 15.

‡ Matthew iv. 17.

advised his disciples, "When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another,"\* but he acted upon this advice himself, with remarkable consistency. He availed himself of none of those supernatural means which were within his power, to silence the opposer, or destroy the persecutor; but he simply withdrew himself, that the weakest of his followers, who would have no such supernatural means at his command, might feel, that in flying from an hour of temptation or persecution, he was merely following a divine precept, and a divine example. Be ready, then, cheerfully to bear the cross of opposition or persecution when it lies in your way, but go not out of your way to seek it. Since the Head has been crowned with thorns, the feet have never yet been permitted to walk on roses; but God's times are the best times; and when he intends that you should carry a cross, be sure you will not want an enemy to lay it on your shoulders. "When, therefore," says St. John, "our Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John," *i. e.* more disciples than ever John had made, "though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples; he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria; then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well; and it was about the sixth hour."†

There are few pictures of our Lord presented to us in holy writ, more interesting than that which is conveyed in the verses we have just read. To behold the Saviour of the world so entirely endowed with all the

\* Matthew x. 23.

† John iv. 1-6.

sinless infirmities of our nature, so completely partaker of our necessities and wants, as to be thus seated, hungry, and thirsty, and weary, upon the side of the well which lay in his way, while his disciples, of stronger frame, as it would appear, and hardier habits than himself, had gone forward to the nearest town to obtain provisions.

Had nothing more been mentioned than the single fact of Jesús sitting thus on the well-side, "weariéd with his journey," it would have been a blessing to the Christian pilgrim, so often wearied with his journey, so often, like the Israelites of old, "discouraged because of the way." To behold him in whom is all our hope and all our confidence, thus partaking of our infirmities, actually, as it were, to see him sinking beneath the heat and the toil of his mid-day journey, tends more to convince us that he was "very man,"\* to assure us of his sympathy and his compassion, than all the declarations of sympathy, or all the words of compassion which he ever uttered. But it was not for this alone that the circumstance was recorded; it was for what was done, and spoken, and taught, and promised, during that hour of weariness and exhaustion, and at that lonely well, that it became the subject of the chronicler.

While our Lord was thus sitting, there cometh a woman from the neighbouring town, to draw water for the use of herself and household. "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink."† The woman, one of an unhappy and ruined class, whose feelings of compassion and tenderness are hardened by the searing

\* Second Article of our Church.

† John iv. 7.

effects of a life of profligacy and sin, instead of hastening to the relief of the wayworn traveller, whose very aspect might have pleaded with sufficient eloquence for the boon for which he sought, answered tauntingly, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."\* You despise and scorn us when you have no need of our services, strange that you should condescend to receive a favour at the hands of one so despicable.

Our meek and lowly Master, unmoved by the obvious sarcasm of this guilty woman's speech, mildly replies, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."† Surely the words of the prophet were words of truth, when he said, "I am found of them that sought me not."‡ Little did this poor creature imagine, when she brought her pitcher from the walls of Sychar, that she should carry back those waters of life which would unceasingly flow on throughout eternity; little could she have conceived, that at that well's side, whither she had so often gone before, she should that day meet the Saviour of the world. Would that a gracious God might at this hour grant us a repetition of the blessing, that some, yea if it be but one, as poor and as guilty as this Samaritan harlot, might find to-day, that which they have often wandered hither without finding, that for which even this day, perhaps, they are not seeking—a God to serve, a Saviour to redeem, a Holy Spirit to sanctify them.

"If thou knewest the gift of God," said our Lord.

\* John iv. 9.

† John iv. 10.

‡ Isaiah lxxv. 1.

Yes, brethren, "If thou knewest!" is the solution of all the indifference in the world. It is not because you do not need a Saviour, that you do not hasten to his feet: it is not because you have already found refuge from the wrath of an offended God, that you are careless and indifferent in seeking the ark of the covenant; it is simply because you do not know "the gift of God." If you knew the preciousness of a Redeemer, his unsearchable riches, his unspeakable loveliness, his all-sufficiency to supply your every necessity, to cure your every malady, to fulfil all your need, so little necessity would there be for us so constantly to invite you to a Saviour, that you would not, because you could not, keep away from him. You would, indeed, "ask of him;" every day would see you at his mercy-seat, every hour behold you drawing from that living fountain; and oh, would not this, and every such blessed opportunity as the present see you as welcome guests at that Redeemer's table? Yes, beloved brethren, it is ignorance, and ignorance alone, for sin itself is only ignorance in its worst disguise, which now keeps you from your Redeemer's side, and which will, if persevered in, hereafter banish you from your Redeemer's kingdom.

The Samaritan woman's ignorance was not yet overcome. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;"\* and, accordingly she replies, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?" While the thoughts of Jesus are soaring far above, upon that heavenly river "which makes glad the everlasting city of God,"† she is only thinking of the well which lies at

\* 1 Corinthians ii. 14.

† Psalm xlv. 4.

her feet. Bowed down to earth, how seldom and how slowly do our affections and our thoughts wing upward their dull and heavy flight. Truly said an apostle, we "are of the earth, earthy;"\* all our thoughts, all our desires, all our feelings, until enlightened by the Spirit of our God, are clogged, and fettered, and bound down, to this same speck of earth, and if they ever take a moment's flight above its surface, how soon their wings are closed, and they drop down again to earth. "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." She sees no pitcher, and she believes not that Christ can ever reach the waters of that deep well; fit emblem of the faith of the world, which will believe in nothing that it could not have anticipated by its own reason, or that it cannot measure with its own guage. You know not the manner in which God will help you, and therefore you will not believe that he can help you. Like Samson, you imagine that God must "plough with your heifer;"† like the woman before us, that he must draw with your pitcher, or that nothing which he can offer will be worthy of your reception. Our Lord, in his reply, still refrains from all animadversion upon her dulness, as he had before, upon her unkindness; nothing in the creature, however provoking, can tempt the Lord for a single moment to depart from the infinity of his loving-kindness, compassion, and forbearance. Under the most aggravating circumstances "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."‡

Jesus, therefore, still bears with her, and endeavours yet once more to affect her spiritual apprehension. He answers, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst

\* 1 Corinthians xv. 47.

† Judges xiv. 18.

‡ Psalm ciii. 14.

again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”\* “The water that I shall give him,” as the evangelist himself explains it in a future chapter, was “the Spirit which they that believe on him shall receive.”† That blessed gift, by which the first faint feelings of the spiritual life are kindled; that little spring, which at its source gushes forth a narrow and a feeble rill, but which shall flow on, widening and strengthening, until every bank of sin, and ignorance, and worldliness, and finally, of mortality itself, which now curbs and compresses it, shall be broken down, and the windows of heaven shall be opened, and the full streams of God’s grace shall be poured forth, and this rill shall become an ocean, and grace, smothered here under corruption and infirmity, shall get leave to expatiate itself in glory, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life!”

Of these mysteries, however, the Samaritan woman had, indeed, little apprehension: she replies, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”‡ Now commences the second part of this remarkable conference: our Lord, finding that the free offers of his grace and mercy made so little impression upon his hearer, and were, in fact, so perfectly unintelligible, changes his point, and resolves to unmask her to herself, and to convince her of her own sin and unworthiness. To effect this, he adopts a method as remarkable for its wisdom as its mercy; he does not upbraid her with her sinful course of life, with which

\* John iv. 13, 14.

† John vii. 39.

‡ John iv. 15.



he was perfectly acquainted, but he rather leads her to a willing confession of it, and displays before her at the same time his own unerring knowledge, and therefore, his unquestionable pretensions as the Messiah of God. "Jesus saith unto her, Go call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly."\* How difficult a thing it is to convict of sin! So deep and subtle is the human heart, so many are its intricacies, so close its windings, that it is not until it is ripped open by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,"† that its contents are known even to its possessor. We should have thought that such a declaration as this by the Saviour, would have brought the Samaritan woman at once a convicted sinner, a humbled penitent, a broken-hearted suppliant, to his feet. But no; even this open detection of her sin was insufficient, she still has one subterfuge left, the subterfuge of every sinner who flies from a consciousness of sin, to the adoption of some formal scheme of worldly religion, for a refuge. She immediately endeavours to evade the force of our Lord's remark, by turning the conversation to the external observances of religion, the comparative sanctities of the Jewish and Samaritan temples, the great subject at that time of religious dispute. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet; our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."‡ But it was in vain that she thus struggled

\* John iv. 16-18.

† Ephesians vi. 17.

‡ John iv. 19, 20.

to get free; the Lord of life, who “came to seek and to save that which was lost,”\* had found this wandering sheep of the Redeemer’s fold, and like the good shepherd who has discovered a runaway lamb, let the thoughtless creature struggle as it may, he will not be satisfied until he has brought it home on his shoulders rejoicing. How many here present have cause to thank the Lord of life, that he has acted thus with them! How many of you, my beloved brethren, now safe within the fold, would still have been among the wandering, had not the same gracious Saviour dealt with you as he now dealt with her, and spite of all the determinations of the natural heart to resist and to procrastinate, drawn you with the bands of love, and united you to himself; and in giving himself for your portion, has given that which, once enjoyed, you would not barter for ten thousand worlds.

Observe, then, how entirely our Lord’s reply goes to the subversion of all her prejudices, and to the establishment of true and vital religion in her heart. “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”† “God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”‡ Teaching at once that important doctrine so little known even to the most enlightened worshipper then, so often forgotten now, that it is to the state of the affections and heart, and to that alone, that God will look for acceptable worship. “God is a spirit,” and nothing but spiritual devotion can please or satisfy him.

Brethren, are there any among you who need the

\* Matthew xviii. 11.

† John iv. 21.

‡ John iv. 24.

lesson which this poor thoughtless Samaritan needed? Any who come week after week, and year after year, to this house of prayer, and have never yet discovered the real method of access to the Father, never offered yet one acceptable prayer? If you are not utterly indifferent to these things, pray that you may pray, seek the spirit of prayer and of supplication from him that "giveth liberally and upbraideth not;"\* one single sentence warm from the heart, and offered in the name and faith of Jesus, will reach the mercy-seat more surely, and bring down blessings more abundantly, than whole centuries of the cold, formal, heartless devotions, with which, alas! even our Christian temples are too frequently profaned.

The woman, as it appears, now softened and convinced by the reply of our Lord, answers, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he."†

Never throughout our Lord's whole ministry, with, perhaps, a single exception, did he thus plainly and unequivocally declare himself. In general, the tendency of his replies was, "If ye believe not me, believe the works."‡ He left it to his miracles to stamp truth and authenticity upon his doctrines, but here he found one who had, probably, never heard of his doctrines, and certainly never seen a miracle; and with that tenderness and love which beamed through every part of his conduct and conversation, he proclaims himself to her in a manner which he had never done, even to the dearest and most faithful of his disciples, "I that speak

\* James i. 5.

† John iv. 25, 26.

‡ John x. 38.

unto thee am he." And now the great work appears to have been achieved; the rebel heart was broken, the weapons of opposition thrown down, the sinning soul converted; that was begun to which eternity itself shall see no end. The accents spoken beside that lonely well were heard in heaven, and angels rejoiced over one more sinner that repented, over one more of those blessed and happy names which are "written in the Lamb's book of life."\*

I need not tell you that in the feelings of that blissful moment, all else was disregarded or forgotten; the very errand for which she thought she had come, was disregarded; the empty water-pot was left beside the well; while its happy owner, with the expansive communicativeness of genuine grace, had fled to call her friends and her neighbours together, to rejoice with her over the sheep which was found, and to seek, and to see, and to bless the good shepherd. "She went her way into the city," says the evangelist, "and saith to the men, come see a man,"—not, who has decided the question between our temple and the temple at Jerusalem, oh no, that was all now forgotten; subjects such as these sufficed to interest her in her days of darkness, but how different was it now,—“come see a man, who told me all things that ever I did.”† Come see a man who has convinced me that I am a sinner; see a man who has reclaimed and converted even me, the most hardened of you all; I do not say, *is* this the Christ? but, *is not* this the Christ? I know that he is, for he has revealed himself to me, and is already to my soul, “the chiefest among ten thousand,”‡ my hope, my joy, my Saviour, and my all.

\* Revelations xxi. 27.

† John iv. 28, 29.

‡ Canticles v. 10.

Brethren, little comment can be needed to such a story. He who came to seek and to save this woman of Samaria, came to seek and to save the best, the worst, the loveliest, the vilest among us. He is ready, equally ready this day, to receive every sinning child of Adam who will hear his voice and accept his invitation. "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation;"\* his arms, his heart, his house, his table, his heaven, are all open to you; "we pray you in Christ's stead,"† to enter in. Let him not say of you on the great day, as he once said of the Jews, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you,"‡ for they, when they heard, believed, but ye, when his fullest and freest offers were made you, believed him not.

\* 2 Corinthians vi. 2.

† 2 Corinthians v. 20.

‡ Matthew xxi. 31.

## LECTURE IV.

ST. JOHN iv. 50.

“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.”

AFTER the conversion of the woman of Samaria, which formed the subject of our last discourse, we find that our Lord remained two days at Sychar, strengthening those blessed impressions which had been made, and winning from among the Samaritans many souls to himself. He was, as he himself tells us, sent expressly to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel;”\* and yet, at the request of these Samaritans, who besought him to tarry with them, he abode two days with these “other sheep which were not of that fold.”† And how blessedly were those two days employed; “Many more believed on him,”‡ says the evangelist. When Christ teaches the lesson, the pupil is not long in learning; two days under his divine instructions, will do more than two years, or even twenty years, where human teachers speak, unaided by the Spirit and the presence of their Master. Our great object, the object of all Christian ministers, is simply this,—to lead our hearers

\* Matthew xv. 24.

† John x. 16.

‡ John iv. 41.

to the feet of the great Teacher of Israel; to send them to his written word, his throne of grace, his ever-present Spirit. For this we strive, and labour, and pray; we wish you to receive nothing upon our evidence, to take nothing upon trust; why should you learn of the scholar, when you may be taught of the Master? Why should you rest in human instructors, when the great Lord of life is as near as ever, and as willing as ever, to instruct you? So far from our feeling any thing of disappointment or dissatisfaction, that our word is not received upon our bare assertion, or our most elaborate demonstrations, we ask nothing more sincerely, we desire nothing more heartily, than this; to hear every individual, of the souls committed to our charge, express himself with the same feeling and in the same language as these Samaritan converts, "Now we believe, not because of thy words, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."\*

It is intended, as one great and most important end of the lectures in which we are now engaged, to present to you the character of the Lord of life, in such engaging, such endearing colours, *i. e.* so completely in the colours of truth, for there can be no exaggeration upon this wondrous theme, that you should, by his grace, feel constrained to seek him, and to know him, and to love him. Believe me, brethren, one of the highest privileges for which life is given you, one of the most blessed purposes for which these few short years of trial are vouchsafed, is to afford you an opportunity of becoming closely attached and intimately united in the

\* John iv. 42.

bonds of gratitude and affection, to the man Christ Jesus here on earth, that when you meet with him as God in heaven, you may meet him with a fervency of love, a depth of gratitude, in which the highest archangel cannot participate, which none indeed but pardoned sinners can ever feel. May the words now about to be spoken, by God's grace, be conducive to this high end.

After the evangelist has informed us that our Lord abode two days, and only two days, at Sychar, he says, that Jesus "departed thence, and went into Galilee;"\* and then immediately adds, "For Jesus himself testifieth, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country."† It does not appear at all evident, at first sight, what is the connexion between this observation, and our Lord's journey into Galilee. Upon looking, however, at the map, we find that Nazareth, which was called our Lord's own country or dwelling-place, and where he had been brought up, lies directly in the road between Sychar (or Sechem) in Samaria and Cana in Galilee,‡ whither he was now going; and this observation, that a "prophet hath no honour in his own country," seems, if we may so say, a kind of apology for passing by Nazareth and going at once to Cana. Nazareth had been blessed with our Lord's presence during nearly thirty years; it had seen his innocent and spotless childhood, and the matured and perfect holiness of his manhood; for it was there that he had "grown in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour, with God and man."§ It must have heard, therefore, many, very many of those words which

\* John iv. 43.

† See Map in Calmet.

† John iv. 44.

§ Luke ii. 52.



“never man spake;”\* and yet Nazareth honoured and loved him not. Like the every-day blessings of common life, his presence was too constantly enjoyed in Nazareth to be either appreciated or recognised as a blessing. Although, therefore, as we shall shortly see, our Lord does not refrain from preaching the gospel even in Nazareth, he thinks it unnecessary to honour it with the great miracle he was about to perform. He avoids Nazareth, and goes at once to Cana, “where he had made the water wine.”† Them that honour Christ, Christ will honour; while they who disregard his word, need never seek a miracle. “To him that hath, shall more be given, but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that he seemeth to have.”‡

No sooner had our Lord arrived at Cana, about forty miles distant from Sychar, where it is evident that his miraculous powers were well remembered, than the following incident occurred: “There was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum,” a town distant about thirty-three miles from Cana.§ “When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.”|| Had the son been in perfect health, the father, in all human probability, would never have taken this long journey; would never perhaps have seen, certainly would not have sought, the Saviour of the world. How few are there, who never come to Christ until sorrow or sickness drives them; how many probably, even in this house to-day, who may date the first feelings of love

\* John vii. 46.

† John iv. 46.

‡ Luke viii. 18.

§ Archbishop Newcome.

|| John iv. 46, 47.

to their Redeemer, the first attempts to seek the knowledge of his name, from the loss or the sickness of a beloved relative or an endeared friend. How many a mother, now in heaven, when she looks on the face of some loved infant safely housed with her beneath his Heavenly Parent's roof, sees in the cause of former bitterness, the blessed instrument which God employed to bring her to himself. Who can deny that even the joys of Heaven may be heightened by retrospections such as these? Blessed is that loss however grievous, that sorrow however severe, which brings us if it be but one step nearer to our Father's house, which unites us, in any, the least degree, the more closely to our adorable Redeemer!

No sooner had this mourning parent presented his request to our Lord, than Jesus answered, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die."\* The natural impatience of the father overcame even the wonted courtesy of the ruler; he scarcely waits until Jesus had finished his reproof, and when heard, his full heart heeds it not; his child, his beloved child, is all that the anxious parent dwells upon, and his restoration to health all for which he pleads.

How few are there among the children of men who would have replied to such an interruption as the meek and lowly Jesus answered it. "Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth."† Not a word of reproof, for a faith so imperfect, that it believed Jesus could do that by his presence which he could not effect by his word; not a syllable of expostulation, that the father's

\* John iv. 48, 49.

† John iv. 50.

heart was too full to profit by the Saviour's lesson; all are overlooked or forgotten by our gracious Redeemer, at that moment, in the anxious desire to give health to the child and peace to the parent.

The word of power goes forth, "Thy son liveth;" the father unhesitatingly believes it, and immediately returns full of joy and confidence to his disconsolate family. But who are these who on the second morning of his homeward journey are hastening towards Cana with joyful steps to prevent, as they suppose, his unprofitable errand, and to recall him to his home? These are the ruler's servants, who, participating in the joy of the grateful family, bring the good tidings of the fulfilment of the promise, in the very words in which the promise itself had been expressed, "Thy son liveth." The nobleman, anxious to have his new-born faith confirmed, and not to attribute that to accident, which his own heart has already told him must have been the work of that wonderful Being from whom he had parted yesterday, inquires accurately of the servants, the very day, and even the hour, when his child had "begun to amend."\* But there were no gradations in that convalescence, there were no beginnings of amendment in the cures of the Heavenly Physician; "Yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him," completely and entirely left him, replied the wondering servants. Then the father remembered that at that very hour, while more than thirty miles distant from his patient, the wonder-working Nazarene had with a single sentence checked the pulse's beat, and stilled the maddening current of the blood, and cooled the flushed and fevered cheek,

\* John iv. 52.

and spoken health and life into that drooping frame. Who could resist such testimony to the fact, that it must be the Maker and the Maker only, who could so repair the work. "Himself believed, and his whole house."\* Behold a double miracle! for as Bishop Hall well remarks, "With one word does Christ heal two patients, the son of his fever, the father of his unbelief!"

"This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee."†

We have now contemplated the remarkable and merciful conduct of our Lord under three great and widely differing circumstances, at the commencement of his ministry, before a single sermon had been preached, or a single instance of his public instructions has been recorded. It appears as if there were some wise and holy purpose to be attained by this, as if in fact our Lord would teach by actions before he taught by words; as if he would so unquestionably manifest his character by these acts of condescending mercy, that no careful inquirer, to the end of time, should ever be in danger of misunderstanding him.

In the three cases to which I allude, we distinctly see the conduct of the Saviour of the world towards ignorance, and sin, and suffering.

I. In Nicodemus there was ignorance.

II. In the Samaritan woman, sin.

III. In the Capernaum nobleman, suffering.

Each differing widely from the other, and yet we find the Saviour acting alike to all; the same considerate forbearance—the same affectionate compassion—the same sympathizing love. Surely, then, it was not

\* John iv. 53.

† John iv. 54.

without a motive that the Spirit of God has recorded these three striking incidents, and sculptured them thus, as it were, in bold relief upon the very portal of the temple. No, the motive is obviously that, to which we have just referred; and from which we may derive this most encouraging lesson, viz. Approach the Lord Jesus Christ in whichever state of mind you may, whether ignorant, sinful, or suffering, you shall find the strongest encouragement to advance; you shall see nothing to alarm, but every thing to allure you to him, whose name is love, and who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."\*

No lesson, we should imagine, brethren, less hard to learn, and yet in reality none so difficult of acquirement.

I. Let me apply it to the consolation of the ignorant. Alas! how many of the worldly wise and worldly learned must be content to take their stand among the ignorant, upon subjects such as these. We will suppose, then, that some are present, whose feelings might be thus expressed: I am well convinced that there is no real happiness out of Christ, that unless I can truly betake myself to him, I never can enjoy the consciousness of sin forgiven, and heaven made my own; but I do not understand these things as others do, I have had little opportunity and less inclination to learn them, and I feel that I must become more fully acquainted with the great mysteries of salvation, that I must read my Bible more, and know it better, before I can hope for that comfort in Christ Jesus, which others feel.

Brethren, the first of the three examples before us, sufficiently answers these objections. You cannot go

\* Hebrews xiii. 8.

to Christ more ignorant than Nicodemus went; it is impossible. You are not invited to go to Christ because you know him, but because you do not know him; ignorance itself is a plea sufficient. "Ask wisdom of him," says St. James, "who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not."\* How encouraging and how beautiful is the injunction. Others will teach, but they, even unintentionally, upbraid you while they teach; their very knowledge almost upbraids your ignorance, and there is something painful in exposing our ignorance to our fellow-men. It is not so with Christ; he is already better acquainted with it than you yourselves are, and yet he upbraids you not. Do you, then, desire a saving knowledge of him? Express your wishes to him in humble, faithful, fervent prayer, and he will not, he cannot deny you. He will manifest himself to you, as he does not unto the world; he will teach you by his Spirit; he will elevate your heart and sanctify your soul, while he enlightens and instructs your mind. It is not in our power to tell you either the manner or the measure in which he will do this; but if you doubt whether he can do it, or if you doubt whether he really will do it, go into the poorest cottage—where Christ has gone before you—enter into conversation with its inmates, and you will be astonished at the manner in which the most uneducated peasant in the land, who has been taught by Christ, will express himself upon those great subjects, which to the worldly wise, perhaps to you yourself at this moment, are perfectly unintelligible. "All thy children are taught of thee,"† said both a prophet and an apos-

\* James i. 5.

† Isaiah liv. 13; John vi. 45.

tle; God has not one ignorant child in all his adopted family, not one who when he enters heaven shall be ignorant of the "New Song," "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."\* Because the Spirit of God is the Teacher, and where he teaches, nothing necessary to salvation is left untaught.

Ignorance, however, is not the only or the greatest barrier which keeps men from Christ.

II. By far the most frequent and most insurmountable is sin. Let me, then, address a few words to the *sinner*, upon the character of Christ, before we enter upon the consideration of his public ministry.

It is the daily, the hourly excuse of thousands, I am not worthy to go to the Saviour, I dare not go to him, my sins are so many, so grievous, so disgraceful. He would drive me from his presence. If you ever think or reason thus, it is simply because you do not know the character of him with whom you have to do. Pity, not indignation, is the feeling with which the Saviour views the sinner. Fellow-sinners may act harshly to you, but the Saviour never can. Look only at the Samaritan woman, her slowness, her dulness, her unkindness, her sinfulness. Did any, or did all these united, induce the Saviour of the world to utter a single reproach, to speak one unkind, unfeeling word; or to hesitate in the great work of converting her to himself? Did they not rather increase his tenderness, because he saw that she was so utterly destitute, so entirely lost? Brethren, when will you learn to know the Saviour of

\* Revelations v. 9.

sinner? Why will you not learn it by studying the Saviour's character, where alone it is to be found, in the pages of his revealed word? You cannot learn it in the world, it is impossible; through all the countless generations of our fallen race, there has been no individual in any, the remotest degree, to whom we should dare to liken Jesus. There are doubtless, at all times, men of kindness, affection, and sympathy among us, men who pity and feel for the sinner, but it is for the sinner mourning and broken-hearted that men feel; it is for the sinner when he ceases to deserve exclusively the name, that men reserve their tenderest sympathy and best compassion. Is it not so with Christ. While he hates sin, he "willeth not the death of a sinner;" for were we not all sinners, when he loved us, even to the death. Does not the Spirit of God most emphatically pronounce this, when he says, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."\* If you are at this moment sinning with the highest hand and the proudest heart,—if you are now sitting among God's people, a mere painted sepulchre, a hardened hypocrite, preparing to return to your home, laughing to scorn all that you have this day heard of a Saviour's tenderness, and a Saviour's love, be assured that that same Saviour, who will, if you remain unchanged, himself pronounce your sentence of unalterable and everlasting wo, by no means will your destruction; so far from it, that he is waiting to be gracious, and while he must hate and condemn the sin, is only anxious to spare, and pardon, and receive the returning sinner.

\* Romans v. 8.



Do you inquire,—Might I then, even now, stop in mid career; might I at once, borne along as I now am, upon the full tide of impiety and sin, but feeling my misery, and wretchedness, and guilt, and desiring to part from it for ever,—might I even now, stretch out my hand, and cling, as with a drowning grasp, to my Redeemer, and would he not strike me from him, and say, “Depart from me, ye cursed?” Or would he not, at least, tell me to seek him, when some real and substantial amendment had given proof of my repentance, and when higher and holier feelings had established themselves within my bosom? We answer, is there upon record a single instance to justify you in such a conclusion? No! the Saviour is, pre-eminently, the sinner’s friend. That you are a sinner and need him, that you are a sinner and willing to forego your sins, that you are a sinner and desirous to seek and to be saved by him, is sufficient claim to him, to all he is, to all he can bestow. He came to help you while in your sins, and to save you from your sins, not with the cold courtesy of the world to congratulate you upon your escape from difficulties, from which it never aided you to flee, but to be himself the cause and the instrument of your escape. He does not stand upon the bank, and wait till the drowning wretch has swam ashore, and then encumber him with aid. As with the sinking Peter, so it is with you; the eternal Son of God is with you upon those dark waters; only stretch out your hand, and it will reach the Saviour’s protecting arm. Wait not, then, until your motives are more pure, or your faith more strong, or your actions more holy, or till you have a stronger desire to be saved; attempt these things in your own strength, and all will assuredly be lost: but

come at once to him who alone can purify your motives, and strengthen your faith, and regulate your conduct, and give the desire. The faith which Jesus gives, and which Jesus loves, is that which brings you at once, with all your sins upon your head, like the feeble pilgrim, to drop your heavy burden at the foot of the cross. Wait until you are rid of it, before you come, and you will for ever stay away. Nothing but the attraction of the cross has power to draw it from you. Come only within this blessed influence, and you will then be enabled to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and to run with patience," and to terminate with joy, "the race which is set before you."\*

III. There is still one last and valuable hint to be deduced from the third of these important incidents, more immediately before us this day: it is this—since sin and ignorance are not barriers to keep you from a Saviour's love, still less is suffering.

Let me, then, speak to the sufferer, as I have already to the ignorant and the sinner. In a suffering world, there never yet was such an assembly as the present, in which no sufferer found a place.

Is there, then, within these walls, one, at this time mourning for the loss of friends, of health, of happiness, surely the happy will not complain if I dedicate a passing word to an afflicted brother. I would say, then, to you who mourn, though it be but with a worldly or a selfish sorrow, the incident before us is not destitute of encouragement, even for you. There was nothing spiritual in the feelings of the nobleman, when he first

\* Hebrews xii. 1.

sought the Saviour; his sorrows were simply natural, he was mourning for a dying son; and yet how readily, how instantly, did Jesus sympathize with him, and help him. "Thy son liveth," were the first words of our compassionate Redeemer: before he converted his heart, he healed his son. Do not then say, but mine are selfish sorrows, mine are worldly cares, they never yet found balm and consolation in a Saviour's love; were I to go to him, it would not be for himself, but for his gifts. Brethren, the Saviour did not thus refine, when he gave forth his invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."\* Are you travailing with sorrow? are you heavy laden with the burden of oppression or wo? Christ will give you rest. Doubtless, the heavily laden with the burden of sin are first invited, but they exclude no other sufferers. There is no exception of age, or rank, or clime, the extent of the travail, or the weight of the burden; the childish sorrows of the weeping schoolboy are as much the subject of the Saviour's sympathy, as the matured wretchedness of the aged man; all come within the Saviour's invitation. It is the effect upon the sufferer's heart at which Christ looks, not at the extent of suffering; the broken heart, touched by his Spirit, may soon become a contrite heart; and this God has promised he will not despise.

It is a powerful recommendation to the Saviour that you are miserable, and that you believe that he both can and will redress your woes; it is sufficient for him that you come asking, seeking, knocking. He loves to be thus sought, and never yet refused an answer of conso-

\* Matthew xi. 28.

lation and peace, only be earnest in coming to him, seeking your peace, and rest, and happiness in him; only commence your acquaintance thus, and there is that in Jesus which will never let you go; there is that which requires only to be known, to be most fully and entirely loved. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" your mourning may at first be but from nature's grief, but if you seek and find the Saviour, he will soon awaken a more tender chord than this; he will soon strike upon your flinty heart, and the living waters shall gush forth, and tears of penitence shall intermingle with tears of suffering, until both shall be succeeded by tears of joy.

Finally, remember, my beloved brethren, for your "strong consolation,"\* that there is not now one glorified spirit through all the realms of infinite space and infinite bliss, who did not, when he came the first time to the Saviour, come ignorant, to be taught,—sinful, to be pardoned—suffering, to be healed. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" And when that victory is complete, and when as victors we shall enter the eternal mansions, strange as it may seem to mortal apprehension, we shall there discover that suffering, and ignorance, and sin, have peopled heaven.

\* Hebrews vi. 18.

## LECTURE V.

LUKE iv. 33, 34.

“And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.”

IN resuming our lectures upon the deeply instructive history of our Divine Master we commence with his residence at Capernaum. This was a city peculiarly adapted to the purposes of his ministry, both geographically and morally; for it stood on the western shore of the sea of Tiberias, and was the dwelling-place of that nobleman, whose son our Lord had miraculously healed, and whose present health, therefore, would bear continual evidence to the Almighty power of the Messiah. While in Capernaum, Christ recalled Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, who had, probably at our Lord's desire, betaken themselves to their wonted occupation during the period of their Master's temporary residence at Nazareth; and he added to them the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, who like the former, were engaged as fishermen on the lake of Tiberias. His gracious and encouraging declaration was the same to them all, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch

men.”\* How wonderfully fulfilled, let the day of Pentecost declare, when by a single sermon, preached by one of these very men, more than three thousand souls were enclosed in the gospel net; how far more wonderfully, let the present age demonstrate, when the same net, formed by these same Evangelists, continues to enclose so large a proportion of the inhabitants of the world.

Our Lord, during his residence at Capernaum appears to have regularly frequented the synagogue, and there instructed the people in the blessed truths of everlasting life. Upon one of the Sabbath days when thus employed, the evangelist informs us, that “In the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil.”†

The subject of demoniacal possessions has always been to many readers of holy writ, a difficult and perplexing one. To those especially who are not satisfied, unless revelation will consent to be weighed and measured by their own puny reason, it has ever been, it must ever be, most embarrassing. The manner in which such men have in all ages been content to solve the difficulty, is by supposing that whenever demoniacal possession is mentioned in the Gospel, it is only another expression for insanity. This opinion has always had many supporters among the learned, but very few among the humble and lowly followers of our Lord. They are wisely content to receive the word of God, as God has spoken it; and when that word declares that a man is possessed by the devil, they do not venture, for the sake of overcoming a difficulty, to affirm that it intended merely to assert, that he was insane. In fact, the circumstances of these pos-

\* Luke v. 10.

† Luke iv. 33.

sessions are so peculiar, that nothing but the literal meaning of Scripture can be received as in any, the least degree satisfactory with regard to them. For instance, we hear of one woman out of whom Jesus "had cast seven devils."\* What possible meaning could there be in this declaration of the word of truth, if "demoniacal possession" and insanity were convertible terms? Would there be any thing intelligible to be gathered from the assertion that this was the woman out of whom Jesus had cast seven madnesses? And yet if the one really were only intended to express the other, there ought to be no impropriety in the exchange. The truth is, and it is a truth which cannot be too often stated, or too implicitly received, as a most important canon, in the interpretation of the word of God, that the more strictly we adhere to the plain and literal meaning of Scripture, when the sense of the passage will bear it, the more correct will be our knowledge of "the mind of the Spirit;" while the most remote interpretation is almost invariably the most incorrect. The course of wisdom, therefore, not only upon this, but upon every subject, is simply to take the word of God as we find it, without any reference to our own opinions, or to human systems; and where we cannot understand, there simply to bow before infinite wisdom, and to receive its declarations in humility and love; waiting for the day when we shall see as we are seen, and know even as also we ourselves are known.

It was, then, in the synagogue of Capernaum that our Lord was first confronted with one of those wretched beings who were possessed by the evil spirit. Most improbable does it appear that Satan should have been so short-sighted as to have wilfully led his victim to the

\* Mark xvi. 9.

house of prayer, and to the presence of the Saviour; and we must therefore conclude, that notwithstanding the amazing power which the devil was permitted, at that particular period, to exercise over the minds and bodies of men, he could not then detain them, contrary to their will, from the healing presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. An important and comforting consideration in every age to the tempted soul; for if Satan was thus limited in his evil design, at a period when his power appears to have peculiarly predominated, how much more confidently may we depend upon the assurance, that if resisted, he will flee from us. It is the believer's comfort to know of a certainty that although Satan may persuade, he cannot compel; he may allure you through your own lust,\* to follow him, as a retainer in his train, but he can never drag you, contrary to your will, as a prisoner, at his chariot wheels.

No sooner, in the narrative before us, did "the unclean spirit" behold the Saviour, and witness the power and authority by which he spake, than, impelled irresistibly, as it would appear, by the overwhelming dread of Deity, in whose immediate presence he thus perhaps unexpectedly found himself, "he cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth; art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."† How strange and horrible a scene for those pious worshippers in the synagogue at Capernaum, when their devotion was thus awfully interrupted by the avowed presence of man's eternal enemy! That he is indeed never absent even from the holiest places, never idle even in our most

\* See James i. 14.

† Luke iv. 33, 34.



sacred hours, we know by melancholy experience far too well; but to hear him thus crying aloud for mercy, to hear him at the same moment proclaiming the Divinity of Christ, and his own eternal hostility to him, and separation from him, must have appalled the strongest mind in that assembly.

Would it were true, brethren, that when these supernatural instances of Satan's power had ceased, all participation in Satan's feelings had ceased with them; would it were true that never, but in the devil and his angels, existed in dreadful association, the knowledge of the truth of the Saviour's office, and the hatred of his person! But alas! does not every open sinner who scornfully rejects the Gospel for his rule of life, and the Lord Jesus for his Redeemer, even while he knows that he cannot disprove the one, or disbelieve the other, stand at this moment before God, in almost as awful a state of danger, as the unclean spirit in the synagogue of Capernaum? Blessed be God, though there is a strong and fearful similarity in their cases, there is yet a difference, and it is a great and mighty difference. For the sinner, however obstinate and hardened and impenitent that sinner may be, "Judah's cleansing fountain" still is open; the blood of the everlasting covenant has freely flowed; a door of access to a throne of grace stands wide; and no sooner is his heart softened by the Spirit of God, no sooner does he fall, a willing suppliant, before that throne, than he may enter within the door of grace and mercy. While for that "unclean spirit," not all the blood even of Calvary, availed to rescue him from a horrible eternity, or to purchase a release from everlasting wo; against him that fountain is for ever sealed; that door for ever closed; hope itself shut out;

despair triumphant ; and nothing left him but “ a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.”\*

Suppose for a moment, brethren, that within the walls of the synagogue, our Lord had addressed that fallen spirit, as he addressed the worshippers at Nazareth, I am sent “ to preach deliverance to the captives,”† I offer it now freely to you ; the value of my blood shall go beyond the bounds of space, and travel even into the world of infinity, and unlock the doors of hell ; redemption, therefore, is this day freely preached even to you, one of its most unclean and ruined inmates. Do you think that fallen spirit would have heard as sinners hear, hesitated as sinners hesitate, and listened to the words of the everlasting Gospel as some, perhaps, even among ourselves, are at this moment listening to it ? No, words cannot express the feelings with which such a being would have started forth from his despondency and despair, to have grasped at a hope of even a momentary respite from his unutterable pangs. He who, when he knew that the Saviour’s power would only be exerted to control his malignity, exclaimed, “ Let us alone,” would, with even the faintest prospect of an escape, have from mere selfishness, fled to that Saviour’s feet, and even while he hated the name of Jesus, would have given worlds for one sentence of his pardoning love. But to him this could not be ; he had “ kept not his first estate,”‡ and even infinite love and infinite wisdom had found no remedy.

“ Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell, severity, but toward thee, goodness ;”§

\* Heb. x. 27.

† Luke iv. 18.

‡ Jude 6.

§ Rom. xi. 22.

that a remedy, a Saviour, a Heaven, all denied to the angels who fell, should all this day, be freely offered to you. Let the hardest hearted sinner among us bless God, that hope and time are not yet for ever taken from him; that grace is still within the reach of fervent, faithful prayer; a Saviour still at hand, Heaven still open, and God still waiting to be gracious. "What have we to do with thee?" must be the devils' cry, for their sentence is pronounced, since hell itself is their prepared inheritance,\* from which there is no escape. While, if the sinner, by a hardened perseverance in iniquity, comes to the same dreadful fate, it is because he prefers disobedience to holiness, the world to Christ, hell to heaven; it is, as our Lord himself declared, because, "ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

No sooner had the "unclean spirit" borne this remarkable testimony, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God," than "Jesus rebuked him saying; Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out."

Behold a second source of encouragement for the tempted disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ: you know something, by experience, of the power of your great and eternal enemy; you are "not ignorant of his devices."† You feel them, if you know your own hearts, in the trials of every day, in the temptations of every hour. His knowledge is so vast, his cunning so deep,

\* See Matthew xxv. 41.

† 2 Cor. ii. 11.

his influence so astonishing, that man is as nothing in his hands ; he rules and governs him at his will. There is but one refuge from his power, and this is by throwing yourself into the arms of his eternal Conqueror. As long as you continue out of Christ, the devil is omnipotent against you ; but once united to him, and you may regard Satan as a conquered enemy ; you are placed beneath the cover of that shield from which the fiery darts of the wicked one fall harmless and innocuous. “ Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”\* Even when temptations are at the worst, when every faculty of your soul seems to be in league with the tempter, still cling to the Redeemer with mighty prayer ; and weak and helpless though you be, he will fulfil his promise, and make you more than conqueror, for his own sake who loved you. So shall you be enabled at the last, to take up the triumphant song of the redeemed, “ We overcame by the blood of the Lamb.”†

No sooner had our Lord left the synagogue, after this signal instance of his divine power over the spirits of darkness, than he “ entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John,”‡ “ And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought him for her.”§ How indefatigable was the good Physician ; one hour removing the spiritual ailments, and the next the bodily diseases of his people ; evidencing far more clearly than words could speak, that there is nothing above his power, nothing beyond his willingness to heal. See also in this, the blessed effect of intercessory prayer, “ They besought him for her.”

\* Ephesians vi. 10.

† Mark i. 29.

† See Revelations xii. 11.

§ Luke iv. 38.

Doubtless Jesus loved Peter, and therefore could not be indifferent to the sufferings of his mother, and yet he waited until he was besought; so truly does our Lord delight to hear the voice of his praying people, that he delays many a blessing, and holds back many a mercy, until he has heard the voice of faithful fervent supplication, entreating for that which he is far more ready to bestow, than we to ask. As soon as he had been besought in the present instance, he entered the house, and stood over the poor sufferer, and as St. Mark adds, "took her by the hand, and lifted her up,"\* and "rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she arose, and ministered unto them."† The greatest pleasure of her renewed life was to be employed like Martha in ministering to the wants of Jesus, or like Mary, in sitting at his feet.

How many are there here present this day, who have, like the mother-in-law of Peter, been raised from beds of sickness, not by the power of medicine, but by the tender mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ! The past season has been one of fearful malady, and of no common visitation;‡ many have been cut off in the midst of health and strength, the promise of whose future years was quite as bright, and quite as confident, as your own. Many now present have been warned and threatened, and laid on beds of sickness, and carried even within sight of the opening grave, and by the tender mercy of our God, healed and brought back again, the malady rebuked, and death, for the present, driven from his prey. It would be well to ask, How

\* Mark i. 31.

† Luke iv. 39.

‡ Preached shortly after the visitation of the cholera.

many of us, so warned and so favoured then, are to be found now, like her of whom we speak, ministering to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the wants of his people? Every mercy is attended by some kindred duty, who follows closely in her train; and when the former has paid you her passing visit of tenderness and love, the latter offers herself to you as an abiding guest. If the mercy of returning health have visited you upon your couch of suffering, or your bed of sickness, then the duty of a closer walk with God, a more grateful attendance upon his blessed Son, was her companion. It is a painful and a bitter thing, to see how often with recovered health, come forgetfulness of the mercy, and neglect of the kindred duty, until the world having re-established its supremacy, and every hour and every thought having again passed into its service, the neglected and forgotten duty is driven forth, like the dove from the ark of Noah, to return no more for ever.

My brethren, if you value warnings, if you value mercies, or rather if you value the God of warnings and the God of mercies, you will be careful that it be not so with you. We have seen, every minister of God has seen, those on a bed of sickness whose hearts have appeared to be subdued and softened under the pressure of present anguish and the fear of approaching death. The world has, for the first time, been revealed to them in its true colouring, its wealth, its honours, its attractions, all baubles light as air; while those things for which alone, during health, their souls have panted, would not, even if bestowed upon them in a richer abundance than ever filled their worldliest day-dream, have contributed a moment's gratification, or alleviated a moment's pain. What anxiety was there then, to

hear of the sinner's hope and the sinner's Saviour! What delight to know, that it was even then, not too late; that the way was open, the door still unbarred, and that the truly penitent believer, even at the eleventh hour, might enter in. Then have we, like Peter's kindred, besought the Saviour for the sick and suffering sinner, and then has he, that unchangeably gracious Redeemer, heard our prayers, and been entreated for the sick, and rebuked the malady, and raised the patient. And then has come the most grievous disappointment which ever befalls the minister of Christ, the return to sin and folly, of those whom he vainly hoped, had been made partakers of the pardoning and renewing Spirit of our God. While a gracious Saviour was engaged in answering our cry for mercy,—and how fearfully does the consideration increase the heartless ingratitude of the backslider—at the very time that the heavenly Physician was bringing to him returning ease and health, the recovering patient was day by day drawing off to a greater distance from the Author of all his mercies. We trusted that the Saviour had rescued one more sheep of his fold from the fangs of the destroyer, had secured one more jewel for his crown; instead of which, he has been obliged to confess, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain.”\* Every day we discover by some little symptom, the backward course of the recovering sinner. All anxiety respecting his spiritual state is at an end; the Bible which used to be seen beside the sufferer, is no longer there, its place supplied by some book of imaginative folly or worthless trifling; the desire for spiritual

\* See Isaiah xlix. 4, where this language is applied to the Saviour.

converse is over, and any subject of temporary interest supplies its place; until at length, health and worldliness, bodily strength and spiritual indifference, are together re-established.

Brethren, you who have been on beds of sickness, you who still feel the liability of your frail frame to all the thousand maladies which lead down to death, and yet in spiritual things have profited nothing by your visitation, remember that the patience of the good Physician may be too often tried; that the strivings of his good Spirit may be too often resisted; his influences for ever quenched. There is a day coming, when the entreaties of beseeching friends, the prayers of ministers, the cry of anguish, will be alike unheard and disregarded by our God; when the only companions of a sick, and it may be a dying bed, will be the recollection of mercies unacknowledged, of resolutions unkept, of compassion and love wasted upon one who has made no return.

May the good Spirit of our God carry the present warning to hearts which none other yet has reached; may he of his infinite mercy perform that in an hour of health, which days of sickness have not affected; and may you be led now to minister of your substance, your time, your influence, to God, feeling no gift too good for him, no sacrifice but a whole heart, sufficient to lay upon his altar.



## LECTURE VI.

MARK ii. 5.

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy,  
Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

THE course of the history in which we are engaged, will this morning bring before us two remarkable instances of our Lord's supernatural power; the first exhibited in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, during one of those circuits which he frequently made while resident there, and the second within the city itself. All such instances are well worthy our serious consideration; but these appear peculiarly so, from the fact, that in the first, our Lord very clearly *typified*, and in the second, plainly and unequivocally *proclaimed* his divine power of FORGIVING SIN.

The first of these miracles is our Lord's cure of the leper, which is introduced here upon the authority of St. Mark, at the fortieth verse of his first chapter, where we read that, “there came a leper to Jesus.” Observe then, first, the state of the person in favour of whom our Lord's miraculous power was about to be exerted.

He was “a leper,” St. Luke adds, he was “a man full of leprosy.”\*

Perhaps of all the diseases to which the human frame

\* Luke v. 12.

was liable, the leprosy was the most astonishing and the most appalling. It affected not merely the body of the sufferer, which it covered with deep bright spots, eating through the skin into the very flesh, and spreading like one great cancer over the whole frame; but in some supernatural manner, it broke forth upon the garments, in green and reddish spots, fretting them away; it even contaminated the walls of the dwelling houses, marking them with "hollow strakes," "greenish or reddish, which in sight were lower than the wall;"\* *i. e.* corroding not merely the plaster, but eating even into the stones of which the houses were built.

For this terrible disorder no cure had ever been discovered; when a house was the subject of it, it was ordered to be pulled down, and utterly destroyed. When it was found upon the garments, they were directed to be burnt. When any individual was attacked with it, he was commanded to apply not to the physicians, but to the priests; and to them not for healing, to which no human power pretended, but simply to ascertain whether he was really the subject of this dreadful malady; and if he were, the priest was to pronounce him unclean, to send him forth to dwell alone, separated from the habitations and haunts of men, his clothes rent, his head bare, a covering upon his face, and condemned perpetually to cry whithersoever he went, "unclean, unclean,"† lest any passer-by should unwittingly come in contact with a malady as contagious as it was loathsome and disgusting.

It was always regarded by the Jews, as a direct visitation from the hand of God himself, for the punishment of sin; and to this they were probably led, not

\* Leviticus xiv. 37.

† Leviticus xiii. 45.

only by the supernatural features of the malady, but by the fact that in at least three very striking instances of their history, the case of Miriam, of Gehazi, and of Uzziah, the leprosy had been pronounced by the Almighty who inflicted it, to be the immediate punishment of some committed transgression. Indeed, our Lord himself rather corroborated than discountenanced this opinion, when he said after one of his many cures of this disorder, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."\*

Such, then, was the nature of the malady with which the applicant now before our Lord was most grievously afflicted; and a more accurate type of sin, the malady of the soul, no bodily disease ever yet presented. Like the leprosy, sin also is deeply contagious and incurable by human remedies, or human physicians; while the sinner, if he remain uncleansed, will be as completely banished throughout eternity from the society of the holy and the happy, as the leper was, from the company of the uninfected among the children of Israel. Even the supernatural effects of this wonderful disorder, are not without their counterpart in the leprosy of sin; for the very house of the sinner is an infected house; his family and household are too often partakers with him in the guilt and punishment of the disease; while an expression made use of by St. Jude would make it appear, that even the contaminated garments of the leper are not without some typical resemblance, in that far more fearful disease of which we are speaking, when he says, "But ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves

\* John v. 14

in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life,"\* ... "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."† Evidently intending to recommend to Christians as complete a separation from sinners and their pursuits, as the Israelites were commanded to maintain towards their leprous neighbours.

Upon seeing Jesus, we are told, that the leper "kneeling down to him,"‡ "worshipped him,"§ and "fell on his face, and besought him, saying unto him, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."|| A very remarkable evidence of faith on the part of the patient; he knew full well that no human power could heal him; that for his dreadful malady, the aid of the physician was hopeless; and, therefore, in thus confidently addressing Jesus, he certainly demonstrated that if he was not actually aware of his divinity, he believed him to possess a power, to which no other living being laid the remotest claim.

"And Jesus," continues St. Mark, "moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will, be thou clean."¶ The leper had said that it depended on the will of Christ, and on that alone, "If thou wilt:" Christ at once acknowledges the truth of that assertion, by the independent language of his reply. Not as the disciples, in the case of their miraculous cures in the name of another; not even as the prophets of old, by the will of God, but simply in his own name, and by his own will, "I will." Who can close their eyes against the powerful evidence which such facts as these adduce to the divinity of the Lord

\* Jude, 20, 21.

§ Matthew viii. 2.

† Jude, 23.

|| Luke v. 12.

‡ Mark i. 40.

¶ Mark i. 41.

Jesus Christ? Is an incurable disease to be removed from the body? the Lord of life has only to speak the word, "I will," and it is done. Is the equally incurable soul of the sinner to be healed and saved? the King of Glory has only to say, "I will," and it is effected. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."\*

As the Divine authority of Christ was thus wonderfully manifested on this occasion, so also were his tenderness and love. We are expressly told that "Jesus was moved with compassion" to this work of mercy. And had we not been thus informed, we might have gathered it from the very manner in which he applied himself to the undertaking; no sooner did the cry of that loathsome creature, whom probably no other being in existence would willingly have approached, come within the hearing of our Lord, than the tender and compassionate Saviour, instead of standing at a distance from him, and calling aloud those words of power which were to drive away that cruel malady, not only suffered him to draw near, but even laid his hands upon him, while he spoke his cure: "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him." Trivial as this act may appear, how deeply must the leper have felt, how highly esteemed so unheard-of an instance of condescending love. The dearest friend, the nearest relative whom that poor sufferer possessed, would not have done what Jesus did; that disease had broken all the bonds of affinity, and dissolved the closest ties of friendship: from the day that the priest had pronounced the "deep bright spot"† to be the burning leprosy, no

\* John xvii. 24.

† Leviticus xiii. 2.

human voice had ever spoken kindness to him; no human hand had ever touched him; but now the Saviour, as if to add to his unspeakable mercy, began by treating him with an affectionate sympathy to which he had long been utterly a stranger. And what the Lord thus commenced in tenderness, he consummated in power; "As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed."

Was the leprosy so remarkable a type of sin, in its incurableness, in its contagion, in its uncleanliness, in its pollution, then surely we may behold, in the incident before us, something typical of the manner in which our gracious Lord will deal with the sinner! This man was not only a leper, he was "full of leprosy;"\* are you not only a sinner, not merely confessing yourself a sinner, as all the world are sinners, but do you feel that the deeply spreading malady has made its way through all the thoughts and affections and feelings of your soul; that while all have sinned, you are full of sin? that you have wasted opportunities of improvement, which to others have never been vouchsafed? that you have disregarded mercies, which were never shown to them? that if you cannot say with St. Paul that you are the chief of sinners, you can yet say, that you know not one whose ingratitude has been of a deeper dye, and whose forgetfulness of God has been of wider extent than your own? that your malady is incurable by human remedies? and that unless the great and Heavenly Physician take compassion on you, "unclean, unclean,"† must be your cry throughout eternity?—Then imitate the example of your brother leper. He humbled himself at the feet of Jesus, he spoke to no one else, he sought

\* Luke v. 12.

† Leviticus xiii. 12.

no other aid, he cared for no other remedy, he knew the utter hopelessness of all human medicines, and came at once to the Heavenly Physician. So come to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. Come with the same humility, and yet with the same unshrinking confidence, as the leper came; say, like him, Lord, I also know and feel, that, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean." You will meet with the same kindness, the same affectionate condescension, the same cure. That Saviour, who did not hesitate to touch the leper, will feel no reluctance to lay his healing hand on you. If your cure be delayed, it is you only who are the cause of the delay. Christ is more anxious to heal than you are to be healed; more ready to hear, than you to pray; more willing to pardon than you to sue for it. Every hour that the dark, deep leprous spot remains upon the sinner's soul, is robbing God of his glory, the Saviour of his reward. The first faint, but heartfelt cry, for spiritual cleansing, forces its upward way through all the opposing atmosphere of earth, and stays not, until it is heard by the rejoicing myriads around the throne.

But the returning sinner needs every encouragement which God can give, to induce him to apply for pardon and acceptance where alone they are to be found, at the feet of Jesus. Every feeling of the natural heart is so opposed to this simple method, every device of Satan is so successfully employed in keeping us away from this only plan of salvation which God has offered, that the life of Jesus teemed with invitations and encouragements and persuasions to this one great and most desirable end. No sooner, therefore, had our Lord made an end of thus prefiguring by the healing of the leper, his power and his willingness to cure that fatal malady

of the soul, of which this bodily ailment was the acknowledged type, than he hastens to proclaim what he had now prefigured; and the opportunity of which he availed himself was the following.

“It came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching”\* “in the house,”† and “many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door, he preached the word unto them.”‡ Active and indefatigable as our Lord was in preaching in their synagogue publicly upon the Sabbath day, he considered this as no sufficient reason for not instructing the people in the same blessed truths on every day, in private, and in his own house. Where the heart is full of the love of God, no time will appear inappropriate, no place unseemly, to speak of all his wondrous works of providence and grace; “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.”§ And while Christ was thus preaching, and Pharisees and doctors of the law were sitting by, to cavil as they heard, suddenly the roof of the house was opened up, and a paralytic man lying on a bed was lowered into the room by four of his friends, and was dropt as it were at the very feet of the Saviour. Not a word appears to have been spoken by any of the party; the sick man’s friends, who remained on the roof, and were no doubt looking down with the deepest anxiety, to watch the result of their affectionate labour, conceived, and truly conceived, that the silent misery of the sufferer, would plead his cause, far more effectively than their best eloquence; while the sick man himself, apparently unable to speak, from the grievous and affecting malady under which he laboured, was content to lie

\* Luke v. 17.

† Mark ii. 1.

‡ Mark ii. 2.

§ Matthew xii. 34.



at the feet of Jesus, and there to trust to his divine compassion. It is not easy to conceive a more powerful appeal to the heart of Christ, than the sight of that mute sufferer; while the whole incident was one well calculated to affect every individual there present, with the most intense interest both in the fate of the patient, and in the conduct of our Lord.

The evangelist continues, "When Jesus saw their faith,"\* *i. e.* the faith of all the parties engaged in this most silent, and yet most eloquent appeal, he paused in the midst of his discourse, and looking upon the poor paralytic, as he lay stretched upon his bed at the Saviour's feet, he said unto him, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."† How much of tenderness, mingled with compassion, was there in this first address. Although a sufferer, not the less a son! and, brethren, not the less a sinner! no bodily suffering can atone for sin. Grievous, therefore, to the eye of man, as was the outward ailment under which the paralytic lingered, it was neglected by the eye of Deity, for the far more fatal malady which lay within. And like a skilful physician, our Lord left the merely symptomatic disorder, to strike at the root of the disease, and carry health and healing there. But there was yet another reason for this conduct of our Lord, and one which affected all around him, as nearly as him to whom he spake. His remarkable assertion, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," brought the question of the claims of our Lord at once to the most decisive issue. The Scribes and Pharisees who surrounded him, "now began," from secret and silent cavilling, "to reason,"‡ saying, "This man blasphem-

\* Mark ii. 5.

† Mark ix. 2.

‡ Luke v. 21.

eth.”\* “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”† Observe, then the important and conclusive testimony borne by our Lord. He immediately replied, “Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?”‡ “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house.”§ “And immediately the sick man rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and went forth before them all, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.”

The great end and object of the whole miracle, then, appears to have been this,—that all “might know that the Son of man hath power to forgive sins.” And the process by which this important fact was established was as simple, as it was unanswerable and conclusive. It was, as if our Lord had said to his opponents, You declare truly that none but God can forgive sins: I assert that I have forgiven those of this poor paralytic; of the truth or the falsehood of this you can be no judges, but I will appeal from that which does not fall within the range of your observation, to that of which all, even the most uninformed, can judge. Here is a man whose whole frame is paralyzed, none but God can restore and renovate the body, which none but God could originally create; now, if by a single word I am able to restore this man to his pristine health, and strength, and vigour, where is the caviller who will venture to assert that I am unable to forgive his sin?

By a single word, then, our Lord restored the para-

\* Matthew ix. 3. † Luke v. 21. ‡ Matthew ix. 4. § Luke v. 25.

lytic; and by this wonderful proof of his divine authority, he convinced every unprejudiced observer, that “the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sin.”

In conclusion, let us endeavour, each for himself, to view our Lord in that peculiar character in which these two remarkable miracles so plainly present him to us, as the sin-forgiving Jesus. If while on earth he assumed this title, and so strikingly proved, while he asserted, his undeniable right to it, how much more unquestionable must be that attribute now, when he sits upon the throne of his glory, to which God’s word declares that he was exalted, expressly to “give repentance and the remission of sins?”\* Who that has seen his willingness to pardon, while on earth, can have a moment’s doubt, as to his perfect readiness, now in heaven? We would, then, earnestly inquire, Are any among you desirous to know the Lord Jesus Christ as a sin-forgiving Saviour? What prevents you from acquiring this knowledge? The way of access is freely open to you; yes, to all, to each. It is so plain, so simple, that “the wayfaring man cannot err therein.”† It is this, and only this, which God requires of you, to make you a partaker of his perfect forgiveness. Retire into your chamber, and before that Saviour who seeth in secret, open your heart freely, fully, and unreservedly. Tell him of every sin which you have committed by thought, word, or deed, against his divine majesty. Suppress nothing, extenuate nothing, but confess, as far as you can remember, all that has ever grieved his Holy Spirit, or broken his divine law: declare before him your deep contrition of soul, your hatred and abhorrence of every act which has been

\* Acts v. 31.

† Isaiah xxxv. 8.

displeasing to him, your earnest desire to commit it again no more for ever; and plead his blessed promises, his perfect righteousness, his precious blood. You will not long remain in ignorance of the practical meaning of this declaration of our God, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."\* It is because men cannot bring themselves to this heartfelt confession, and because they will not seek God's Spirit to work it in them, that they so seldom attain to real peace of mind and conscience, so rarely enjoy the sense of God's forgiveness. Every day some little deviation from God's will and God's ways marks your course; a thousand worldly thoughts and unworthy feelings cross your path; and all these are left to rankle in the breast, and to alienate you more and more every day from God. You want resolution, you want sincerity, you want faith, to treat God like an indulgent father, to come to Christ as a forgiving friend. You will not believe either his own word, or his own messengers, when they assure you that he is thus merciful, thus indulgent. What a difference would it make, not merely in your future, but even in your present happiness, if you could but be prevailed on to view him thus, to go to him with the candour and the confidence with which an affectionate child, even when he knows that he has greatly erred, ventures to approach a kind and forgiving father.

But as in the parable of the great supper, "all with one consent began to make excuse,"† so is it now: one is too much occupied with the things of this world, another too little interested in those of the world to come; while many even of you who are really penitent,

\* Isaiah xlv. 22.

† Luke xiv. 18.

and really desirous of the blessing of sin forgiven, are, by some mistaken feeling, kept back from its full reception and complete enjoyment. Perhaps the most prevalent of these misapprehensions in the truly contrite heart, is that you imagine you have not experienced sufficient sorrow for sin; that you do not, and cannot grieve for it as you hear or as you read that others have grieved for it, with all the agony of a broken heart. Christian brethren, there is no rule laid down in God's word upon this subject; there is no measure of mental anxiety which God has especially commanded, and short of which he will refuse to pardon or to hear. The only measure of grief which God requires, is that which accompanies the determination, by God's help, to forsake sin. If you come in sincerity, really desiring to confess and bewail all sin, really anxious to give up all sin, really praying to be forgiven all sin, there is not that individual among you who may not rise from his knees that hour a pardoned sinner! freely forgiven by that merciful and compassionate Redeemer who has even now, as he has ever had, "power on earth to forgive sin." What a blessed truth is this; how can we sufficiently testify our gratitude to God for the revelation of such an unspeakable mercy! Do not, then, wait till you have suffered deeper conviction of sin; do not keep away from a sin-forgiving Saviour, until you have filled up any imaginary measure of repentance and grief: the very fact that you truly deplore your past transgressions, that you heartily desire to forsake sin, and to receive a Saviour, is evidence sufficient, and recommendation sufficient, for his pardon and love. It is, most frequently, by holding out against the offers of his forgiveness and the strivings of his Spirit, that men work

for themselves those pangs, and that extreme of wretchedness, which although many true children of God unquestionably have experienced, many, whose adoption is equally unquestionable, have entirely escaped.

May God of his mercy soften every heart, turn every mind, bring every soul among us to this most blessed state of acceptance with him; may he lead each individual here present to come and seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ as a present gift, that each may enjoy the consciousness that he is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and that each may hear, even while on earth, that blessed sentence, "Son, thy sins are forgiven."

## LECTURE VII.

LUKE v. 27, 28.

“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.”

ACCORDING to the large majority of biblical critics, the calling of St. Matthew is the only incident now remaining in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, which occurred during the first year of his ministry. Some writers, indeed, are of opinion that the great feast given by St. Matthew was upon the day of his conversion, and therefore should immediately follow this event; but it appears to be satisfactorily demonstrated by Lightfoot, Archbishop Newcomb, and Doddridge, that these events, although placed in juxtaposition by the evangelists, must have been separated by a considerable period of time. It has also been urged, in addition to the reasons given by those commentators for this separation, that at the feast in Matthew's house Jesus spake in parables, which he is not known to have done during the first year of his ministry. There is good reason, therefore, to believe that this instance did not form an exception to his general rule, and therefore did not occur until after the second Passover, at which time he

adopted the parabolical method of instruction, probably in consequence of the Scribes and Pharisees imputing his casting out devils to Beelzebub. If, then, the harmonizers to whom I have referred, be correct, the calling of St. Matthew is the only incident which remains to bring up our history to the second Passover in our Lord's ministry, and therefore to conclude the present section of the lectures in which we are engaged.

"After these things," says St. Luke, "Jesus went forth,"\* *i. e.* after he had healed the leper, and restored the paralytic, which formed the subjects of the last discourse. When our Lord performed the latter of these wonderful cures, you will recollect that it was expressly stated, that "there were Pharisees and Doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem:"† you will bear in mind how triumphantly our Lord had replied to their infidel cavils, and how conclusively he had demonstrated to them that "the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sin."

But he had yet another and still more humiliating lesson to teach to these same Pharisees and Doctors; he had to teach them that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."‡

Let us, then, accompany the Lord Jesus Christ from the house in which the cure of the paralytic had been

\* Luke v. 27.

† Luke v. 17.

‡ 1 Corinthians i. 27-29.



wrought, and follow in his train, and become as it were eye-witnesses of the method by which he taught this great, and instructive, and difficult lesson. "After these things," says St. Luke, "he went forth," and as he passed along, many of the Pharisees who had come from afar, no doubt accompanying him, "he saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom."\*

It is scarcely necessary to remind you, of the degree of abhorrence in which the Jews held those of their nation who thus accepted office under their conquerors, and performed for a foreign and infidel power the duties of tax-gatherers, or custom-house officers. So undisguised was this hatred, that it had become a common saying among the Jews, that "vows made to thieves, murderers, and publicans, might be broken."

No sooner, however, did our Lord discover Matthew, seated at his dishonourable employment, receiving, probably, the toll which the Roman government exacted from those who passed and re-passed the sea of Tiberias, than, to the utter consternation of the self-righteous Pharisees, he immediately approached him, addressing to him these few and simple words, "Follow me."

Without the hesitation of a moment, without the reply of a word, the publican arose, and leaving all, in which he had been a moment before immersed, instantly obeyed the summons, and from that hour, through good and ill, through toil and labour, through persecution and privation, through contempt, reproach, and infamy, he followed the Saviour of the world. Wonderful illustration

\* Luke v. 27.

of the truth of this declaration of our Lord, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."\* Here was a proof that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," and here was an evidence to our Lord's supernatural power, to neither of which could the most prejudiced Pharisee be blind. For men are not wont to quit at once and for ever, long-cherished habits of life, and long-established callings, without some powerful counteracting principle. Do you doubt the assertion? Then let the most eloquent and persuasive among yourselves commence to-morrow, like Jonah of old, to go "a day's journey"† through our vast metropolis, and take with you the strongest arguments and the most conclusive reasonings, and endeavour to prevail upon one tradesman to leave his counter, one man of business his office, without any corresponding temporal allurement to offer him, and it requires no prophet's tongue to tell that of the thousands you accost, the tens of thousands you pass by, you shall not prevail upon an individual to listen, or to obey you. What, then, is the first lesson we learn from the incident before us? that when Christ speaks effectually to the ear, the Spirit speaks convincingly to the heart: that there is a power in God's effectual calling, with which nothing human can compete, which will break down all opposition, and firmly establish itself in the convinced and converted heart of him to whom it speaks,

For the individual application of the lesson before us, we advance a step farther, and assert that a supernatural influence of a nature precisely similar and capable

\* John x. 27.

† Jonah iii. 4.

of producing precisely similar results, must in every case be brought to bear upon us before we can be enrolled among the true people and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this is one of those great points upon which the church and the world have always been, and always will be, at variance. The popular opinion is, that all men in a Christian country are precisely in the state in which St. Matthew was after his conversion. That such a change is, unless to the open infidel, or the flagrant sinner, perfectly unnecessary; that although the generality of men are certainly not living a life of entire devotedness to God, for this they cannot deny, yet that a little more time and reflection, and perhaps a little good advice and a few external means of grace, are all that are wanted to bring them to this happy state; and that, at any rate, when these men shall choose to listen to God's word, they will certainly have full power to receive and to obey it. The effect of this error is, that men are content to go on from day to day, and from year to year, resolving at some future time to change, and to repent, and to believe all, and to do all, which God requires of them; the fear never, for one moment, crossing their mind, that when they may resolve to listen, God may not please to speak; that when they may have determined to obey, God may not choose to call; and that thus neglecting present means and present opportunities, all future may be most peremptorily denied them.

While on the other hand what is the view of the word of God and of the Church of God upon this great matter? It is, that whenever any individual of whatever country,

or rank, or time, is effectually called to follow Christ, it is the work of sovereign grace.

You acknowledge it, you cannot but acknowledge it, in the case of St. Matthew, because it is utterly impossible to account for so remarkable an effect in any other manner. You behold a covetous man, for had he not been a covetous man, he never would have held an office so despised and degraded as that of the publican—giving up in a moment all his present gains, all his future prospects, at the word of an unknown and unhonoured stranger. It is impossible, therefore, not at once to confess, in his case, that this was God's work; here was the finger of the Most High, the power of his Spirit.

But then you get rid of the great lesson it was intended to teach you by saying, "This was a peculiar case; this was the calling of an apostle; there is nothing in this at all similar to God's usual dealings with his creatures, nothing similar is, therefore, likely to occur in his treatment of me."

We will at once acknowledge that, in the case of St. Matthew, there was something peculiar, and differing from most others in our own day, and in the ages that have intervened between us, but you will be surprised to see how little there was that could be deemed peculiar, how very little that was exclusively confined to the case before us.

St. Matthew was converted in an instant, the whole work as it appears, begun, continued, and completed in a single moment. St. Matthew, immediately upon his conversion, deserted his worldly gains, left all his worldly business, and devoted himself at once to the apostleship.

We admit, then, that Matthew's resigning his worldly calling and his worldly gains was peculiar; but this only as regards the act, and not as regards the state of mind which produced the act, and which is required of all. We still further grant that the instantaneousness of his conversion does not often occur at present. But with these two exceptions, we say that there was nothing, literally nothing, in the call of Matthew, which has not its counterpart in the effectual calling of every true believer among ourselves.

We believe that in all cases true conversion is equally supernatural in its origin, and equally decisive in its effects.

I. It is equally a supernatural work.

The eighteen hundred years that have passed since this event, have made no difference whatever in the human heart. It is just as hard, just as deceitful, just as ignorant of God to-day, as on the day when Matthew sat at the receipt of custom; and never does the heart respond to the call to spiritual duty and spiritual life, until it receives that call from the mouth of its Maker. As David has long since declared, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."\* It is when God speaks savingly to us, when divine grace influences the heart, that the heart, so influenced, obeys.† The great objection to this which always arises in the mind of "the natural man," is, if this be the case, then where is the freedom of my own will? If my conversion to God be thus so completely and entirely a supernatural work, the agency of his Spirit, then may that Spirit act even against my

\* Psalm xxvii. 8.

† See 10th Article.

will, and carry me, whether willing or unwilling, in the train of my conquering Lord. Very few who argue thus, are, we fear, really acquainted either with the word of God, or with what even their own Church says upon the subject of this free-will of which they so largely boast. We find the word of God distinctly declaring, "The preparations of the heart in man, are from the Lord;"\* and again, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."† While our Saviour says, "Without me, ye can do nothing,"‡ therefore, neither take the first good step, nor think the first good thought. And in agreement with this, the apostle to the Philip-pians asserts, "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Again, we find our own Church, in her tenth article, speaking so distinctly and uncompromisingly upon this great subject, that her children at least cannot hold to two opinions upon it, for she says, "The condition of man, after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God." Here, then, we have a most distinct avowal that in the case of every individual, even in a Christian country, there is by nature no power to turn to God, but that the conversion of the heart, under all circumstances, must be a supernatural work.

Is there, then, any violence committed upon the human will? Is there any encroachment upon that free agency, without which man would not be a responsible being? Certainly not. At the very moment that Divine grace

\* Proverbs xvi. 1.

† Jeremiah x. 23.

‡ John xv. 5.

is influencing every thought of the mind, and every feeling of the heart, and every affection of the soul, our will continues perfectly unfettered, our freedom entirely uncontrolled.

How, then, is this? We reply, that while we continue in our natural state, our will is opposed to God's will, but the very moment that the effectual calling of Christ reaches the soul, his grace captivates the affections; the heart distinguishes *that* in his word, in his commands, in himself, which it begins to love. There is no longer any opposition of our will to be overcome, for it has already coincided with God's will, and is not now at variance with it. So far, therefore, from the service of Christ being any encroachment upon our freedom, the first desire of our renewed heart is to enter his service, to obey his will, and like the Israelitish servant of old, voluntarily to be pierced "through the ear unto the door,"\* that we may be his for ever.

You may tell "the natural man" that the very fact that his conversion is a supernatural work, implies that his will must be forced, his free agency encroached upon, his liberty destroyed, and he will doubtless credit you; and slave, as he really is, to Satan's cruel bondage, he will embrace his chains and thank God he is yet free, and pity the superstition which is enslaving thousands. But, talk to "the spiritual man" of the service of God being a hard service; tell him that his will is subjugated; that his inclination is fettered; his liberty gone; and how will he answer you; he will say, Go tell the child who is devotedly attached to the most affectionate of parents, and who knows no will but theirs, that he is a

\* See Exodus xxi. 6, and Deuteronomy xv. 17.

slave; or tell those kindred hearts which are bound together by the strongest ties on this side of heaven, that theirs is a bitter bondage; even they may credit you, but I never can; for every thought of my mind, and every feeling of my renewed heart, and every affection of my bosom, indignantly repels so palpable a falsehood, "His commandments are not grievous."\* His name is love, every act and word of his to me has been full of love, forbearing love, pardoning love, directing, guiding, sanctifying love, from the day, when God of his sovereign grace, called me into spiritual existence, even until this hour. Instead of feeling my present state a state of bondage, I never knew what liberty was, I never had a moment's respite from the thralldom of my unholy tempers and lusts and passions, from Satan and from sin, until the Lord Jesus Christ himself, by his supernatural power, made me partaker of the glorious liberty wherewith he makes his people free.†

It is thus, in sentiment at least, that every truly converted follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, while he acknowledges that the change which has been wrought in him is wholly supernatural, will reply to the charge that his will has been forced, his mind fettered, his freedom destroyed, by a service in which love alone commands, and love obeys.

II. As the work of conversion has been shown to be as completely a supernatural work now, as it ever was, so may it be shown, that the effect of conversion now, is as decisive as it has ever been.

The effect upon Matthew the publican was, as we have seen, that he instantly left all for Christ; and the

\* 1 John v. 3.

† Galatians v. 1.



effect upon the sincere Christian in every age is as marked, and as decisive. He does not indeed cast aside his worldly business, or forsake his worldly calling, but he desires to do, and when truly turned to God, he is enabled to do what is in every respect the same. He follows every earthly occupation with a single eye to God's glory; he holds all his worldly possessions in charge for God; he becomes in heart and mind, in motive and action, a "new creature:" and even Matthew the apostle differed not more decidedly from Matthew the publican, than such a man differs from his former self. That this is so, the lives of many holy, self-denying followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in every age will determine; that it must be so, all Scripture loudly tells. For does not the word of truth most unequivocally declare, that "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;"\* and again, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."†

It is easy to say, that such declarations as these refer to other people and to other times; that what is perfectly suitable to the unbaptized heathen, is preposterous when applied to the baptized Christian. It would be so, were the baptized Christian always a Christian in heart, as well as name; it is so, where the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," have been effectual in turning the whole man to God. But dare we say that this is the case of the majority? Does not the experience of every day and of every heart proclaim at once that it is not? You know that it does. You

\* Galatians vi. 15.

† 2 Corinthians v. 17.

know that the decisive change referred to in the passages of Holy Writ, which I have read to you, is not to be recognised in the life of one baptized Christian in a thousand.

Can you, then, with these uncompromising declarations of God's word before your eyes, be content with the sort of half-religion which is satisfying the world? Can you think that a Sabbath hour one day in the week, and it may be a hasty chapter of God's word upon every other day, are sufficient evidences of true conversion, while the thoughts, the heart, the life, all remain uninfluenced, unimproved? That the ever-blessed Son of God came down on earth to lead the life of suffering and privation which we are now contemplating, and to die his death of inexpressible agony, and all to purchase to himself a people who should devote six-sevenths of their time to the service of his eternal enemies, sin, the world, and the devil, and be content to give the seventh portion grudgingly to him.

No, if conversion be a work supernatural in its origin, and decisive in its effects, then most assuredly, this is not conversion. All is natural, perfectly natural, nothing supernatural here. It is natural that every individual should desire just so much religion as he imagines will satisfy God, and keep himself from "the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched."\* The supernatural effect begins, when the love of God, and the delight in Christ, and the desire for heaven, are all springing up as powerfully influential in the heart, as the love of sin, and the delight in this world's pleasures, and the desire for this world's advantages, once were. The

\* Mark ix. 44. 48.

supernatural effect begins when the realities of an unseen world more powerfully influence every thought, and motive, and desire, than the far more closer and more pressing realities of time and sense; when sin becomes absolutely hateful to us, and Christ proportionably precious, and holiness in all our ways and all our works unceasingly desired; when the love of God and the obedience to his commands, is the one great object of the renewed heart, the convinced conscience, the spiritually enfranchised will.

But if such a course of half-religion as I have just referred to, cannot be called a supernatural work, as little can it be called a decisive work. Where is the decision of that man's mind, who lives for both worlds, perhaps, throughout a long life, vibrating like a pendulum between heaven and hell, unknowing himself, unknown to all around him, to which of these two widely different eternities the last vibration of the pendulum shall incline.

Brethren, "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;"\* and if, by God's grace, you have good reason to hope and to believe that you are; if you have reason to trust that with you, conversion has been indeed a supernatural work, and in its effect is daily and hourly becoming a more decisive work, remember that you have nothing which you have not received; and let the consciousness of this draw you still nearer with a more grateful heart, and a more convinced will, and a more determined and decided walk, to the God of your salvation. If you have been hitherto contented with offering a divided obedience, let your resolution now be, in God's strength to "follow the Lord fully," to offer to him a

\* 2 Corinthians xiii. 5.

whole heart, to devote from this day all your powers, all your affections, all your energies, to him who loved you and gave himself for you, to purchase you as “a peculiar people zealous of good works.” Thus having, like that devoted apostle of whom we have this day spoken, “left all, and followed” the Saviour here, you shall be rendered meet, with the blessed company of the apostles, saints and prophets who have preceded you, to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,”\* in his eternal kingdom.

\* Revelations xiv. 4.

THE HISTORY  
OF  
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR  
JESUS CHRIST.

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SECTION III.  
FROM THE SECOND TO THE THIRD PASSOVER IN OUR  
LORD'S MINISTRY.



## LECTURE I.

## ST. JOHN v. 8.

“Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk.”

WE resume the lectures at that period in the history of our Divine Master, which is marked by his visit to Jerusalem, for the purpose of keeping the second Pass-over after the commencement of his public ministry; and with which, therefore, the second year of that ministry begins. The first incident which occurred during his visit, and which is recorded only by St. John, is the cure of the infirm man at the Pool of Bethesda; an incident full of instruction and interest, and to which, seeking the Divine aid of the Holy Spirit of God, we would now call your attention.

The inspired historian having mentioned the presence of our Lord in Jerusalem, at this particular season, and the motive which brought him thither, saying, “There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,”\* thus proceeds to describe the place, and the circumstances of the miracle of the text.

“Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,

\* John v. 1.

having five porches.”\* It is the opinion of Dr. Lightfoot, that this pool had been used as a bath for persons under ceremonial defilement, and that the five porches were covered with walks, or porticoes, built for their convenience. “In these” porches “lay a multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then, first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole, of whatsoever disease he had.”

It is needless to detain you upon the many conjectures which learned writers have ventured upon this passage of Scripture, rather than believe the plain and simple statement of the word of God itself; the manner in which one accounts for the medicinal virtues of the pool, by supposing it to have been a mineral spring; another by imagining that the entrails of the sheep, slain for sacrifice, were cast into it, and that the angel was only a messenger from the Sanhedrim, sent at certain hours to stir up the water, which had acquired, in a manner they do not attempt to explain, some most powerful healing properties. It is enough for the simple reader of Holy Writ, that, however contrary it may appear to human experience, the unerring word assures him, it was the will of God, that at particular seasons, the waters of this pool should be possessed of certain miraculous properties, communicated, as it appears, by a messenger from on high; and that the first, and only the first person who then stepped into them, was invariably healed. Since these wonderful properties are

\* John v. 2.



mentioned by no uninspired writers, it seems probable that they were communicated to this pool but a short time before the ministry of our Lord commenced, and were removed when that ministry concluded. However this may be, it is certain that at the period of the incident before us, they existed, and that the sight of the many suffering children of affliction, lying in these porticoes, in the daily and hourly expectation of a blessing which only one could enjoy, must have strongly affected the heart of our Redeemer. Whether the pool lay near the temple, as some imagine, the history does not recount, but one thing it manifests, which, in a suffering world should never be forgotten, that let the sick and miserable be where they may, they cannot be out of the thoughts, or out of the sight, or out of the path of our Divine Master. His first object at Jerusalem seems to have been, to visit the "blind, halt, withered," who lay at the pool of Bethesda, uncared for and unthought of, perhaps, by any other human being in those vast multitudes, who assembled at the Passover, except the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Surely there is comfort in the thought, even to the most wretched and most desolate upon earth. The Saviour, who passed by the palaces of princes, sought out the porches of Bethesda. That lodging cannot be too poor and miserable for the Saviour's presence, which contains one suffering sinner. He who himself had not where to lay his head, will seek and visit you in the lowest abode of penury, if you will but acknowledge your need of him, and welcome his approach.

"And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years."\* How long and how grievous

\* John v. 5.

a visitation, is the first comment which we are all disposed to make upon this portion of the history: far different was the remark of the holy men of old, the pious and devoted, but as to his bodily frame, infirm and suffering, Richard Baxter; he says in his note upon this verse, "How great a mercy was it, to live thirty-eight years under God's wholesome discipline. O my God, I thank thee for the like discipline of fifty-eight years; how safe is this, in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure."

Who but a real child of God could ever have suggested such a comment upon such an incident! Whose heart among ourselves, can honestly, and as in the sight of God, re-echo the sentiment!

The sick man of whom the parable speaks, had probably lain the longest there of all those who filled those porches with misery and bewailing; and the Saviour who knew all things, knew the length, as well as the depth of his distress, and apparently on that account, selected him as the object of his healing mercy. There may be, for we have met with cases such as these in our ministerial course, some truly penitent believer, among yourselves, to whom the preaching, and the counsels, and the prayers of minister and friends, are as unavailing to bring peace, as medicine had been to bring a cure to the case before us; but take courage, you are perhaps only kept the longer and tried the deeper, that the hand of the good Physician himself may be extended to you, and that your spiritual healing may be the work of Christ alone: he will, in his good time, bestow, what all ordinances and all means, without him, never can; the "peace of God which passeth all understanding."\*

\* Philipians iv. 7.

Observe we next, the manner in which our Lord calls forth the desire to be healed, before he performs the cure, "He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?"\* Could he doubt it? Could he who knew the hearts of all men, be ignorant of the wretchedness that dwelt within; and had for eight and thirty years, imbittered to this poor sufferer, every enjoyment and every hour of life? No, Jesus knew full well, all that the sick man wished, and all he hoped for; but where Christ imparts the cure, the heart must be aroused, and the desires quickened, and the tongue excited to seek it. Therefore did he ask the question; and therefore does he now, even at the present hour, and to every subject of his healing mercy, first bestow the grace to seek the boon; which, when sought for, he delights to give.

Brethren, I know not how it may be with others, but with myself I feel, that had not he bestowed the gift, first bestowed the sense of my deep need, and the will and power to ask the remedy, I had still lain a poor, helpless outcast upon the brink of the waters of life, ignorant alike of my own fatal malady, and of the returning health which they alone impart.

But let us for a few moments imagine the scene of the parable to be changed; this Church to be the portico beside Bethesda's pool; yourselves the sick and suffering patients; and the disease, not infirmity, but sin; sin which has corrupted every heart, and perverted every way, and endangered every soul. Suppose the Saviour to enter this portico, and to apply himself to you individually, and with the same question which he addressed to the man before us, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

\* John v. 6.

Are you quite certain what would be your reply? Are you sure that there is no one here, who when he found, that to be "made whole" of sin, implied the destruction of its reigning, as well as its condemning power; the breaking off of many a dear connexion, the denial of many a sinful pleasure, the discontinuance of many a vicious habit, which for a long, long season, perhaps for eight and thirty years, has been as deeply rooted in your heart, as this man's malady in his constitution, is there no one here, who like the rich young man, would turn away in sorrow, prefer his sin to his Saviour, and refuse even spiritual health itself, at so high a cost? Alas! we fear that few assemblies, even of Christian worshippers, but contain some persons such as these. Remember, then, that we are painting no imaginary scene, when we compare the ordinances of God, with the healing waters of Bethesda. For, never are the doors of God's house opened, that the waters of salvation do not flow; never is the word of life truly preached, that the Spirit of God does not "move upon the face of those waters,"\* to impart to them the healing qualities, of which not one alone, but all, yes all, without exception and without reserve, may be partakers. Whenever, therefore, you set your foot within the walls of the temple of God, the great Lord of the fountain asks of all, of each, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And what is your reply? How many, who in heart exclaim, Lord I am whole, I need not a physician. How many, who shrink from the healing process, and prefer the malady to the cure. How few, who reply at once, "Lord, I am distressed, undertake for me, and do what seemeth the best."

\* Genesis i. 2.

My brethren, were we half as conscious of our spiritual ailments, as of our bodily diseases; were we a thousandth part as anxious to be healed of the former, as to be cured of the latter, long ere this, there would not have been one "blind, halt, withered," within our temple, or a single feeble one within our walls. May God of his tender mercy teach us deeply to feel our maladies, as the first step towards their removal, and our healthfulness.

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."\*

How good an evidence is it that sickness, and trial, and trouble, have had their perfect work, when the pride of the heart is humbled, and the fretfulness and complaining of the lips are silenced, and we can dwell upon our sorrows without one repining word, or one distrustful thought. The sick man before us, does not breathe a syllable against the hard-heartedness of his fellow-men; that of all the thousands in that crowded city, not one had leisure enough, or love enough, to sanctify his visit to the Passover, by such an obvious act of mercy as the lifting this poor sufferer into the healing pool. He simply tells the story of his own wretchedness, and the selfishness of those around him, in these affecting words, "I have no man," and "another steppeth down before me." The utmost that he dared to hope was, that now, at length, he had encountered one, who could feel for other's woes, and who might, perhaps, be intending to seat himself beside him, and there remain and watch

\* John v. 7.

the coming of the supernatural visitant, and place him first within the troubled waters. But Jesus had far higher things than this in store for him; he had a cure unexpected, sudden and complete for the infirmity of his body, followed, as we have every reason to believe, by the renewal of his soul. "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk, and immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."\*

So true it is, that he with whom we have to do, is not only able, but willing, "to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think."†

There is, however, yet another portion of the history to be considered, which will portray the duty of man, as distinctly as the former part has shown the loving kindness of the Lord.

No sooner had the healed man obeyed the command of Christ, by carrying his bed upon the Sabbath day at the imminent peril of his life, for such a breach of the ceremonial observance of that Divine Institution, than the Jews fiercely interrogated him, by whose authority he was thus transgressing. The man whose knowledge of our Lord, was as might be expected, most imperfect, still felt that he who could work so wonderful a miracle by his own power, must certainly possess a right to obedience of those he healed; and this, indeed, was agreeable even to the dogmas of many among the Jews themselves who justified a prophet in infringing the rest of the Sabbath, by the example of Joshua surrounding Jericho, for seven successive days, with the ark. The man who was healed, therefore, acknowledging, what

\* John v. 8, 9.

† Ephesians iii. 20.

the Jews denied, that Jesus was a prophet, replied at once, as sufficient authority for the act, and sufficient justification of it, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." How powerful is the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ, upon the heart which has once been really visited by his compassion and love. This healed man ventured even his life, rather than disobey the word of him who healed him. When on the great and coming day all the generations of men shall stand together, how will the "maimed, and the halt, and the blind," who, for one act of mercy and compassion, obeyed their Divine Redeemer, without a feeling of hesitation or distrust, put us to shame, who after countless instances of mercy, far greater, and far higher, than they were ever blessed with, follow him so distantly, and obey him so reluctantly and coldly. The only substantial proof that you ever can give, that the love of Christ has touched your heart, is this,—Has it left the stamp of true subjection to him there? Are you not satisfied with saying, "Lord, Lord," but are you doing the things which he commands you? How much profession of religion is there at the present day, where this first and surest fruit is wanting. Say not, deceive not yourself by thinking that Christ has ever visited you, if a holy, consistent obedience has not been the result. If you truly know the Lord Jesus, if you have indeed received healing and mercy at his hands, you would hazard life itself rather than habitually break even the least of his commandments. For be assured, whatever be your profession of religion, the heart possesses still its native hardness, if the bright beaming of a Saviour's love upon it has failed so to soften it, that it may be

moulded into some degree of conformity to his commands, or resemblance to himself; the soul still lies in all its natural dulness, if when those rays have fallen upon it, it has reflected back no portion of the love which it received.

The man whom we have just seen condemned as a Sabbath-breaker, for carrying his bed, in obedience to him who healed him, at once evinced the falsehood of the allegation, by going straightway to the temple, to praise the Lord for all that had been so wonderfully done for him. It was in that house of God, that Jesus met with him, and spoke those words which we may reasonably hope were blessed to the conversion of his soul, "Behold, thou art made whole. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."\*

When our Lord granted the first manifestation of his love in the healing of this poor man, he found him ignorant, and he left him ignorant, of the very name and quality of his benefactor. But though he knew not Christ, he knew the way to the temple, and he not only knew, but performed the duty of carrying thither his thank-offering to God. Behold here the manner in which, while acting according to the light we possess, our God fulfils his promise, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."† The Saviour completed the mercy in the temple, which he had begun at the pool: while the man who wist not who it was, when he was healed, discovered while he prayed and praised, that it was "Jesus who had made him whole." This well agrees with the gracious method in which God ordinarily deals with his creatures. "If

\* John v. 14.

† Matthew xiii. 12.



any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,"\* is one of the most consolatory of the unerring promises of God. Never are there such scriptural grounds for believing that you will be brought, in God's good time, to the fulness of the knowledge, and faith, and hope, that are in Christ Jesus, as when engaged in performing, as far as it is known to you, the revealed will of your God. It is a blessed thing to reflect how many in every generation, as it passes through this state of suffering and probation, are first brought to feel their need of something better than this world can offer, by the pressures of affliction, or the trials of sickness. How many who receiving at those distressing seasons, healing and grace, are led on in all holy obedience, step by step, from the bed of sickness, to the temple; from the word of God, to the Son of God; from bodily health, to spiritual cure; until all that the Saviour has done and suffered for them is gradually unfolded to their hearts, and they have "followed on to know the Lord,"† their light shining more and more, until it reaches the perfect day.

But, brethren, if it be a blessed thing to know, that these are the steps by which thousands and tens of thousands in every generation ascend from earth to heaven, surely it is a deeply painful thing to know also, that these are steps which thousands never tread; that of all the multitudes who are daily going down to death, vast indeed is the proportion by whom we fear the upward path is untrodden and unknown.

One word then only, in conclusion, to you to whom the mercies of a bed of sickness have been vouchsafed

\* John vii. 17.

† Hosea vi. 3.

in vain. You have suffered from the chastening hand of your God, and by his healing power have been raised up, where many have fallen to arise no more. And are you still careless, thoughtless, disobedient? Do the giddy throng, who smile at that which makes all nature serious, who postpone all deep and earnest care of the immortal treasure with which God has trusted them, see no one more giddy, more thoughtless, than yourself? Are all the vows and all the prayers of that sick room forgotten, or remembered only when the breach of them reminds you for a passing moment that they are registered on high? It is a fearful thing to trifle with God's judgments, but tenfold more fearful is it, to trifle with his mercies. When sickness and sorrow once more revisit you, when you attempt to betake yourself again to him from whom you have before found healing and consolation, shall you be surprised that though you seek him, he is no where to be found? Shall you wonder that your prayer has no wings, your bed of sickness no consolations! Alas! this also is in the ordinary course of God's dealing with his creatures; for has he not himself said, "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."\* Every mercy received is but the seed-corn which the heavenly Husbandman scatters: if there be no fruit, no harvest, the barren field cannot repine that no future seed-time shall ever visit it. It is unreasonable to complain, if broken vows, and forgotten prayers, and unrequited mercies, are followed by a Spirit who has ceased to strive, a Saviour who does not intercede, a God who has withdrawn himself. Tedious as may have been your former trials, long and painful your

\* Luke viii. 18.

illnesses, severe your sufferings, the heaviest of them is but "a light affliction," in comparison of those which God has in store for them that trifle with his mercies. We perhaps are able to imagine few things more distressing than eight and thirty years of bed-ridden infirmity; yet what are they, when compared with a century of agony; and what is that when put in competition with an eternity of wo?

May a gracious God grant that we may each, and all, be so led by his mercies, as never to need his threatenings, and never to be visited by his judgments; may he vouchsafe us this chief of blessings, for the merits, and through the intercession, of Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom be all the glory now and for ever.

## LECTURE II.

JOHN v. 25.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.”

It does not come within the intention, and could not possibly fall within the scope of these lectures, to expound verse by verse, and word by word, the discourses of our Lord; yet are there some striking and remarkable passages in his mortal sojourn, which can in no other manner be brought before you. The incident which follows the miracle at the pool of Bethesda is unquestionably one of these.

Our divine Saviour had, as Lord of the Sabbath, commanded the man whom he had healed to carry his bed upon the Sabbath day; this, as we have seen, excited the indignation of the Jews, who, having been told by the healed man, that “it was Jesus who had made him whole,”\* “persecuted Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day.”

It is the opinion of some of the best commentators

\* John v. 15, 16.

and is rendered extremely probable by the context, that the persecution here alluded to, was not the lawless persecution of ruffians desirous of putting the Lord Jesus Christ to a violent death, but the judicial persecution of men who were determined to slay him, as a Sabbath-breaker, by the acknowledged law of the land, and for this purpose carried him before the Sanhedrim. The declarations of our Lord, therefore, which commence at the seventeenth verse and continue to the end of the chapter, are supposed to form his defence before the Sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews; and contain, as might be expected from such a defence, some of the most striking and convincing testimonies to his Divinity, which the incarnate Son of God ever pronounced.

On this account, the present lecture cannot be more profitably employed, than in dwelling upon some of the most astonishing and satisfactory of these testimonies; forming, as they unquestionably do, a body of evidence upon the Godhead of our blessed Saviour, and I might almost add, a body of divinity upon his doctrines, which is not to be rivalled in the whole gospel history.

St. Chrysostom long since observed, that while there are shallows in Holy Writ in which the lamb may wade, there are also depths in which the elephant must swim. If we find that this discourse of our Divine Saviour will carry us into these deep waters, let us not be discouraged; human reason soon gets beyond its depth and loses its footing, when it attempts to wade the ocean of eternal truth, but faith will be supported in depths where unassisted reason would assuredly sink; and though the worldly wise man and the intellectually proud man may stumble and fall in those dark waters,

which we are approaching, the truly humble child of God, even though his lot be cast among the most ignorant, will find, by the helping hand of God's good Spirit, firm footing and secure walking upon the surface, notwithstanding the mighty and undiscovered depths which lie beneath.

The remarkable defence of our Lord, to which I have referred, is divided into two parts. The first occupying from the seventeenth to the thirtieth verse of the chapter inclusive; containing a collection of proofs of the co-equality in power, and wisdom, and honour, of the eternal Son with the eternal Father. The second part, extending from the thirty-first verse to the end of the chapter, containing a series of testimonies from witnesses whom none could doubt, or contravene; viz. John the Baptist; the miracles of Christ; the voice from heaven; the Scriptures of unerring truth; all of which are adduced by our Lord, and furnish the body of his evidence.

Such are the contents of this astonishing chapter; the latter portion of which I have just mentioned is so plain that it will be needless for us to dwell upon it, but the former is unquestionably obscure, and yet so rich an inheritance to the believer, and so valuable an armoury for the young Christian, that we shall confine our observations exclusively to its life-giving truths.

Proceed we, then, under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, to examine this instructive portion of our Lord's defence before the Sanhedrim. The Jews had no sooner preferred their charge of Sabbath-breaking, because our Divine Saviour had performed his miracles on that sacred day, than, as we read, our Lord immediately commenced his defence by this remarkable

assertion, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."\* How great a mystery is involved in this brief sentence! On other occasions our Lord contented himself with asserting that acts of necessity and love were never to be reckoned as breaches of the Sabbath day, but here, before the great council of the nation, he takes a far different, and far higher stand, he acknowledges, according to their view of it, a breach of the Sabbath, and then proceeds at once to justify the apparent transgression. His defence is as though he had said, "If works of every kind will break this hallowed day, then am I guilty, and then have I been guilty throughout all time, for united to God the Father from all eternity in essence, divinity, and power, I am united with him also in work. Hitherto, throughout four thousand years, my Father and I have worked incessantly upon this hallowed day; the sun has at our word, continued his mighty journey uninterruptedly; the sea has never ceased to flow; all nature, at our bidding, has gone forward; all the works of Providence and grace have held on their unwearied course; this is our doing, our work, to which no single Sabbath has seen an intermission; and shall I, who have 'worked hitherto,' now be accused for performing a single miracle of love upon this hallowed day?"

Such a reply, as our Lord had doubtless foreseen, at once not only redoubled the rage and animosity of his persecutors, but changed the nature of their charge. They had brought him before the Sanhedrim for Sabbath-breaking, but they now proceed to try him for blasphemy. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to

\* John v. 17.

kill him," says the evangelist, "because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."\* The Jews, therefore, evidently understood the words as I have just endeavoured to explain them: and so far was Jesus from any attempt to remove this impression, which he unquestionably would, had it been false, that he returns an answer to the new charge of blasphemy, insisting far more plainly upon his divinity, and speaking far more strongly upon it, than he had ever done before. In fact, from this point the defence is one continued series of proofs of this first of all revealed doctrines to the soul of man, the co-equality and co-eternity of the Father and the Son. "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."†

The first impression of these words upon the reader, often is, that they imply an inferiority in the Son, and that our Lord's intention probably was, as it undoubtedly is, in some portions of his history, to mark the inferiority of the man Christ Jesus, to God, the everlasting Father.

But nothing of this kind is his intention here. The assertion is simply made, to strengthen and to fill up the outline of a truth so mysterious, that the human mind can never, in its present state, fully appreciate it, and never without the direct operation of the Spirit of God, rightly receive it. When our Lord says, "the Son can do nothing of himself,"‡ he implies that such is

\* John v. 18.

† John v. 19.

‡ Idem.



the entireness of the union between the Father and the Son, so completely is the Son "very God of very God," that all that the one Person of the Deity doeth, is done by the other, and therefore that nothing can be said to be done by the Son, as separate from the Father. And yet, while one in essence, so completely are they two in person, that "the Son doeth what he seeth the Father do," a word adopted merely to meet our finite comprehension, and not in the least intending to imply that the works of the Son are copies of the Father, or follow them in order of time, (for this the subsequent verses and all Scripture would disprove,) but to express, as clearly as our imperfect diction can express, the intimate communication of nature, will, wisdom, and power, between the eternal Father and "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father."\* There, with a oneness of nature, will, and knowledge, which far surpasses all understanding, he hath known all things which God knoweth, and even all things which God seeth, and done all things which God doeth, throughout the ages of a fathomless eternity.

Our Lord enforced this awful and incomprehensible truth in the following verses, by the declarations that "the Son quickeneth whom he will,"† and that he judges whom he will, not that the Father has in any sense divested himself of the power of quickening or judging, but that it is communicated, by an indissoluble union, to the Son, and thus made known by him to man, that as our Lord declares, "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."‡ Having, then, established this fact, upon these incontrovertible decla-

\* John i. 18.

† John v. 21.

‡ John v. 23.

rations of that God who cannot lie, our Lord proceeds to build upon them these additional proofs of his divinity, which involve some of the highest and most mysterious doctrines of salvation.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”\*

Learn from this, that the one great object of all true Christianity is, to bring you to hear Christ’s word, *i. e.* to receive the everlasting gospel, to be made partakers of that salvation which he lived to promulgate, and died to seal. “Faith,” says the Holy Ghost, “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”† Faith we know, is, as every other Christian grace, the gift of God; but this is the manner in which it is usually wrought in us by the Spirit of God, through the hearing of the revealed word of the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of salvation, however, as regards our individual reception of it, is not completed in hearing and receiving Christ’s word; there is a step, and a very important one, yet beyond, which is most plainly developed in the words before us. “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” Observe, then, the great end and object of faith in Jesus Christ. It must, by the power of the Holy Ghost, lead you directly through the Son, to God the Father, a God in covenant with you through Jesus Christ; a God who has, even from the foundation of the world, been reconciled to all his creatures, but who now receives you, who come to him, through Christ, as reconciled to him.

\* John v. 24.

† Romans x. 17.

Mark, then, and from your inmost soul bless God for his mercy while you do so, mark the present and immediate benefit which you obtain by thus coming to God. He who so comes, "hath," saith our Lord, "everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."\* "Is passed;" how unspeakable a mercy, how glorious a privilege; the believer waits not for the day of doom to determine whether he shall stand at the right hand or at the left of his returning Saviour. He has obtained present pardon, present peace, and present joy. The world is crucified to him, and he is crucified unto the world; God is reconciled to him, and he is now reconciled to God. His hope is not an uncertain hope, but that which the apostle so well described, when he said, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."†

It is a delightful and blessed thing to speak and to hear of privileges such as these. But, alas! many, how many are there who both hear and speak of them, who never realize them in their own consciences, or partake of them in their own souls. Let me, then, this day, inquire, how is it with yourselves? Have you heard, have you believed, have you received, these life-giving truths? All depends, as you have seen, upon the first step in this most important series. Have you rightly, effectually, savingly heard? I do not simply allude to the hearing of the outward ear, but of the inmost heart. Are you doubtful in what manner to reply to so infinitely important an inquiry; are you conscious, as I trust you are, that unassisted you cannot hear; that the hearing ear, as well as the believing heart, is entirely

\* John v. 24.

† Hebrews vi. 19.

the work of God's free grace? Is any one among you inwardly saying, Would that I might thus hear to the saving of my soul, but alas! with me the threatening of the prophet seems almost to be fulfilled, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."\* Then, with what feelings of gratitude will you receive the next great declaration of your Redeemer, in the words of the text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

Let us for a moment inquire, Who are these dead, of whom our Lord with so much certainty and such authority predicates that they "shall hear?" Think you that it means they who have been committed to the kindred dust? No, these are afterwards spoken of expressly in the twenty-eighth verse. They also shall, no doubt, one day hear, but these dead men were to hear the very hour in which the Lord Jesus spake these words before the Sanhedrim? For is not this his own declaration, "the hour is coming, and now is?" He could not, therefore, allude to the inhabitants of the grave, who shall hear hereafter. They to whom he alluded then, are, they can be none other, the spiritually dead, "the dead in trespasses and sins."† You, brethren, you, and I, and all men, either are, or have been among their numbers. How unspeakably encouraging, then, is the declaration. However dull may be our ears to hear, however hard our hearts to understand, we cannot go beyond the metaphor here adopted by our

\* Isaiah vi. 10; Matthew xiii. 15.

† Ephesians ii. 1.

Lord; we cannot be more insensible than the dead; and yet even they shall hear. Imagine, then, the very worst state in which your fears can place you, as regards the spiritual welfare of your soul, viz.: that you are at the present moment among the spiritually dead. Then the promise before us applies expressly to yourself. Only, would we inquire, are you willing to hear? By which we mean, such hearing as includes reception, belief, and obedience. Be assured that you "shall hear." Neither evil men nor evil spirits, shall frustrate the work of your Divine Redeemer, or make it of none effect to your soul. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." He shall bestow upon you the hearing ear, and with it the renewed and living heart. "For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."\* Life spiritual, life temporal, life eternal, all laid up in Christ Jesus, the grand depositary of the life of God's people throughout all ages.

"Your life then is hid with Christ in God;"† but not so hidden, that the eye of faith cannot see it, and the hand of faith cannot reach it, and the prayer of faith cannot draw it down. No, it is "your life," though it is hidden in Christ Jesus; it is hidden for you, thanks be to God, not from you. It is concealed only as regards your enemies; it is treasured up as regards yourself. Be then no longer without this richest gift which God himself has ever offered to bestow. Put forth your hand this day, and pluck these fruits of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

You have, perhaps, entered this house, a son of Adam, a lost and perishing sinner, an heir of death, corruption, and condemnation. The blame is yours and the folly

\* John v. 26.

† Colossians iii. 3.

yours, and the sin and its punishment will be yours, if you leave it not a child of God, a reconciled saint, an inheritor of his kingdom of glory. Effectual calling, spiritual knowledge, pardon, justification, sanctification, and finally, glorification, are all proffered you, if you will come at once, hearing, receiving, loving, and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ, for has he not himself said, without a single exception or reserve, "They that hear shall live." Yes, brethren, so hearing, you can never die. Death is disarmed, Satan is vanquished, Heaven is won. How delightful, how encouraging is the whole scope of this wonderful address! I feel myself so overpowered by its fulness, so overwhelmed by its richness, its abundance, the exceeding length, and depth, and breadth, and height, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and yet of which some of the brightest glimpses that ever shone upon the soul of man, break forth from the declarations we have been considering, that I am constrained to cry out with the prophet and the apostle of old, "O Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child."\* "Who is sufficient for these things?"† Probably some such feelings of deep and mute astonishment as must visit the soul of every reflecting man, when listening to these wonderful declarations, were manifested by the members of the Sanhedrim while they heard them flowing from the lips of our Divine Redeemer himself; for we find him immediately afterwards, and as if replying to some signs or words of wonder from his audience, thus expressing himself: "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resur-

\* Jeremiah i. 6.

† 2 Corinthians ii. 16.

rection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”\* As though he had said, “Marvel not that I now manifest a power which none of woman born has ever yet possessed; that I have life at my bestowal, and that the spiritually dead receive it when they hear my voice;” what is this, compared with the appalling fact, that not a child of Adam who has ever yet descended to the grave, but shall one day hear this self-same voice now sounding in your ears, and when he hears shall live.

My brethren, if you have been—but what Christian can have been—unmoved by declarations such as we this day have reviewed, what think you of the great and awful truth before us now? “The hour is coming,” saith our God, when the voice of Jesus shall burst the sepulchre, when every grave shall be riven asunder, and every spot upon this wide world’s surface shall be revisited for a moment by him who lies beneath it. Called by that voice, you shall yourself come forth, your body and soul for ever re-united, and accompanied by the multitudes who lie around you, shall pass upward to the judgment seat. That “great white throne”† of the descending Saviour, before which all the generations of men, from the first man Adam to the last of his descendants, who shall enter the world, at the very hour of that world’s dissolution, shall one and all, be re-assembled. But when there, you shall stand alone; a gathering world around you, and yet not one to help, not one to shield you from your Judge; as much alone, as if no other ear were open to his voice, no other heart laid bare before his eye. Then shall be brought to view all unrepented, unforgiven sins, all

\* John. v. 22, 29.

† Revelation xx. 11.

words, all thoughts, all actions, which from your cradle to your grave shall have dishonoured God, done despite to the efforts of his striving Spirit, and poured contempt upon the atoning sacrifice of his blessed Son. And for what purpose shall such additional agony be inflicted upon those, who throughout eternity shall never again behold the face of God after that day has closed? To stamp that burning shame upon the sinner's cheek, that brand of deep remorse upon the sinner's brow, which after ages never shall eradicate; to justify, before men and angels, the sentence which a righteous Saviour shall at that coming hour pronounce; and to leave every condemned and hopeless sinner utterly speechless; to deprive him even of the miserable gratification, that it was an unjust decree of a partial God which consigned him to the dreadful fate from which he shall for ever and for ever suffer. Can you anticipate such a scene without one honest, self-inquiring thought, "What is the part which I shall bear upon that coming day?" Let the statement of divine truth which you have now heard, assist you in your reply. God hath committed all judgment unto the Son, for the express purpose, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Are you so honouring the Lord Jesus Christ? Acknowledging yourselves as not your own, but his who has bought you with his precious blood? If you are, then are you now among those dead who have heard the voice of the Son of God, bringing to them that spiritual life here, which is the sure and only fore-taste of eternal life hereafter; then shall you be among those tenants of the grave, who, having done good, having brought forth the fruits of the spiritual life of which they were partakers, shall, when they hear that well-known voice, come forth to the resurrection of life.



But is there no other feeling with which we may anticipate the mysteries and glories of that day? no other thought awakened in our heart by this most awful declaration, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth?" Blessed be God, there is that which as nothing earthly ever could awaken, so nothing short of heaven itself shall bring the full accomplishment, the perfect and unspeakable fruition. It is the anticipation of all that that voice shall be, and all that it shall bring to us, if we are among the blessed number of God's dear, and pardoned, and holy children. It will be no new, no stranger's voice to us upon that coming day. When the newly awakened ear catches, for the first time, the sound of the Bridegroom's cry,\* every accent, every word will be in the well-known, well-remembered tones of our best, our dearest friend. The first feeling of our souls will be, as our bodies rise from out of the dust, "This is the self-same voice which I once heard when dead in trespasses and sins; and when I heard I lived. This is the self-same voice which often, oh how often, during my earthly pilgrimage, cheered me on the bed of sickness, comforted me in the day of trouble, strengthened me in the hour of temptation, was my guide, my counsellor, my friend. And shall I fear it now? No! Let me yet hear it once again, at thy right hand, O God, perfecting all that concerneth me, finishing thine own work, completing thine own glory, and sealing my everlasting happiness."

If the word of God be true, that desire shall be granted, for every believing and obeying child of God shall one day hear that self-same voice pronounce, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."†

\* See Matthew xxv. 6.

† Matthew xxv. 34.

## LECTURE III.

LUKE vi. 12, 13.

“And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”

THE glorious defence before the Sanhedrim, which we considered in the last lecture, being concluded, we find our Lord withdrawing himself from Jerusalem, and shortly afterwards engaged in the important work of the election of the twelve apostles.

How deeply instructive is the lesson which every record of the preparation of Jesus, for the most important labours of his ministry presents to us. “It came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” Subject, as our Divine Maker unquestionably was, to all the innocent infirmities of our nature, how unsparing was he of himself, how regardless of his own comfort and gratification, thus to occupy in prayer the whole night which was to precede a day of unexampled labour.

What a sublime and striking picture is here presented to us, of the incarnate Son; withdrawn from the noise and tumult of the cities and the haunts of men, amid the

silence of the night, and the desolation of that mountain scene, holding converse with the ineffable Jehovah; all nature hushed in still repose, as if unwilling to interrupt the wonderful communion; while hour after hour of darkness passed away, and still the unwearied prayer winged upward its happy flight, from the perfect purity of God the Son below, to the not more perfect purity of God the Father upon his throne. What a mighty, what an almighty prayer must have then gone up before the Eternal One, embracing not merely the chosen few, who, on to-morrow's dawn, were to become the near companions of their Lord, but their successors and followers throughout all time. It is no vain presumption, to believe that not the humblest messenger who has ever since been sent to preach "on earth peace and good-will to men,"\* but found a place in that most solemn intercession; and that for him were sought, during that hallowed night, the grace, and strength, and wisdom, which of himself he could not have. Most surely may we believe, that while the great Head of the Church was thus laying all the difficulties, and all the ignorance, and all the need, of those whom on the morrow he was about to constitute the authorized ministers of his gospel, his omniscient mind embraced within the petitions of that prayer, every individual in every age, who is "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to serve God," for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people, and is "truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the ministry of the Church."†

"All night" did our Lord continue in that mysterious intercourse with the eternal Father; an example of per-

\* Luke ii. 14.

† Ordination Service of the Church of England.

severing prayer, which although, as regards the peculiar nature of the communication, it must ever remain far above the attainment of the Christian, still furnishes in its perseverance, a high and holy lesson for the imitation of the Church, as long as she continues militant here below. It is not by the short and transient applications to a throne of grace, which we are too apt to dignify with the name of prayer, that we can hope to be qualified for seasons of peculiar trial, temptation, or labour. This can alone be done by dwelling near the mercy-seat; by sitting, as it were, upon the footstool\* of the throne; by daily, hourly, constantly sending forth those winged messengers of the heart, the secret, silent, swiftly flying thoughts, which while they form, like the Patriarch's ladde; an uninterrupted line of ascending intreaties to the Most High, form also a channel for his descending mercies to our souls. "And, when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles. Simon (whom he also named Peter) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor."†

The purpose for which the twelve were selected, is thus explained in the parallel passage in St. Mark's gospel, "He ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils."‡

How great their privilege, how glorious their distinction, to perform such works as man before had never

\* See 1 Chronicles xxviii. 2.

† Luke iv. 12, 13.

‡ Mark iii. 14.

done; and to preach to the lowest, the humblest, the poorest, the good tidings “sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”\* Yet was it not merely these blessings, great and distinguishing as they were, of the chosen followers of our Lord, which formed the highest subject of their hearts’ rejoicing: it was the far nobler privilege conveyed in the simple expressions, “that they should be with him.”† It was for this that they were especially ordained; “He ordained twelve that they should be with him;” and it was to this that in after days we find them looking back “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”‡ Hear only the beloved apostle referring to these highly privileged seasons, and this most blessed intercourse, after an interval of more than fifty years; “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life,”§ is the manner in which he delights to designate the Saviour of the world. While we find Peter, with a very similar feeling, speaking of the season when he was “with him in the holy mount,”|| and of “the time, that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.”¶ It was by being thus continually with Jesus, that they were to learn from his own lips his blessed and life-giving doctrines; that they were to see with their own eyes, the meekness, and patience, and forbearance, and humility, and love, which the intercourse of every day would manifest, but which no tongue could truly tell; and by walking daily at his side, and treading hourly in his footsteps, that they might be qualified, as far as men could ever be, to transmit some faint

\* 1 Peter i. 12.

† Mark iii. 14.

‡ 1 Peter i. 8.

§ 1 John i. 1.

|| 2 Peter i. 18.

¶ Acts i. 21.

expressions of "the mind which was in Christ Jesus,"\* as the heritage of the Church for ever.

Brethren, pray that your ministers, pray that all the ministers of the gospel of Christ, may bear upon their hearts the purpose for which their predecessors were especially ordained, "that they should be with Jesus;" for be assured that it is in proportion, and most accurately in proportion, as we fulfil this first, great object of our calling, that all others will be attained and sanctified. Had the apostles wandered far away from him who called them, had they visited him at distant intervals, thought of him but seldom, conversed with him but rarely, walked with him but occasionally, what would they have known of "the mind that was in Christ Jesus?"† What can we know of him if our cold and lifeless communion be confined to stated periods, or public services; in fact, if we are not ever with him? Pray, therefore, that we may hold converse with him unceasingly; that neither the duties, nor the pleasures of life, may lead us from him; that we may come from immediate intercourse with Christ, into the pulpit; and that we may return again into his blessed and purifying, and enlightening presence. Be assured that it is your interest, as much as your duty, thus to pray; for so alone, the Holy Spirit of our God assisting us, shall we be enabled to speak of Christ, as the apostles themselves spake of him, when from the gracious words which proceeded out of their lips, their hearers at once "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."‡

No sooner had our Divine Master selected the twelve favoured followers who were to go with him whithersoever he went, during the remainder of his ministry, than

\* Philippians ii. 5.

† Idem.

‡ Acts iv. 13.

he addressed to them, and to the assembled multitudes, the discourse usually known by the appellation of the "Sermon on the Mount." A composition, of which it is very insufficient commendation to declare, that so pure, so spiritual, so perfect a code of ethics, never from the world's creation to that hour, had been delivered to the children of men. Then, for the first time, were men instructed in the real nature of the law of God; that it required truth in the inmost parts; that it was intended to control every glance of the eye, and every feeling of the heart, as positively and as distinctly, as every word of the lips, and every action of the life; that an angry word,\* and a resentful or contemptuous expression, would entail the judgments of God, as surely as the more open violence of the ruffian and the murderer; that a lustful look† was as certainly recorded in the book of God's remembrance as an adulterous act; that the charity bestowed to be seen of men,‡ was disregarded by our Father which is in heaven; that the return for the hypocrite's prayers, and the hypocrite's fasting, was all bestowed on earth; that they had here their reward, and here their consolation.§ It was in this wonderful discourse that men for the first time learnt from God himself not only the manner,|| but the language in which they should approach him; for here the Saviour for the first time delivered that inimitable composition, "The Lord's Prayer." It was here, also, that in opposition to every established opinion in the world, yea, no doubt to the natural feelings even of the apostles themselves, our Lord declared that not the great and glorious, but the

\* Matthew v. 22.

† Matthew v. 28.

‡ Matthew vi. 2, 3, 4.

§ Matthew vi. 5-16.

|| Matthew vi. 5-15.

poor and meek, not those whom the world calls happy, but the pure in heart, the mourner and the peace maker, are the only truly blessed.

Wonderful indeed is this divine discourse : so wonderful, that there are not wanting well authenticated instances in the Christian Church, of the sceptic and the unbeliever, whom no other evidence of the veracity of our holy religion could affect, having been converted to the belief in its eternal truths, and the divinity of its blessed Author, by a careful investigation of the "Sermon on the Mount." One such instance has come to my knowledge during the course of my ministry in this place ; and I doubt not but the last day will disclose many, in which the lessons of charity, forbearance, and love, conveyed in this discourse, have fixed upon the heart an abiding impression that "never man spake like this man,"\* and have compelled the reader to exclaim, while dwelling upon the heavenly spirit of purity and peace which here pervades every sentence that fell from the lips of its Divine Author, "Truly this man was the Son of God."†

Some short time after the delivery of the discourse, to which we have thus briefly alluded, the interval being marked by the healing of the centurion's servant, and the raising of the widow's son, we find our Lord invited by one of the Pharisees, named Simon, "to eat with him." The evangelist continues, "And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat."‡ To enter fully into the feeling of the beautiful incident to which these words form the prelude, you must bear in mind the universal custom of those days, and in those

\* John vii. 46. † Matthew xxvii. 54 ; Mark xv. 39. ‡ Luke vii. 36.



countries. The dinner table was surrounded by a couch, upon which the guests, having put off their sandals, reclined at full length, each leaning upon a pillow placed under the left arm. The servants stood behind this couch and therefore at the back of their masters, and on a level with their feet, so that the phrase, "to stand at the feet," was not unfrequently used as descriptive of servants in waiting. While, then, our Lord was thus reclining at table, "Behold," continues the evangelist, to draw our attention more expressly to the incident which follows, "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet, behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."\* There is no reason whatever to suppose that the person here spoken of, was either Mary Magdalene, or Mary the sister of Lazarus; the latter certainly anointed our Lord's feet a few days before his crucifixion, but it is perfectly gratuitous to conclude that she anointed them twice, or that Mary Magdalene ever anointed them at all. All that is told of the woman of whom we are here speaking is, that she dwelt in that city, most likely Nain, and that she had been an open sinner. She is never again mentioned, that we are aware of, in the gospel history. Unknown, therefore, she will for ever remain, to the Church of God on earth, but doubtless well known to "the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven,"† as one who loved and honoured their Re-

\* Luke vii. 37, 38.

† John i. 11.

deemer at a time when "his own received him not;" when even a cup of cold water was thankfully accepted; and when the tears of this poor penitent formed the brightest jewels which adorned his crown.

No sooner had the woman thus offered her little tribute to that gracious Being, from whose divine teaching she had already learnt to hate and to forsake her sins, and to love dearly and tenderly the Saviour for whom she had forsaken them, than the Pharisee reasoned within himself; "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him; for she is a sinner."\* Hitherto the whole scene appears to have passed in perfect silence; in silence fell the tears of gratitude upon the Saviour's feet; in silence the poor, but happy penitent, enjoyed the consciousness of her sins forgiven, and her person and her offering accepted by the Redeemer of the world; and while demonstrating her gratitude in a manner which she knew he could not misunderstand, and which she cared not how others might misinterpret, she desired no sign, she sought no language of approval. Perhaps her enjoyment was as complete, during those silent moments, when all the affections of her full heart were poured forth at her Redeemer's feet, as the highest encomiums even of that Redeemer himself could make it. But the time was come, when both for her sake, and for his own, that silence must be broken. The Lord of life saw all those disparaging and unworthy thoughts which were kindling at the heart of the self-righteous Pharisee, and at once opens the conversation thus; "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee."†

\* Luke vii. 39.

† Luke vii. 40.

The Pharisee answered, "Master, say on."\* Though the heart had just pronounced his guest to be an impostor, the worthless courtesy of the lips proclaimed him "Master" still. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed him five hundred pence, the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most."† The Pharisee, who appears to have had little conception of the application of the parable, carelessly replies, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most."‡ Then did our Lord in a manner so pointed, so unanswerable, so overwhelming, to Simon, and yet so tenderly considerate to that poor penitent, defend the cause of her who stood trembling and weeping among the servants at his feet, that there is no child of God who would not rather have been the subject of that defence, than of all the accumulated honours of the world. "Jesus said unto him, thou hast rightly judged."§ "And he turned to the woman," whom probably, from her situation, he had never, till that moment, seen; "and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many," (marking therefore, to Simon's fullest satisfaction, how perfectly our Lord knew she was a sinner) "are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same

\* Luke vii. 41.

† Luke vii. 42.

‡ Luke vii. 43.

§ Luke vii. 44.

loveth little.”\* Not, as is too often misunderstood, she is forgiven, because she loved much; but she loved much, because she had been forgiven. The object of our Lord most unquestionably being, to show that the amount of the believer’s love will bear an exact proportion to the amount of evil, and of danger, and of sin, from which he knows he has been rescued. Then, to proclaim before the whole company of Pharisaic cavillers, the fact already known and delighted in, by her who was the immediate and blessed subject of it, “He said unto her, thy sins are forgiven,”† “thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”‡

And can men read, or can men hear this story, and then tell us that love to the Saviour forms no necessary part of our religion? that it is enthusiasm, folly, the mere effect of high-wrought imaginations, with no ground-work in the sober foundations of the word of God? All we ask to determine the question is this, let an uneducated, unprejudiced person read the incident before us, without one word of comment, and then inquire of him, what is the state of heart which a Saviour who spake, and acted thus, while here below, and who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,”§ most values now? Do you believe that such a man would hesitate in his reply? Do you believe that he would question the necessity of every thought, and feeling, and affection of the soul being devoted to the love of that blessed Being who has redeemed it? No! the answer of every simple-minded reader of such an incident must be, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha.”||

\* Luke vii. 47.

† Luke vii. 48.

‡ Luke vii. 50.

§ Heb. xiii. 8.

|| 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

My brethren, in what manner, then, do your hearts respond to this improving history? Is the love of the Saviour a duty of which you have never thought, a privilege of which, experimentally, you are ignorant, you may, perhaps, find the reason of it here. You have been forgiven little—little, did I say? nay, then, there would be still some love, some feelings of gratitude, to him, from whom the mercy is received; for he to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth still, though he loves but little. Where there is, then, no love, there can have been no forgiveness; therefore, where there is no love to Jesus, you are still unforgiven—“ye are yet in your sins.”\* You may, with Simon the Pharisee, have held outward converse with the Saviour, even sat at his table, and like the Pharisee, have called him “Master;” but assuredly you never dropped one tear of penitence for sin, or of gratitude that sin was pardoned. No! this little incident, with our Lord’s own comment upon it, accounts for all the coldness, and the hardness of the religion of the world. You do not love, because you have neither found, nor sought, forgiveness. You cannot love, because you are told to love, or even because you ought to love; there must be something in the object itself, or something received from the object itself, before it can call forth the affections of the human heart. The merely professing Christian sees nothing lovely in the Saviour, and is conscious of receiving no personal benefits at his hands; how then can he love him? You can only love Christ, and God in Christ, “because he first loved you;”† you can only feel assured of this love, and fully enjoy the individual ap-

\* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

† 1 John iv. 19.

appropriation of it, by obtaining a sense of the forgiveness of your sins ; and this sense of pardon, while it is the free gift of God by the operation of his good Spirit, upon your heart, is seldom long withheld, where there is a true, a lively a justifying faith. For you will observe that it was to this, especially, that our Lord referred, as the cause instrumentally, of the penitent's pardon and salvation—"Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

If, then, there be one child of God here present, whose love to the Redeemer is cold and feeble, I would say to that individual, strive and pray for an assured and undoubted consciousness, that you are indeed forgiven. Behold not only forgiveness itself, but the sense of forgiveness revealed in the word of God as the believer's privilege ; pray for it as necessary to the advancement of your own happiness, and of your Saviour's glory. Rest not until, by persevering prayer, you have obtained it. For never is Christ more honoured than by the love and happiness of his people ; and how closely these are connected with the pardon of sin, we need not tell.

Be not afraid that the knowledge of your forgiveness, the consciousness of your acceptance with God, will breed presumption ; in a real child of God it invariably begets humility, for "Who maketh thee to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"\* The deepest humility ever seen on earth, is not only perfectly consistent with the fullest sense, that you are an accepted penitent, a pardoned sinner, but is the very offspring of that blessed conviction ; for surely never was humility herself more humble than when she stood

\* 1 Corinthians iv. 7.

among the Pharisees's servants, weeping tears of joy upon the Redeemer's feet, and loving much, because she had had much forgiven.

May the invaluable boon of a free and full forgiveness, and the abiding knowledge of it in our hearts, however long withheld, be bestowed by the infinite mercy of our God, upon every one who truly seeks it; that "though for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations, the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."\*

\* 1 Peter i. 6-9.

## LECTURE IV.

## MATTHEW xii. 31.

“Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”

OUR Lord, attended by the twelve apostles, having made the circuit of Galilee, “preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God,”\* in every city and village, returned to Capernaum.

While there, they “brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him, inasmuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.”† It was upon this occasion that the malignity of the enemies of our Lord, evinced itself in a manner which drew forth from the Saviour of the world, the awful declaration of the text; that there was a sin which God himself would never pardon, either in this world, or in the world to come; a warning far too important to be passed over in silence, while attempting to convey any reasonable impression of the doctrines and preaching of our Divine Saviour.

Immediately after the cure of the blind and dumb

\* Luke viii. 1.

† Matthew xii. 22.



demoniac, we are told by St. Matthew, that "when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."\* Our Lord having exposed the extreme absurdity of such a sentiment, by the observation that a kingdom, or a city, or a family, divided against itself, would be brought to desolation, and that the kingdom of Satan could form no exception to so infallible a rule, proceeds, having thus demonstrated its falsehood, to animadvert in the following manner upon its sin: "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."†

There is something, at first sight, so completely opposed to the general tendency of the merciful and pardoning spirit of the gospel of our Lord, in the passage which has just been read to you, that few, we believe, have ever reflected upon it, without experiencing a deep anxiety, fully to understand the nature of its fearful denunciations, and to reconcile it to the general declarations of forgiveness and love, which pervade the word of God: while many have, from an inaccurate conception of it lived for years in a state of trouble and despondency, for which they believed that neither earth nor heaven, neither time nor eternity, contained a remedy. This fact, a fact which the experience of most Christians fully corroborates, will, I trust,

\* Matthew xii. 24.

† Matthew xii. 32, 33.

justify me in entering more at length upon this subject, than the nature of these lectures will usually allow me to do, upon any abstract point of doctrine.

It will probably assist us in our considerations, if we begin by examining the case of some great and grievous transgressors, who are often supposed by others, and still more often by themselves, to fall within the charge of sinning against the Holy Ghost.

I. First, then, the man is not necessarily guilty of this unpardonable sin, who after he has received the knowledge of God, falls into great and heinous enormities, and disgraces his calling, and grieves the blessed Spirit of whom we speak. I mention this, first, because the opinion that he is thus guilty appears to derive great encouragement from this text in the sixth chapter of the Hebrews; "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

We believe that in this text, the word "impossible," is simply used to express the extreme of difficulty, but not literally of impossibility. Just as our Lord says, "If any man hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple,"\* where he evidently uses the word "hate," comparatively, and as intended to imply only a less degree of love, than that with which the Saviour is to be loved. We should say, therefore, that though difficult, it is not absolutely impossible, for those who have thus offended the Holy Ghost, to return to the

\* Luke xiv. 26.

ways of peace, and receive the pardon of God. For if it were, then assuredly must David have been condemned, since few will doubt, that he had tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, before he sinned in the matter of Uriah; and yet we are expressly told, for the comfort of the Church, that upon a sincere and deep repentance, he received the blessed assurance, “the Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.”\*

II. Neither is he guilty of the unpardonable sin, who is led for a time, by the temptations of Satan, or his own corrupt heart, openly to rebel against this Divine Spirit; for the prophet Isaiah tell us expressly, respecting the children of Israel, that “they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit,”† but that God still “remembered the days of old, Moses and his people,”‡ and yet again had mercy upon them.

III. Nor does he commit it who “hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,”§ and “who loves darkness better than light, because his deeds are evil.”|| For this is truly our Lord’s description of the unregenerate in his day, and is undoubtedly the characteristic of every unregenerate man, in every age and every clime.

IV. Nor again is he guilty of it, who through fear denies the Lord who bought him; for then would St. Peter himself have been among the miserable number of the unpardoned. Nor he who persecutes the people of Christ; for then would St. Paul have been a cast-away. Nor he who “crucifies the Son of God afresh;”¶

\* 2 Samuel xii. 13.

§ John iii. 18.

† Isaiah lxiii. 10.

|| John iii. 19.

‡ Isaiah lxiii. 11.

¶ Hebrews vi. 6.

for then would all who crucified him in Calvary have been condemned. And yet we distinctly know that some, at least of these, obtained mercy. For examine Acts ii. 36—38. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And what was Peter’s answer, Ye have sinned the unpardonable sin, and cannot be forgiven? No, far from it,—“Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.”

Of these delinquencies, then, great, and terrible, and damnable as they all, if persevered in and unrepented of, unquestionably are, we may safely assert, that neither any of them singly, nor all of them together, can be pronounced to be the sin, upon which the Saviour here passed the most dreadful of all condemnations.

Were we asked distinctly in what does it consist, we should reply, from an examination of the context, Simply in ascribing the miracles of our Lord to the power of the prince of darkness. But then we should gather from all the circumstances of the case, this assurance, that although the sin itself, probably, may never be committed at the present day, the state of mind which led to its committal, may not be so utterly unknown even among ourselves, as men, in the fulness of a spurious charity, are but too apt to imagine. For consider the characters of those who brought this impeachment against our Lord. They were not the poor, and the illiterate, but the most learned class of persons at that time in Judæa. They had seen the miracles of Christ.

they had heard his preaching, they had witnessed the spotless purity of his life, they were perfectly well versed in every prophecy respecting him, and they knew that he had applied those prophecies to himself. They had, probably, even heard his wonderful defence before the Sanhedrim, and were in heart, thoroughly convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of God. In the face of this conviction, they determined to reject and destroy him, and by the accusation of demoniacal possession, to overthrow his influence, and thus to prepare the way for the persecution and death which they were preparing for him. In fact, to disavow and blaspheme the operation of the Holy Ghost, at the very moment when they were most fully convinced, that so doing, they were fighting against God.

The very essence of this sin, then, appears to be, that it was not a sin of ignorance, but of presumption; not like other sins, from some motive of self-gratification, but from the most hardened enmity and hatred towards God; and this, not merely against God the Father, as a Sovereign; or against God the Son, as a Saviour; or against God the Holy Ghost, as a Sanctifier; but against the three eternal, co-equal Persons of the everlasting and ever-blessed Trinity, in the Person of the Holy Ghost; and to add to the guilt and iniquity of the act, this at the very time when that Holy Spirit, as a Messenger of peace, was willing to come with his saving, and life-giving influences, into their souls. All the power, the wisdom, the love of the Triune Jehovah, concentrated in the Holy Ghost, for the express purpose of winning the sinner to his God, were thus openly opposed, blasphemed, and trampled upon, by those who believed in their heart the truth of the doctrines which they denied,

the value of the promises which they rejected, the authority of the Saviour whom they affected to despise.

That this sin is unpardonable, we have the authority of Christ himself. Why it is so, is sufficiently answered by the reply, because God has willed it so. No sin can be forgiven without repentance;—but repentance is the gift of God, and for this it will assuredly never be bestowed. The blasphemers of the Holy Ghost, therefore, by driving from them the only person who could “give repentance,”\* the only person who conveys all the covenanted mercies of the Godhead, which are from the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost, into the souls of his people, seal themselves up, under final and total apostacy, until the day of doom.

From the explanation which we have here attempted to give, of the state of mind which must invariably accompany this unpardonable sin, it will be obvious that there is one peculiar feature in it, which should be remembered, lest at any time, Satan, “the accuser of the brethren,” endeavour to persuade you, that you have committed this fearful offence against the Majesty on high. The characteristic to which I allude, is this—the sin will not only be intentionally committed, but it will necessarily be final; by which I mean, it will be persevered in even unto death. There will be no pause, no misgiving, no fear of having offended God, no earnest desire of a return into the path of holiness, to the man engaged in this sin. Where these exist, their very existence disproves the fact, that the unpardonable sin has been committed. The blasphemer of the Holy Ghost can never know regret, or relentings here, as he will never know

\* Acts v. 31; xi. 18.

forgiveness hereafter. His course is one of constant, open warfare against the Majesty of heaven, hating God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with what may be called a rancorous and personal hatred; such a feeling, for instance, as was evidenced by the most brilliant and most worthless of foreign infidels, when he concluded his letters, with the well-known and horrible blasphemy, of "Crush the wretch," as applied to that blessed and Divine Being, whose history we are considering.

If, then, I address any, who are grieving deeply, from the apprehension that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, I would ask them, Has your rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, of his person, his sacrifice, his offers, been a wilful and an obstinate rejection, against conviction, against the surest belief that he whom you rejected was all that you denied him to be? And do you still wittingly and willingly thus despise him? If you do not,—and where is the soul who ever yet could at the same moment be acting thus, and yet grieving to act thus—you have not, you cannot have committed the unpardonable sin. It would, in fact, involve a positive contradiction in terms, that any individual guilty of this sin, should either fear, or feel that he was guilty of it. Be assured, then, whatever approaches you may imagine you have made to this fearful state of mind and feelings, so long as you have even a will to return, or a single sincere regret within your heart, that you have thus offended God, the door of mercy and of pardon is not closed upon you; for as it is God who alone "worketh in you thus to will,"\* it is evident that he has not forsaken you, but that the cleansing blood of Christ, the

\* Philippians, ii. 13.

sanctifying influences of the Spirit, the pardoning love of the Triune Jehovah, are still freely offered to you, and God himself still waiting to be gracious.

From the very day that the sin of which we have now been speaking was committed by the Pharisees, a very remarkable change took place in the method in which our Divine Master delivered his instructions to the people; from that day he spake unto them by parables. Previously, his instructions had been plain and simple; such, for instance, as his sermon at Nazareth, and on the Mount; indeed, perhaps with a single exception, no parable had ever yet been delivered by our Lord, but from henceforth, "without a parable," says the evangelist, "spake he not unto them." When the first instance of this occurred, viz. the parable of the sower, the disciples, naturally surprised at the change which had taken place in their Lord's method of teaching, immediately inquire, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand."\*

My brethren, these are awful truths. Our Lord distinctly declares, that the reason for which he adopted the metaphorical mode of speaking, of which so many beautiful instances are recorded, was not, as many imagine, because the parable was a common Eastern method of illustration, and therefore peculiarly fitted to

\* Matthew xiii. 10-13.



the comprehension of his hearers ; had this been the case, it would scarcely have been so unintelligible to the disciples ; it was rather from a feeling of deep compassion for those who were wilfully rejecting the bread of life, that he might not increase their condemnation, who, when plain truths were presented to them, saw them, as if they had seen them not ; and heard them, as if they had heard them not. He, in fact, removed the light which they neglected, in mercy, lest they should procure to themselves the greater condemnation.

Be warned then, brethren, that you trifle not with the opportunities of religious instruction. Dwell much, dwell frequently, upon the word of God, which you are privileged to hear from time to time ; pray over it, receive it as your covenant of mercy, your daily rule of life ; until every worldly, sensual, ungodly habit, action, word, and thought, be reduced to the "obedience of Christ,"\* and we are enabled, by God's grace, to say of every individual committed to our spiritual charge, "Blessed are your eyes for they see ; and your ears for they hear."†

When our Lord had finished his parables, and explained them to his own immediate followers, "He went into a ship with his disciples, and gave commandment to depart, and said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, but he was asleep. And they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us, we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful,

\* 2 Corinthians x. 5.

† Matthew xiii. 16.

O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”\*

“Judge not according to the appearance,”† said our Lord; and where is that follower of his who needs not so wise and merciful a caution? No vessel ever put to sea, which we should have thought would have been blessed with a fairer wind, and a more prosperous voyage, than that which carried the Saviour of the world. Yet upon that vessel did the prince of the powers of the air exert all his influence, and all his malice, until the waters covered it, and the vessel itself was in jeopardy. Are you sometimes led to fear that the true and living Church of the Redeemer has not the presence of the Saviour with her, because she is oppressed, or opposed, or endangered? Or are you, in your individual case, led to doubt of the same blessed fact, because in temporal or in spiritual things, trouble and disappointment, the tempest of the world’s opposition, or the winds of despondency and doubt, are permitted to assault your soul; because you sometimes feel it to be almost a question, whether you are really a child of God, or have any part or lot among the heirs of his inheritance? To you, then, there is much encouragement in the incident before us. The presence of the Saviour did not prevent a storm; but when at the worst, it instantly and entirely quelled it. It allowed enough of danger to try the faith of his people, but not sufficient to peril their existence. The fact that the Saviour is with you, is therefore fully sufficient to enable you to brave all dangers, to face all trials, and to be assured of safety, and preservation, and final deliverance. But even his most immediate presence,

\* Luke viii. 22, 23; Matthew viii. 18, 24.

† John vii. 24.

that felt presence, which the true Christian, and the true Christian alone, is sometimes permitted so sensibly to enjoy, will not preserve you from many an hour of spiritual suffering, yea, even of deep and fearful anguish to your soul. For these are the moments when “the trial of your faith worketh patience,”\* “and patience, experience;”† yes, the blessed experience of the infinite power and infinite love of your Redeemer, which then shine forth the more resplendently; for the bow of the covenant never appears so glorious as when it stretches across the blackest cloud. Had there been no storm, the power of the divine Saviour over the discordant elements might never have been known, even to his disciples. Had he not been asleep during that storm, their faith, small as it was, would never have been exhibited at all. Bless God, then, in your own case, for every hour of trial, however dark, if you have seen in it more and more of the covenant love of God which passeth knowledge. Bless God for every prayer which has appeared to be unheard, if it have led you to more prayer, more faithful, earnest intreaty, until the awakening Saviour has shown himself for your complete and full deliverance. Again, take courage from the fact, that even the disciples themselves possessed but “little faith.”‡ And do not despair, even if yours be less than the least of all seeds. A true and saving faith, although it cannot be too large for God’s glory, and for your own comfort, cannot be too small for the purpose of salvation, if it be but the true and living faith of the gospel. The shipwrecked sailor, if he have but been cast upon a rock; a single foot above the reach of the waves, is as per-

\* James i. 3.

† Romans v. 4.

‡ Matthew vi. 30.

fectly secure as if he were looking down from a thousand fathoms high, upon the troubled waters. If, by God's grace, your soul have really found a resting-place upon the Rock of Ages, God will not despise the day of small things, the disciples of "little faith." It is enough, that you have been cast, by God's sovereign grace, upon the Rock. Let all the powers of darkness conspire to raise the tempest, both its winds and waves are impotent, in detaching the feeblest sinner who clings for safety to the sheltering side of that eternal barrier.

"Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,"\* has been from all eternity engraven upon that Rock, and never has that boundary line of safety been overpassed. Only rest not contentedly in your present station, be daily climbing higher and higher, by more fervent prayer, by more frequent, and close, and intimate communion; and, above all, by conscientiously and consistently acting according to that portion of light which God has given you. Be thus continually endeavouring to advance to higher degrees of spirituality of heart, and holiness of life, and resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of your salvation. Be not content, until you have reached the summit of that Rock, whose Head is above the heavens. And may he who rebuked the wind and the sea, so that the raging of the waters ceased, and there was a great calm, fulfil to you his own most blessed promise, by "bruising Satan under your feet shortly,"† and receiving you in safety, within the walls of that celestial city, "whose builder and maker is God."

\* Job xxxviii. 11.

† Romans xvi. 20.

## LECTURE V.

MARK v. 25-28.

"A certain woman, when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may but touch his clothes I shall be made whole."

AFTER the incident with which the last lecture concluded, we find our Lord passing over, for a short time, into the country of the Gadarenes. So little were these unhappy people prepared, to benefit either by the presence, or the preaching of Christ, that the only effect produced upon them, by one of the most astonishing of his miracles, was, that "they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts."\* It is not always that our Lord will resist the opposition of the carnal heart, and overcome every impediment, and break down every obstacle, and enthrone himself upon our vanquished appetites and lusts; it was not so in the case before us; for we are told, immediately afterwards, that "Jesus passed over again by ship to the other side."† Had our Lord treated us, individually, as he here saw fit, in his wisdom and justice, to treat the Gadarenes, how few among us would have been present in this house of God

\* Mark v. 17.

† Mark v. 21.

to day! How seldom are the first offers of a Saviour cordially heard, and immediately accepted, by those who have lived in ignorance of God. Many a repulsive feeling, many a rebellious thought, rises up within them; and though few will emulate the open opposition of the Gadarenes, and say, "Depart from us," how many are there who put the word of salvation wilfully from them, rush into the world, give way to folly, yield to sin, and in their days of darkness seek any and every master, rather than commit themselves at once to the Shepherd of their souls, and give themselves up to be guided, and governed, and sanctified, and saved, by the God of their salvation.

The lesson before us, then, is an awakening one. You also, like the Gadarenes, may be permitted once, and but once, to have the offers of a Saviour's presence, and a Saviour's love, freely set before you; the present may be that important season, once neglected, to return no more; the door of your salvation closed; the word of your salvation silenced; the Saviour of your salvation for ever gone. God grant that we may speak, and that you may hear, this day, as those who fully believe in the possibility of so awful a verity.

As soon as our Lord had landed upon the opposite side, "there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and when he saw him, he fell down at Jesus' feet," and "besought him greatly, that he would come into his house."\* How remarkable a contrast to the treatment which our Lord had just received on the opposite shore! But may we not ask, with David, "Is there not a cause?"† Had no domestic calamity wrung

\* Mark v. 22.

† 1 Samuel xvii. 29.

the heart of the ruler—had no deep and trying affliction sent him to the Saviour, would he have been thus zealous, thus earnest, in his application to the Lord of life? We cannot answer the inquiry, as it applies to the ruler, but there are few who will hesitate to do so, as regards themselves; few who will not, with shame and humiliation, confess—but for that bed of sickness—but for that worldly disappointment—but for the loss of that dear friend—but for the death of that loved child—I had never sought or found the Saviour of the world.

The ruler, however, not only sought the Lord, but, as we are expressly told, he came “beseeching greatly.” His feelings, therefore, of the need of the mercy for which he sought, were strong and powerful; grief and anxiety found a ready utterance; his prayer was marked by its fulness, its earnestness, its importunity. Does this describe the nature of our petition, when we draw near to God in daily prayer? and if not, whence the difference? Alas! the difference is here. The ruler went with a heart full of trouble, and anxiety, and faith; and “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”\* We too often go, we fear, with a heart so little occupied by our high errand, with a soul so little impressed by our deep and urgent necessity, a spirit so little influenced by a strong confiding faith in him to whom we apply, that so far from “beseeching greatly,” we have neither desires to express, nor words in which to convey them. Learn, then, from the example before us, what is essential for acceptable prayer. Endeavour, by serious thought and holy meditation, to seek that Spirit, who alone can fill your heart with a real sense of your own danger,

\* Matthew xii. 34.

poverty, wretchedness, and sin, and this, accompanied, as in the ruler, by a true and living faith in the power of him to whom you apply, and you will find no difficulty in "beseeking greatly" for the aid of the good Physician. But remember that every petition uttered in the absence of feelings such as these, falls short of that throne of grace to which you send it; and like an arrow from a slackened bow, powerless and errandless, drops down to earth again. Examine the prayer of Jairus, and you will almost be convinced, that he must have spoken both the language of faith, and the language of the heart; "My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live."\* "For," adds St. Luke, "he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying."†

Even where there are many children, and times are hard, and the difficulty of bringing them up in comfort is great, the loss, or even the sickness, of any one among them, is to the parent's heart a trial of no ordinary weight; but where the child is an only child, and the parent blessed with affluence, and his hopes and expectations are all centered upon the one single object of parental love, it must indeed be a heavy and a grievous visitation, when God is pleased to call back the precious boon which he has mercifully bestowed. That our gracious Redeemer not only well knows it to be so, but peculiarly sympathizes in trials such as these, may, we think, be gathered from the fact, that of the three memorable instances, in which he exerted his divine power over death and the grave, and broke their chains,

\* Mark v. 23.

† Luke viii. 42.



and released their captives, and brought them back to life again, one was the case of an only brother, another an only son, and this an only daughter. Who can hear of such discriminating instances of the love and tenderness of our Redeemer, and not experience the unspeakable comfort which the apostle appears to have derived from the consideration, that we have indeed a merciful High Priest, who can be touched, and who assuredly is "touched with the feeling of all our infirmities." Can you, then, apply to that Saviour, under any circumstances of difficulties or trials, without feeling the full "assurance of faith," that he has not only power enough, but love enough, to grant all, and more than all, of which you stand in need?

"And Jesus arose and went with him," says the evangelist, "and so did his disciples." But as they went on the way to the house of mourning, surrounded by a crowd of wondering spectators, and closely attended by the anxious father, to whose request our Lord had yielded so instantaneous an obedience, "Behold, a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched the hem of his garment, for she said, If I may but touch his clothes I shall be whole; and straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body, that she was healed of that plague."\*

It furnishes us with some little idea of the abundance of the miracles of our Lord, of which, comparatively,

\* Mark v. 29.

so few have been recorded, when we find one of the most remarkable, conveyed thus, as it were, merely in a parenthesis ; so little dwelt upon, that had it not occurred during his passage to the house of Jairus, it seems probable, that it would never have been narrated ; and yet few are the instances, from which more of comfort and encouragement to the feeble or the secret follower of our Lord, may be deduced, than from this simple story.

We first remark the secrecy of the application of this poor sufferer. Some had not scrupled to call aloud upon the passing Saviour, " Jesus, Master, have mercy on us ;"\* others to be placed upon their sick beds in the Saviour's path, that it might be impossible to overlook them ; but here was one, who, with the natural timidity and modesty of her sex, shrunk from observation, and would not publicly ask the mercy, of which she so greatly stood in need.

We next observe the peculiar strength and energy of her faith. Many had believed that a word, a command of Christ, was sufficient to heal the worst of maladies ; but none, that we are aware of, ever had faith to believe, as this poor woman did, that a single touch of his garment, yea, even of the hem of his garment, would be superior to all the physicians upon earth.

How remarkably analogous to this is the case of some few, some happy few, in every congregation. They make no loud professions, no public display of their deep conviction, of the plague which lies at their hearts' core ; and yet, perhaps, none have felt it more acutely, or laboured under it during a longer period of wretched-

\* Mark v. 26.

ness and wo. They also have "suffered many things of many physicians," and have been "nothing bettered, but have rather grown worse." The world, society, business, self-righteousness, all have prescribed for them. The world has prescribed its pleasures, society its cheerfulness, business its occupation, self-righteousness its duties, but all equally in vain; the stream of their corruption flows on, as powerfully as ever, for the source of its pollution remains untouched; the heart is corrupt, unhealed, unaltered still. They behold, perhaps, the crowds which throng around the Saviour; for has he not said of the preaching of the Cross, as truly as of the sacrifice of the Cross, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me?"\* They "hear of Jesus," then, as we are told, this poor woman did; they come in the crowd, and are hidden in the crowd; their malady unknown even to those who follow in the same throng, or worship in the same temple with them. Thus all unknown, and all unseen to others, they receive the living word into their hearts, they draw near by faith to the Saviour, and put forth their hand, and not only touch his garment, but hide themselves, and their own corruptions, and their wo, beneath it, even the garment of a Saviour's righteousness, and find there, where alone it can be found, their healing and their cure. These are they whom David calls "The Lord's hidden ones,"† of whom, in the worst days of Israel's idolatry, there were seven thousand, unknown to man, but known indeed of God, and precious; hidden now, because of their humility, which courts not human observation; because of their feebleness which needs a shield, and

\* John xii. 32.

† Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

their weakness which cannot stand upright; but one day to be revealed, perhaps, even upon earth, when their faith has been strengthened, and their love increased, as among the most devoted and consistent followers of their divine Master; but certainly, on the day when "the Lord of hosts shall make up his jewels,"\* as among the brightest ornaments of their Redeemer's crown.

Doubtless it is a glorious sight to see "the trees of righteousness," as the prophet denominates the established people of God, "planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth their fruit in due season,"† lifting up their heads to heaven, in all the strength, and vigour, and beauty, which the dews of the Spirit have imparted, and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness have cherished, and standing unbroken and uninjured beneath the heaviest gale that blows, defying alike the tempest and the flood. It may be a less glorious, but is it not even a more encouraging sight to the Christian, to mark these same trees, "the planting of the Lord,"‡ just as they are struggling into existence, their heads for the first time emerging from the underwood; and their weak and feeble stems drawing up from amidst the shelter that has shielded them, bending beneath every wind that blows, and appearing unable to stand the shock, with which the first strong gale shall visit them? It is a blessed and a soul-encouraging sight to the Christian, because in that small and yielding sapling, he sees the stern, unbending oak of centuries yet to come, the father of the forest, upon which all storms, all tempests, shall exert their violence, but in vain. While others

\* Malachi iii. 17.

† Psalm i. 3.

‡ Isaiah lxi. 3.

think only of the weakness of the tree, he is thinking of the strength and permanency of the root; he knows that, far beneath the surface, and far beyond the sight of man, the root of that frail tree has driven its fibres firm and fast into the living Rock, and let the stem be shaken as it may above, all is secure below; and let the hurricane sweep with resistless force across the forest, and every other tree fall prostrate beneath its arm, he knows that this may bend, but cannot break, and though it stoop to earth, shall rise again the stronger and the more secure, imperishable and indestructible, for it shall adorn the paradise of God.

But there is a time when the Lord will not permit even his "secret ones" to remain hidden from the eye of men, but will compel them to manifest their faith, that his own glory may be revealed. So it was now with this poor sufferer; she had obtained her cure, and was rejoicing in all that the Saviour had performed for her. When "Jesus immediately, knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And when all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And he looked around about to see her that had done this thing. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came,"—therefore she had evidently retired to some distance, immediately upon obtaining the cure, and was not among the number of those who had denied that they had touched the Lord,—"she came trembling, and falling down before him, she told him all the truth," "she declared unto him be-

fore all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.”\*

Silence, which in the first instance was a proof of her modesty, would, if persevered in, now have been culpable. There is a time, brethren, when the most feeble believer among you all must not be ashamed to stand forth, and avow the mercies and the healing you have received; must be ready to confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men, and, if called upon, to tell “what the Lord hath done for your soul.” He may not, and often does not, require this at the very beginning of your Christian course, at the very instant that you receive your spiritual cure; but neither will he permit you to be long concealed. The cure must be attributed to the right source, must be acknowledged as the work of the good Physician, and, as this poor woman did, you must tell “all the truth,” that your Saviour may receive all the glory.

“Then Jesus said unto her, Daughter be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”† Are there any among you who need the peace which Christ alone can give, that “peace of God which passeth all understanding,”‡ then receive it here. Your cure is not perfected, your healing not complete, until you have obtained peace; peace of conscience, peace of mind, peace of soul. Whom the Lord Jesus Christ treats as a child, and heals as a child, he also acknowledges as a child. “Ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”§ Have you then found access to the gracious Being of whom we speak, has the feeble hand of your young faith touched but the garment of the Saviour, and has the plague within been healed, then

\* Mark v. 30. † Mark v. 34. ‡ Philippians iv. 7. § 2 Cor. vi. 18.

be assured that this mercy, great and wonderful, and undeserved as it is, does not stand alone. He who has pardoned your sin, has accepted your person, and now not only permits, but encourages you to rejoice in your adoption, and says, "Daughter, be of good comfort, go in peace."\* This is, in fact, the one great privilege of the gospel. Take this from the believer, this spirit of adoption, this assurance of his sonship, and you leave him poor indeed. For there is no middle state here on earth, as there shall be no middle state throughout eternity. We are all and each either the children of God through Christ Jesus our Lord, having been reconciled and brought near by the blood of the cross, having been united to himself and carried into his family by the Spirit of adoption, or we are, at this moment outcasts and rebels, neither partakers of his grace, nor preparing for his inheritance. If not children, then enemies; but "if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."† How unutterably solemn the alternative! May no individual leave this house of God to-day, without endeavouring to ascertain the truth as regards himself, his own soul, and his own adoption. May none be permitted to build himself up in a false and groundless hope, or in a delusive peace; may none be satisfied until he has assuredly received that Spirit, for which none ever sought in vain, even "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."‡

"While our Lord yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, certain which said, Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was

\* Luke viii. 48.

† Romans viii. 17.

‡ Romans viii. 15.

spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.”\* Perhaps our Lord knew that the ruler’s faith was weak, as he most certainly knew the fiery trial it was about to be exposed to, and in mercy to him permitted this miracle to be wrought, and that avowal of the poor woman to be made, upon which we have just been commenting, that his faith might be strengthened for the conflict that awaited it. It seems, at least, that some such thoughts were passing through the Saviour’s mind, by those kindly-spoken words of strong encouragement with which he cheered him when he received the fatal message, “Only believe.” It is, indeed, a little sentence, but we shall never see that man on earth who can, with profit, lengthen it. It has a richness and a fulness which experience may, and, I trust in God, will teach you, but which words cannot describe. Would you learn its virtues, the wonder-working power of those short syllables? Go to the broken hearted sinner, see him watering his couch with his tears, overwhelmed with a burden from which the united strength of men and angels cannot set him free; point that wretched and guilty creature to the cross of Christ, and to the Lord who hangs upon it, and say, “Only believe.” If the Spirit of God speaks them to the heart, while you address them to the outer ear, you will soon behold their wonderful effect; the heavy burden, untouched by mortal hands, falls at his feet; he who has taken it from him will bear it for him, and he shall feel it again no more for ever. Or go to the bed-side of the dying saint; do fears and doubts oppress him? is this the hour of Satan and of darkness? has he for a moment, amidst

\* Mark v. 36.



the clouds that overhang him, lost sight of the Star of Bethlehem? Whisper in the ear of that desponding follower of Jesus, these little words, "only believe." The shades of darkness will disperse, the scales will fall from his eyes, the anguish be removed from his soul, faith will again resume her throne, and all will be peace.

Yes, Jesus himself had no higher and no better remedy for sin, for sorrow, and for suffering, than those two words convey; at the utmost extremity of his own distress, and of his disciples' wretchedness, he could only say, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me."\* Believe, "only believe."

"And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn."†

Who shall complain that they are subjected to the ridicule of the world, to the trial, as the apostle calls it, "of cruel mocking,"‡ when they behold their Lord, thus, at the very moment of exerting the highest attribute of Deity, "quickenning whom he will," calling the breathless corpse to life again, "laughed even to scorn," by these poor fallen sons of earth! How does our indignation rise and our heart burn within us, that the great God of heaven and earth should thus be ridiculed by the works of his own hands.

Brethren, let us learn from it at least, patiently, if not cheerfully, to bear that, which even our Lord and Master has borne before us, and will bear with us; re-

\* John xiv. 1.

† Mark v. 38-40.

‡ Hebrews xi. 36.

remembering that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him,"\* and that a conformity with him even in these, the least of trials, shall not be forgotten on that day when we shall be also "glorified together."†

"But, when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha, cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years."‡

How perfectly simple in every portion of this wonderful narration, how void of all display. If, as has been well observed, the very language in which our Lord speaks of heaven, marks him at once as an inmate and a sovereign there, so does the very manner in which he performed the most stupendous of his miracles, almost as certainly as the miracles themselves, establish his divinity. No impostor could have been contented with such a total absence of all effort, all excitement, all display; our Lord appeared, if we may so say, scarcely conscious that any wonderful work was to be achieved. "Maid, arise," was the simple language in which he performed a deed which, in dignity and power, might rival the creation of a universe. And is it not often thus calmly, and quietly, and unobtrusively, that he still acts by his divine Spirit, when the yet greater work of the spiritual resurrection of a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, is to be perfected? Oftentimes, how often none can tell, a single discourse, a sentence, yea, even a word, has been blessed to this

\* 2 Timothy ii. 12.

† Romans viii. 17.

‡ Mark v. 40-42,

great and wonderful end; no effort visible, no display of majesty and power, except to the happy soul thus raised to spiritual life. But, as in the miracle before us, "When Jesus said, Arise, he took the damsel by the hand," so now, the word of Christ's power must be accompanied by the hand of his grace, ere the miracle of mercy can be wrought, for in vain do we exclaim, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,"\* unless his arm be indeed outstretched to draw you thence, and to give the spiritual life to which we call you. May that hand of mighty power be exerted among us this day; that you, if there be but one who is still sleeping the sleep of sin, may hear that word, "Arise!" and be so shaken from your deathful slumbers, that nothing again shall tempt you to sleep upon your post; but being thus aroused, that you may forget those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, be daily, hourly, constantly pressing forward for "the prize of the mark of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus." May we all feel how little, how less than little, there has yet been of spiritual life in our prayers, of active holiness in our conduct, of an earnest, faithful, zealous devotedness to God in our daily conversation, that we may indeed arise, as those who are risen with Christ, and seek in earnest those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

\* Ephesians v. 14.

## LECTURE VI.

JOHN vi. 37.

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

THE closing lecture for the present season brings us, as we find by the fourth verse of the chapter, to another Passover, being the third which occurred during the ministry of our Lord; one of those resting-places which we proposed to ourselves when we commenced this important history. It is impossible to look back upon the road we have lately travelled, without being struck by the remarkable instances we have witnessed of the Divine power, and wisdom, and love, of our adorable Redeemer. Whether we view his wisdom, as manifested in that astonishing defence before the Sanhedrim, in which he proclaimed his divinity; or his love, in pardoning the poor and sinful woman who washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head; or his power, in calling back the daughter of Jairus to life again; we are equally constrained to say, “Surely this man was the Son of God.”\* But, brethren, this has been said and believed, and doubtless, is at this moment, by thousands, who possess no share in the

\* Luke xix. 14; John vii. 46, &c.

salvation, which "this man" preached, and in the redemption which he purchased. We do not, then, regret, that the last portion of Scripture upon which we shall at present dwell, consists of a sermon rather than a miracle; that the last passage of the mortal life of our Lord, which remains to be considered during the present season, will bring him before you, not demonstrating his Messiahship, or his divinity, but offering the blessed fruits of them to your souls; that the last words you will hear from his lips, will contain the very marrow and essence of the Gospel; and that if you were brought from the depths of heathen darkness, and placed for the first time this day, beneath the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, sufficient of them would, by God's grace, struggle through the clouds of human teaching, to kindle within your hearts that holy flame, which all the powers of evil should be unable to extinguish.

The occasion of the divine discourse to which I refer, appears to have been the following. Many of the Jews, who had been partakers of the miraculous meal with which our Lord had so lately presented five thousand of his followers,\* determined upon accompanying him whithersoever he went; not, indeed, for the purpose of learning his doctrine, or from the feeling of love to his person, but simply from the unworthy motive of eating the bread of idleness, and feeding from time to time upon the miraculous food, which they now discovered that our Lord was well able to supply. For this most selfish object, they had traversed sea and land, until they had again overtaken Christ while tarrying at Capernaum.†

\* John vi. 10.

† John vi. 23, 24.

Jesus, whose omniscience told him at once the extent of their labours, and the intention of them, no sooner beheld these worldly-minded followers again gathering round him, than he thus addressed them; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles;"\* yet even this, we should have thought, would have been a motive sufficiently low and earthly, had it led to nothing further; "but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."† They were, as we have seen, labouring and toiling, travelling by water, travelling by land, and all for what purpose? Because they had eaten of the bread, and were filled, and hoped in a similar manner to be again rewarded. Therefore, our Lord addresses them, Ye are labouring for meat, but it is meat which perisheth; if you would have that which endureth, and endureth for ever, come, find it treasured up in me. How similar to the language with which he had long before addressed the woman of Samaria: You are seeking for water; ask of me, and I will give you the living water. What, then, is the great lesson which all, in every age, and in every clime, are instructed to derive from these replies of our divine Master? Brethren, it is this: Whether it be meat or drink, whether it be pleasure or profit, whether it be contentment or joy, whatever be the gratification you are seeking from the creature, it is really to be had only from the Creator. O, that men could be induced to believe this mighty truth, to take the Lord Jesus Christ at his word, and to

\* John vi. 26.

† John vi. 26, 27.

go to him and to him alone, for that peace, and rest, and sustenance, and enjoyment, which the whole world of created beings cannot give. When shall we be content to learn the consoling and encouraging lesson? How many are there of you, whom I address at this moment, whose hearts are wounded with disappointment, or bleeding with anguish, or wearied with toil, because you have learnt it not. You have "laboured for the meat which perisheth," and are you surprised that it should perish? You have toiled for the waters of an earthly well, and do you mourn that they no longer stand at that well's brink? that, ever as you draw, they are receding, that a longer and a longer line is needed, that your labour is increased, and its fruits diminished? Or more, do you grieve that your cisterns are broken, and your wells are dry? Be not surprised at this; it is the very condition of their existence. They are cisterns, not fountains; wells, not rivers. All that they once contained, and in which your hearts delighted, was poured into them by an unseen, Almighty hand, and when that hand has ceased to pour, those waters must subside; and when that hand shall break those cisterns, the water must run out. Earthly blessings, possessions, relationships, must fail you; they would not be earthly if it were otherwise. Do you seek for those which endure, they are to be found in God, as revealed to us in Christ Jesus, and in him alone. Rest then from labours which are destroying your energies, and must end in disappointments; cease from expectations which this world can never gratify; no longer indulge a grief which distracts the heart, and carries away the affections, from him who alone is worthy of them, but concentrate every feeling, every expectation, every desire, in him in whom alone

all fulness dwelleth. The heart which is fixed on God knows no distrustful thought, no abiding disappointment, no hopeless sorrow: it may labour for the meat which perisheth, but it will not toil for it, as those who have never tasted of the "hidden manna,"\* wherewith the Lord sustains his people; it may mourn for earthly blessings too soon removed, but it cannot sorrow even for them, as others which have no hope.

We call upon you, then, this day, to feed by faith on the Son of God, "for him hath God the Father sealed."† God, in offering him to you, hath set to his seal, that there is a power, a richness, a fulness, a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency in Christ, which shall never disappoint you; and you, in receiving his testimony, have "set to your seal that God is true."‡ Blessed Saviour, sealed by God the Father as the Priest, the Prophet, the King, the God of all thy believing people! and blessed believer, sealed by God the Holy Ghost, as his redeemed, his disciple, his subject, his child, "unto the day of redemption."§

In vain did the Jews attempt to turn aside, by the weapons of an earthly warfare, this one great lesson of the Bible, that the receiving of Christ, the coming to Christ, the feeding upon Christ, is alone the life of the Christian. Our Lord again and again returns to it, until he makes the truth so plain, the doctrine it contains so undeniable, that though many might, as many did, reject it, thanks be to God that no child in a Christian land is so ignorant as necessarily to misapprehend it.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life:

\* Rev. ii. 17.

† John iii. 33.

‡ John vi. 27.

§ Ephesians iv. 30.



he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”\*

In the former testimony, our Lord had declared that to all who came unto him, the Son of man would give the bread of life. Here he distinctly states the glorious truth upon which we have been commenting, “I am the bread of life.”

We need not largely insist upon the importance of the metaphor. That the body may be nourished, it is not enough that the bread be of the finest wheat flour, that it be seen, that it be approved, that it be handled,—it must be eaten, or the famished wretch will die, though surrounded by an incalculable abundance. So it is with “the bread of life:” you may admire the Saviour, and love to hear of him; you might, for many in the days of our Lord’s earthly sojourn assuredly did so, you might see, and even “handle the word of life;”† and yet have neither part nor lot in his salvation. That he may come as life to your soul, the Lord Jesus Christ must spiritually be fed upon; he must be clearly and fully received in all his offices, and closed with, and embraced by, a true and living faith. It is then only that this gracious promise is fulfilled, that you shall never hunger, and never thirst, after those pleasures, profits, follies of the world, which are the worthless chaff, and yet which satisfy the worldly heart that feeds upon them. To tell you to look with no longing eye upon the world, is utterly vain, until not merely the eye, but the heart, has been fixed upon, and satisfied with, Christ Jesus: to direct you neither to hunger nor thirst for those miserable husks, and those stagnant pools,

\* John vi. 35.

† 1 John i. 1.

which satisfy the worldling, is equally vain, until you have not merely tasted, but habitually fed upon the bread of life, and the waters of salvation, which are treasured up for you in Christ Jesus. It is then only that the promise is fulfilled, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."\* Perfectly fulfilled in this world of sin, it will never be; there are in the heart, and in the mind, even of the most advanced believer, occasional breakings forth of his vanquished appetites, and his subdued and chastened lusts; he does from time to time, hunger and thirst for those things which are forbidden, but he does not gratify the appetite; Satan may spread his dainties for him, but he knows by painful experience, that like the apples of Sodom, though beautiful to the eye, they will turn to ashes in the mouth; the world may, like Jael of old, bring him "butter in a lordly dish;" but he sees the nail and hammer which are behind, and he will neither sleep in her tent, nor eat at her table.

In proportion as his soul is renewed by the Spirit of God, these earth-born appetites become more and more rare; but be assured, there is no real remedy for them, but by daily, hourly feeding on him who is the bread of life, by going to Jesus for the satisfying of every appetite, and finding that refreshing food, that strengthening nourishment in him, which nothing but a continual living upon him can supply.

My brethren, how often, how solemnly, how urgently, with how many entreaties and with how many prayers we have pressed this great gospel truth upon your at-

\* John vi. 35.

tention, God only knows. With what effect, that God who seeth the heart can alone pronounce, as he can alone produce it; but of this we are convinced, that if we have failed in the endeavour, “then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also;”\* “ye are yet in your sins.”† For no religion which does not bring you to the Lord Jesus Christ, and teach you to find all your hope, and all your life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, as “hid with Christ in God,”‡ can stand in that day, when the wrath of God shall be abroad on the earth, or can save a soul alive.

When our divine Master had spoken the words upon which we have been commenting, he looked around him with the mournful feeling, that as regarded some at least of his hearers, they had been in vain, and said at once plainly and unreservedly, “ye also have seen me, and believe not.”§ Then he adds, as if to derive consolation to his own soul, amidst so discouraging an aspect, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” Praised be God for this immutable and blessed promise! There were seasons, apparently even to our Lord, when the hardness, and coldness, and unbelief of his hearers drove back his heart, if we may so say, from the stream of God’s love which was then flowing on, like some richly laden river, through the continent of time, and upward to the fountain head of that love, seated in eternity before time began. Thither did his heart retire for that consolation, which the present circumstances of his ministerial work did not afford him. There he dwelt in comfort on the eternal promise, “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me;”|| all, and

\* 1 Cor. xv. 14.

§ John vi. 36.

† 1 Cor. xv. 17.

|| Romans v. 11.

‡ Col. iii. 3.

every one of them, shall feed by faith upon the bread of life; not one sheep of the flock shall be shut out, not one lamb of the fold shall perish.

Surely, if our divine Master could draw consolation from this high source, the weakest of his servants may well be permitted to do the same. Yes, brethren, it is a blessed spring of consolation to know, that however weak and infirm the instrument who scatters it, the bread of life can never be cast forth in vain; that from its smallest crumbs, some well-beloved child in God's redeemed family shall obtain spiritual nourishment and life; that, sooner or later, all who are given to the eternal Son shall be fed, all shall be nourished, all shall be matured into the "stature of the fulness of Christ Jesus our Lord."\* But there is comfort in the reflection, not only to the ministers of God, but to his people. Do you never, when looking around you upon the multitudes engaged in folly and in sin, feel this desponding reflection gaining ground upon your better judgment, how small is the company of true believers! how few are there in every generation, who are here following, how few who shall hereafter dwell, with the eternal Lamb! This is your consolation, whether they be many or few, man cannot determine, for no eye but the eye of God can see, no hand but his can register them, and doubtless many whom we number not, are entered there, in the volume in which their names are written, even in the Lamb's book of life: but this we know, that all, without a single exception, without one backslider, all whom the Father hath given to Christ, "shall come to him." There may be years of rebellion, forgetfulness, and sin,

\* Ephesians iv. 13.

“nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”\*

While you derive great comfort and encouragement from this reflection, let it suggest to you great forbearance, great patience, and long-suffering towards even the worst of men. Do you behold a fellow-sinner who has run the lengths of riot, profligacy, and profaneness, from which, by God’s restraining grace, you have been withheld; deal tenderly with that man’s feelings, character, soul. How know you not, that he may be among the number of those whom the eternal Father hath given to the eternal Son, and who shall, therefore, one day, come to him. Yes, even upon earth, that out-cast sinner may so far outstrip yourself upon the heavenward road, and in eternity may fill a place so near the throne, that you shall be immeasurably far below him.

But if there be a lesson of Christian encouragement, and love, and tender compassion here, for every believing heart, is there no instruction in the words which follow, for the sinner himself? There is, indeed, a lesson never taught but in the school of Christ, and one which we pray God to carry home to the heart of every individual, who has not yet made his peace with God, and drawn near to, and actually closed with, the Redeemer of the world. It is conveyed in this blessed, this life-giving sentence; “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” While the believer may dwell with a holy delight and satisfaction upon the former portion of the text, let the unbeliever fix his thoughts and his attention here. Grace, free, unmerited grace, is offered to all, and to every child of Adam, by whom these words

\* 2 Timothy ii. 19.

are heard. We say to every individual among you, here is an offer of salvation to which no exception is made, no reserve attached. Are you willing to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, to accept his offers, to obey his laws? Wait not then for a greater degree of moral fitness, or even for a stronger feeling of desire to come; delay not for another, God only knows if you shall ever have another, invitation, but come unhesitatingly, and come at once. Do you reply, I am too sinful, too unworthy, too polluted; be assured, that your individual case, with all its unworthiness, its pollutions, its sins, was more perfectly known to, and present to, the eternal mind, at the very moment when the Saviour said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," than it is at this moment known to yourself. Observe only the particularity of the promise; although our Lord began the sentence by saying, "All that the Father giveth," he changes the person in that portion of it which he intended especially to apply to the sinner's heart, and says, not "them that come," but, "him that cometh;" that no man, no woman, no child, might feel excluded. However disposed, therefore, you may be to dread, lest your own case should form an exception, be assured that there is not the slightest real or scriptural ground for it, for from such an invitation so expressed, by him who was perfect wisdom and truth, as well as perfect love, there is not, there cannot be, throughout all the generations of Adam, one living soul necessarily excluded. All who come, and each who comes, shall be alike received and alike welcomed. But it is not only to the unbeliever, seeking a refuge and a home, that these words speak such powerful consolation; there is no single point in the Christian's journey, from his

first approach to a Saviour, to his final consummation in that Saviour's glory, to which they have not ministered contentment and peace. One of the most faithful followers of the Saviour with whom I have ever been privileged to hold communion here below,\* assured me, after years of close and devoted fellowship with his Lord, that there were hours upon a bed of sickness in which every other text throughout the sacred volume appeared to fail him, and he was sustained by this alone. Wonderful peculiarity of the bread of life, that the same portion which can nourish the child just struggling into spiritual existence, can maintain the full-grown man and strengthen the soldier of the cross, in the fiercest hours of his closing conflict. Are there any among you who are ever tempted in the days of sickness, or affliction, to fear, that though you once had hope in Christ, you possess an interest in him no longer? In the words before you, you also may find peace: they tell you, though you may be cast down, though you may even for a season appear to be cast off, that you never shall be cast out: "I will in no wise cast out." Again, do you at such seasons fear that you have never had a saving interest in the Lord Jesus, that you have never yet really come to him? It is often vain to contradict such an assertion, though it be false. Acknowledge, therefore, that it is the fact, that you have never yet closed with the offers of salvation, and we still repeat the invitation, "Come to him now." Apply this text to your heart, as if for the first time, and even so coming, his word is still the same, and never can be falsified; "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

\* The late truly pious, and highly intellectual Rev. John Sargeant, the biographer of Henry Martyn.

Time would fail me, were I to attempt to dilate upon all the powers of this wonder-working passage. True it is, that our Lord afterwards subjoins, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him,"\* because it is not, it has never been, it can never be, "of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,"† that all the praise and all the glory may flow back to that eternal fountain of love where all is due. But this closes not the door, this narrows not the entrance. We dare not suppress these words of our Lord, because we are bound to "declare unto you the whole counsel of God;"‡ and it might be said, that in speaking of the unfettered freedom of the invitations of the Saviour, in declaring that all are invited, that all might come, we feared to acknowledge the absolute necessity of the divine drawing. We would not knowingly suppress one line of gospel truth; for however difficult or contradictory it may appear to our limited comprehension now, we are sure that every word of God will one day be fully verified. Receive, therefore, the promise of the text, even coupled with this which some men denominate a restriction; but before you term it so, fairly examine the passage, and see if it deserve the name. Do not look at it by the dim and feeble lamp of theological controversy, but in the warm sunshine of gospel truth, and of personal experience.

We ask, then, of every individual beneath this roof, the simple question, have you never by your own experience, felt the meaning of our Lord's declaration, "No man can come to me, except the Father which

\* John vi. 44.

† Romans ix. 16.

‡ Acts xx. 27.



hath sent me draw him?" Has the Father never drawn you? We might almost be content to rest the answer upon the events even of the present hour. Have you felt no desire, no passing inclination, since you have been within these walls to-day, while hearing of a Saviour's love, and of a Saviour's promises, to be yourself a participator in these blessings? Has not even this transitory feeling passed across your soul? Could they be mine without an effort, how gladly should I be a partaker. If, then, nothing more than this, the least, the faintest trace of all that I am describing, has been yours, even you can never say, I could not come to Christ, for the Father would not draw me thither. No, be assured that even you, on the last great day, if you reject these offers, resist this drawing, will, with every other impenitent unbeliever, be left speechless and without excuse; for I shall not hesitate here to record, that the more I search God's holy word, the more I dwell upon his perfect character; the more I hold communion with him whose name is love, the more entirely am I convinced, that there is no soul born into the world to whom the strivings of God's Spirit come not; that there is no individual upon earth, whom the Father draws not with such a degree of sweetness and of power, that he might come to him, who, if he came would "in no wise cast him out."

My brethren, these are high, and holy, and heavenly mysteries; mysteries which I cannot explain, because I cannot understand or fathom them; apparent contradictions which I am unable to reconcile; difficulties which I cannot comprehend, and which while on earth, I am content to believe to be inexplicable. It is easy to form

a system that should cut the knot which it is impossible to unravel; to say at once, as many bold men, and many good men have not scrupled to say, Christ died for none but the elect, God draws none but the elect, and therefore, none but the elect can come to Jesus; it is easy, by taking a partial view of divine truth, and then drawing our own deductions, to arrive at such tremendous simplicity as this, and thus to hold one complete and perfect system. But this I cannot do, for I declare, as in the presence of God this day, that it is my full conviction, that there is no human system, whether it be Calvinism, or Arminianism, which I have ever seen, that could bear to be placed side by side with the heavenly truth of God's Almighty word, and long run parallel with it. Perplex not yourselves, therefore, with man's inventions, but draw your wisdom, your hope, your guidance, at once from Christ, your living Head. There is enough, without the incumbering aid of human systems, in his divine word, for time and for eternity. All has one object and one end; all points to Christ the Saviour of the world, and through him, by the eternal Spirit, to the Father. All clearly and unanswerably demonstrates this, that while the salvation of the sinner must originate in, be carried on, and perfected through the sovereign and undeserved love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, the condemnation of the sinner shall be all his own, wrought out by his own corruptions, and perfected and sealed by his own obstinacy and perverseness.

The effect of the discourse of our Lord, which we have this day been considering, is thus recorded by the evangelist: "Many of his disciples, when they heard

this, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it?\*" And "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Strange, indeed, if we knew not, alas! too well, the insufferable pride of the human heart, that such should be the effect of truth, even when spoken by the God of truth himself. Watch carefully over your own hearts, my brethren, that it produce no such baneful fruits in you. You may avoid the hearing of painful or of humbling truths, you may reject the reception of them, but their truth you cannot shake, their strength you are unable to invalidate; and, though you may close your ears or your hearts to them, throughout a long life here on earth, remember, there is an eternity awaiting you, to be employed in rejoicing in the happiness which these truths shall bring, or in for ever cursing the hour when you heard, but heeded them not.

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."†

May this be the feeling and the decision to which, by the Spirit of God, all hearts here present may this day be brought. May no individual, who has attended upon these means of grace, during the present season, refuse to echo back from his heart those affecting words, "Lord, to whom" else "shall I go?"‡ The world cannot save me; even God himself will not receive me, unless I first go unto thee, O Lord, the great propitiation, the heavenly Intercessor, the alone Saviour of my

\* John vi. 60.

† John vi. 67.

‡ John vi. 68.

soul. "Thou hast the words of eternal life;" O speak, then, with such divine power and energy to my dying soul, that I may, by faith, "eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood,"\* and have eternal life; and be raised up at the last day. And may God of his infinite mercy hear, and answer, and fulfil the petition for you, for me, and for all, for his dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ.

\* John vi. 53.

**THE HISTORY**  
**OF**  
**OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR**  
**JESUS CHRIST.**

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**SECTION IV.**

**FROM THE THIRD TO THE FOURTH PASSOVER IN OUR  
LORD'S MINISTRY.**

THE HISTORY

OF THE

REPUBLIC

OF

THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

## LECTURE I.

MATTHEW xv. 28.

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

THE present section of the life in which we are engaged, commences with the beginning of the third year of the ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Two of these important periods have been already considered from this place: the last and most interesting is yet before us. Never did we apply ourselves to the task with deeper feelings of our inability to do it justice, than at the present moment; never with a stronger conviction of entire reliance upon the strength, and teaching, and guidance of that blessed Being of whom we are to speak; and we may add, never with a more humiliating sense of our great need of your forbearance and your prayers.

Brethren, pray for us, that what is spoken in our infirmity may be made perfect in his strength, who delights to glorify himself by the weakness of means, the feebleness of instruments, the inadequacy of all secondary causes, that the Lord alone may be exalted, and that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man.

The first incident in the third year of our Lord's

ministry, is recorded both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, in the fifteenth chapter of the former, and the seventh of the latter, in the details of the conversation between our divine Master and the Pharisees, upon the subject of eating "bread with defiled (*i. e.* to say, with unwashed) hands," and "the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of tables;" in short, upon all those ceremonial observances which the Pharisees, rejecting the commandment of God, had invented for the purpose of establishing a religion of externals, in the place of that which purifies and regulates the heart. This creed of the Pharisees has been, in every age, the religion of nature, and is not unknown even in countries where the pure light of Christianity shines the most resplendently. As long as it is easier to occupy ourselves in external observances than to improve in holiness; to perform a ceremony, than to fulfil a duty, or to correct an evil habit or temper; so long will men in all ages, and under all dispensations, be liable to fall victims to the temptation of preferring the outward signs of religion to its inward and spiritual grace; so long even among Christians, will ordinances be attended, and ceremonies valued for their own sakes, rather than, as they ought to be, for their effects in the promotion of true and vital godliness in the life and conversation.

We might almost imagine that the incident which occurred next in order of time to the conversation we have referred to, had been selected by the evangelists, and placed in juxtaposition with it for the purpose of marking by its contrast, the high estimation in which a single spark of divine grace is held by that God, who forms his estimate of every action, by the state of the heart from which it springs, and who while he despises the most elaborate ceremonies of man's invention, delights



in the smallest seed of spiritual life, which is sown by himself.

“ Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts,” or rather into the confines, “ of Tyre and Sidon,” and “ entered into a house, and would have no man know it, but he could not be hid ; for behold, a woman of Canaan, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”\* She is called by St. Mark a Syrophœnician, the more usual name of part of ancient Canaan ; and a Greek, the general expression for a Gentile.

The reason for which our blessed Lord desired especially at this season to retire from the observation of men, and would have none made acquainted with the place of his retreat is not revealed to us. Perhaps the only cause for which any reference at all is made to the fact of his concealment may be simply to show the strength of maternal tenderness, as manifested in the remarkable person to whom the incident refers. She had at home a daughter, who was the subject of demoniacal possession ; and secret as our Lord’s retirement might have been, and hidden as it was from the eyes of others, it could not escape the anxious searchings of a mother’s love, perhaps the most powerful feeling by which the human heart is ever influenced.

This at once engages us on behalf of the applicant ; we know that she is a parent and in sorrow ; we are not ignorant of the merciful Being with whom she had to do ; and we feel an interest in the result of her petition. But then there is a feature in her history, of which we have

\* Mark vii. 24,

not yet thought, and which has pertained to none other that we have yet considered. She was a Gentile, all other applicants had been Jews; she was of the accursed race of Canaan, whose lives had been given to the sword of the Israelites by the express command of God himself. She had, therefore, no title to the covenanted mercies of God, which had been signed and sealed only for them "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants,"\* even to the believing children of the faithful Abraham. This consideration throws some doubt upon the success of her mission, and increases our anxiety to see the end. She addresses the Saviour so confidently and so appropriately, that we feel at once this can be no common case. "She cried unto him, saying, have mercy on me, O Lord thou Son of David."† Whence, as a Gentile, had she learnt, thus rightly, to know the genealogy of the Messiah? and who had taught her to apply it to this obscure Stranger, who was now concealing himself in the most remote corner of Canaan, and to whom, so many far better read in scripture than herself, had denied the title? How easy to make the inquiry, how impossible to answer it! Perhaps like Cornelius and Lydia, her heart had been opened, by God, to receive the knowledge of himself; perhaps, surrounded by the debasing errors of a most foul and polluting idolatry, she alone had faithful been among the faithless, and in many a silent hour, had dwelt upon the sacred page of Revelation, and meditated upon David's root and David's branch, until, like Simeon, she had been taught of God, to wait in prayer and hope, for the consolation of Israel. There is nothing improbable in the conjecture; so far from it, that if it be not true, we

\* Romans ix. 4.

† Matthew xv. 22.

know not whence she could have derived a knowledge so correctly scriptural, or how she could, thus rightly, have addressed the Saviour of the world.

We turn from the suppliant to the merciful Being to whom she spake, and how great is our surprise when we are told, "but he answered her not a word." How unlike the accustomed kindness of our Lord! We have seen him eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and replying to their inquiries. We have seen him seated by the side of the well, in deeply instructive converse with a Samaritan harlot. None so low, none so ignorant, none so guilty; but he had words, and words of kindness and instruction for them all. But here he was silent: nay, even his own disciples, who were not wont to feel more tenderly, or more readily than their Master, on this occasion appear almost as if they had exchanged natures with him. They cannot hear that mother's voice, unmoved; and while Jesus is deaf to her entreaties, they take up her cause and intercede with him, "Send her away, for she crieth after us;" yield to her requests, heal her daughter, for it is wretched thus to listen to her reiterated supplications. This indeed induces the Saviour, for the first time, to break silence, but it is in words more painful to the mourner than the most obdurate silence could have been. "He answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" a refusal, apparently the sternest, and the harshest that ever passed the Saviour's lips. Now mark its effects upon the applicant. Does it drive her from him? Does it send her away in despair? No, it brings her immediately to his feet. "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." Blessed proof that the heart is right with God, when every mark of his chastening, every in-

fiction of his love, only draws us the more closely to himself. "As for the ungodly, it is not so with them; but they are like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth."\* Every breath of God's chastening being to them as the blast of his displeasure, and driving them but the farther from the presence of his glory.

O that the language of our hearts may be, in the words of one of God's people of old, "When the flail of affliction is upon me, let me not be as the chaff which flies in thy face, but as the grain which lies at thy feet." That it was so with the Canaanitish woman, is evident from the story; she who had followed, at a distance, during our Lord's forbidding silence, only drew the nearer in consequence of his more forbidding reply. "Lord, help me," contains the whole of her desires; she was willing to leave both the measure and the manner of the help, to him of whom she asked it. She has told him of her case, and she believes that he is too good, too skilful a Physician to need a syllable beyond the one short sentence, by which she places it unhesitatingly in his hands, to deal with it as seemeth him best.

It is a blessed thing, brethren, when in an hour of anxiety, we are content thus to place a blank in the hands of God, with sufficient confidence in his wisdom, and in his love, to feel assured that he will fill it wisely and tenderly; to cry from the dictate of a simple faith, "Lord, help me," and to be content, although that help come in far different guise, from what we looked for. But the trial of this poor suppliant was not yet over. Jesus knew that he had to deal with a disciple, whose

\* Psalm i. 5.

faith was of the highest order, and, therefore, he hesitates not to put it to the severest test. Throughout all Scripture, we read of but one who was dignified with the title of the Father of the faithful; and throughout all Scripture, we never read of a second, who was commanded to sacrifice an only son. "Jesus answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."\*

How invincible a faith, what wonderful perseverance, what deep humility. The Saviour could not cast her lower than she was well content to cast herself. No term of reproach that he could apply to her, which she was not most willing to accept, and from which she could not gather arguments for his mercy. Even the very depth of her degradation, only forms a stronger plea for the extension of his love. If a dog, then still one of the household; with no title indeed to the children's bread, but with a stronger claim upon the crumbs than one more distant, though less degraded.

Does any one among you feel himself to be, at this moment, so far from God, that the rays of divine mercy have not yet travelled down through so great a distance; an alien, an outcast, a sinner, yea, the very chief of sinners; and shall this conviction stop your cry for mercy, and render you incompetent to pray? No, take encouragement from this Gentile woman; make the very depth of your degradation a plea with God for the outpouring of his mercy. He has bread for children, but are there no crumbs for dogs? Yes, be assured, that if under the old dispensation, confessedly one of severity, there was

\* Matthew xv. 26, 27.

still, after the family and the household had been fed, bread enough and to spare, even for the dogs of the flock; under the gracious dispensation beneath which we live, far more than this may reasonably be expected; not only that the dogs shall be fed, but that none are so unclean, none so separate from God, but that, if they seek it, they shall receive cleansing, and food, and raiment, and reconciliation, and adoption. Only ask in faith, nothing wavering, and you shall have more than crumbs, you shall feed fully upon him who declared, "I am the bread of life, and of whom if a man eat, he shall live for ever.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."\* Here we behold the Saviour once more in his own true and blessed character: painful as his reserve and unkindness must have been to this poor woman, we can readily believe, that they were more painful to himself. Perfectly as he knew that her faith, though it were "tried with fire," would be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, we cannot doubt, although no such symptom is to be seen in the narrative, that he who thus for a short time placed her in the furnace, deeply sympathized with the sufferer. As the heart of the surgeon cannot but feel, although his hand will not tremble while he is probing the deepest and severest wound.

Had we been present at the close of this instructive scene, our language of commendation would perhaps have differed widely from our Lord's; we should have said, O woman, great is thy humility, great is thy patience under rebukes and disappointments, great is

\* Matthew xv. 28.

thy perseverance in prayer : he contented himself with the commendation of a single grace, and that, not the most obvious, when he said, "Great is thy faith." While men only see the fruit and the branches, Christ sees and applauds the root from which they spring. It is faith alone which can put the crown upon the head of the Redeemer, and therefore, of all the graces which can occupy the heart, faith is pre-eminently that which "the King delighteth to honour."

It is profitable to dwell upon these instances of the Saviour's dealings with his people, while on earth, because they form, as it were, epitomes of his transactions with them, even now while in the kingdom of his glory. Let us, then, for the purpose of strengthening our faith, and increasing our love to Jesus, take as close a parallel as possible to the incident before us. I address, it may be, at this moment, some Christian parent whose heart for years has bled over the wayward, the ungodly, conduct of a beloved child. You have made that child the subject of many an earnest and secret prayer, and yet no answer of peace has descended upon your soul. God has been silent: the Lord Jesus Christ has been silent; the Comforter has been silent. Like the disciples of old, Christian friends and ministers have interceded for you, "Lord, send her away," answered and contented. Still the answer comes not; or, if it come, it seems in anger, rather than in mercy, and the increasingly devious course of the child, for whom you pray, is to you a more severe and agonizing reply, than the harshest answer to the Canaanite. And now you are tempted to despond; you cannot believe that there is mercy yet in store for you. How often does the Christian parent need a lesson

from this Gentile mother! All this is but the trial of your faith: because your Lord sees that it is strong, and loves to exercise it; or because he knows that it is weak, and desires to strengthen it: but be assured, whatever be the motive from which he has thus troubled you, it cannot be to make you cease from desiring that which is so evidently for God's glory, but to make you pursue it with greater faith, with more unabated energy, with more unwearied prayer. In the end, you shall reap, if you faint not; for we can scarcely imagine that ever God refuses a crying child who makes the honour of his heavenly Father the limit of his prayer, and desires to ask according to the will of God. But then, brethren, in this, and in all other Christian trials, you need, what Christ declared that the Syrophœnician possessed, a "great faith." Little faith, we grant, will save you, if it be but genuine; but little faith will never enable you to bear up under great trials, under severe and accumulated disappointments, and against even the Lord himself, when he contendeth with you. It was this which so peculiarly set the stamp of value upon the faith of the Canaanitish woman; it was this which distinguished the prophet of old above his brethren, and enabled him to say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." No faith but a great faith, could have prompted this; as none other could have taught the patriarch Job to exclaim, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Be content, then, with



nothing less than "great faith," the only stock upon which great humility and great endurance, great holiness and great love, will ever grow.

The miracle which we have been considering was followed by others, so numerous and so astonishing, that we are told "the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and they glorified the God of Israel."\* Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat,"—not intending to imply that they had fasted during three days; but that now, on the third day, their provisions were exhausted. "I will not send them away fasting," continues our Lord, "lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?"† But what was impossible to the servant, presented no difficulty to the Master. "Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children."

Brethren, we rejoice that needing as we do at the present moment every encouragement, so stupendous an instance of our Redeemer's power and love, should

\* Matthew xv. 31.

† Matthew xv. 32, 33.

occur thus at the commencement of our present labours. We desire to see in it an omen for good, upon the course of spiritual instruction on which we have this day entered. We would pray for you and for ourselves, for the same faith here manifested by the multitude and by the disciples—for you, that you may, like those of whom we have just read, come as the followers of Jesus; that you may come in the spirit of dependence and prayer; expecting a spiritual feast, but not from man; that you may sit down like the multitude, without questioning the power of him who is to provide the food, and in the fullest, firmest belief, that it shall be provided, and that an unseen hand shall convey it into your souls: and for ourselves, that we may “take courage,” though the numbers to be fed be large and the provision scanty, though we shall be often tempted despondingly to ask, whence shall we find “so much bread as to fill so great a multitude?” Though we have no stores of our own from which to furnish forth a table in the wilderness, yet that our Lord will suffer none who hunger and thirst after righteousness to “faint by the way,” through our inability to feed them. No, we are constrained to believe that he who in breaking the seven loaves so multiplied them in the hands of the disciples that they became sustenance for four thousand people, will still be present to stand between our poverty and your necessity; and as that merciful Being alone can bless the meal, so will he himself provide the bread; and while he gives it into our hands to distribute to you, will, of his abundant mercy take care that every one who hungers shall be fed, and that all who are fed shall be filled.

## LECTURE II.

JOHN vii. 37.

“ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”

AFTER the miraculous feeding of the four thousand persons with the seven loaves, our Lord entered into a ship and went into the parts of Dalmanutha; thence, having made a circuit through the villages of Cæsarea Philippi, and sojourned some time in Galilee, he returned to Capernaum. During this journey the remarkable conversation with St. Peter occurred, when that apostle, instructed by no human teacher, pronounced our Lord to be, not merely “the Christ,” but “the Son of the living God;”\* and for this confession of the divinity of the Saviour, received the peculiar blessing of his Master. Six days after, our Lord vouchsafed that astonishing manifestation of himself upon Mount Tabor, which has usually been termed his transfiguration; when, with Moses and Elijah, he appeared before the astonished eyes of Peter, James, and John, in that glorified body, in which he shall,

\* Matthew xvi. 16.

probably, one day, manifest himself to assembled worlds.

Having upon a former occasion\* spoken fully upon these instructive incidents, we shall pass on to the next event in the life of our divine Saviour. We find, then, that after having commissioned the seventy disciples, and "sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come," he is again about to go up to Jerusalem, to attend the feast of Tabernacles.†

The origin of this feast is to be found in the 24th chapter of Leviticus, where we read, "In the fifteenth day of the seventh month," "ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days. And ye shall take you, on the first day, the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, seven days." "It shall be a statute for ever in your generations." "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths." And, then is added, the remarkable reason for this most appropriate festival, "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."‡

This festival was most scrupulously observed by all the pious Jews; and although, when they had built themselves cities, and dwelt therein, the observance must have been attended with considerable trouble and inconvenience, we are told by the Jewish writers,§ that it was by no means discontinued, but that arbours were made on the flat roofs of their houses, and in their court-

\* In the 4th Lecture on "The History of St. Peter." † John vii. 2.

‡ Leviticus xxiii. 43.

§ See also Nehemiah viii. 14-18.

yards, and in the streets ; and that during the seven days of the continuance of this festival, the Jews left their houses empty, and removed their furniture into these tabernacles, and dwelt in them entirely.

To this feast, the brethren of our Lord, according to the flesh, but who were evidently not converted by the Spirit,—for “neither did his brethren believe in him,”—now urged him to repair. For the present, he declined following their advice ; but after they had departed, “then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but, as it were, in secret.”\*

During the three first days of the feast, our Lord, in all probability, mingled silently with his fellow-worshippers unnoticed ; but, “about the middle of the feast,” says St. John, “Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.” Every day, during that feast, a certain number of oxen were sacrificed to God, the temple was crowded with worshippers, and at night richly illuminated ; as were the thousand arbours, which glittered like stars over the face of the city ; while, doubtless, these outward demonstrations of pious and holy gratitude, in many cases, sprang from hearts filled with a real, fervent love to him whose mercies to their forefathers they thus recorded ; and, perhaps, not a few were ardently longing to see again the stranger whom they had met with, when, a few months before, they had come up to the Passover, the sound of whose voice still lingered on their ear, while “the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,” had never since departed from their hearts.

These expectations were fulfilled ; for, as we have just

\* John vii. 10.

read, Jesus again "taught in the temple," openly, publicly, and amidst the thousands that resorted thither. Struck with the solemn and heart-awakening words which he uttered,—for "never man spake like this man,"—his audience, many of them probably, simple-minded people from the distant parts of Judæa, since all assembled at the feast, began to experience great astonishment, and exclaim, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

I know not why it should be considered, as it usually is, that there was any thing invidious in the observation; it seems to be the natural expression of surprise from those, who, judging of the station in life of the speaker, by his appearance, and concluding that he had enjoyed few outward advantages, felt astonishment, that he should teach so wisely, and so well. The answer of our Lord rather appears to corroborate this opinion; He replied, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." 'Are you astonished at its sublimity, at its wisdom, at its excellency and power? I refer you from myself to God, it is not mine alone, but his; and I receive it, as man, from the Eternal Father.' Invaluable model, at all times, for the Christian minister; by it he may learn to refer his hearers, from himself, to him that sent him; to carry them back, at once to the source, even to the Lord Jesus, to God himself. Brethren, do you value the truths you hear from this place? they are not ours, but God's. Does any word here spoken, ever come home with power to your heart, as a word of warning, or of encouragement, or of comfort? here again, it is not ours, but God's; all the "excellency and the power" are of him, and to him be all the praise, and all the glory."

Our Lord continues, "If any man will do his will, he

shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." How truly encouraging must this declaration have been, to persons such as we have reason to believe at this time surrounded the Saviour of the world; men who, perhaps with the exception of the three yearly festivals, which brought them up to the great city, were continually employed in agriculture, or in the humble but engrossing occupations of life, to some one or other of which every Jew was educated; and who had, therefore, but very transient opportunities of ascertaining the all-important fact, whether this were indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. However well read they might be in "all that the prophets had spoken," to them it was no easy task, to ascertain whether they were certainly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and whether he who spake thus marvellously, were indeed the promised Messiah, the Word of God.

The comforts and encouragements of the promise before us, however, were never intended to be confined to the Jews, assembled at that feast of tabernacles. Are there none, even in a Christian country,—are there not many in every congregation?—who, if they rightly understood these words, would bless the Saviour who delivered them, for so simple, so undeviating a rule, by which the poor and ignorant shall understand those mysteries which are hidden from the worldly wise, only that they may be revealed unto babes.

Dwell, then, for a moment, upon this remarkable declaration, and carry it with you as a golden rule for scriptural interpretation, a never-failing key for the casket of the revealed word. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." "Any man;" not, therefore, merely the wise man, or the learned man, or

the clever man, but all, all and each, shall arrive at right results upon the great and vital truths of Christianity, if they but accompany their search by a holy obedience to God, a heartfelt endeavour to act up to the degree of light which they have already received.

Do you ever, when you have engaged in the reading, or when you come to the preaching, of God's word, depart unedified and unconvinced, finding, it may be, truths which you cannot appreciate, doctrines which you cannot receive or understand? and do you depart in a spirit of captious criticism, to discuss, and to reason, and to "darken counsel with words?" Brethren, this is not the way to become "mighty in the Scriptures;" this is not God's method of teaching his wonderful, and difficult, and life-giving doctrines. No, when doubts and difficulties assail you upon any of the essential lessons of Christianity, first make of your own heart this deeply important inquiry, Is my life regulated by those truths which I already know? Is there any thing, which I have reason to believe is according to the will of God, which is not according to my practice? If you are compelled to answer in the affirmative, then there is obviously at least one stumbling-block to be removed, before you can hope to be made wise unto salvation. The veil is not upon your eyes, but upon your heart. Instead of cavilling, go home and pray. Instead of cultivating a spirit of argument, strive for a spirit of holiness; you will yourself be astonished, how exactly, in proportion as you are giving up sinful practices, questionable pleasures, ungodly habits, and advancing, as far as in you lies, in all holy obedience to the commandments of God, will be your increase in the knowledge of God's revealed will, and your discovery of



every vital doctrine of his word. Have you never observed, on some clear night, while looking upward at the heavens, that although at first all is obscurity, yet a little while, and star after star shines out, till that which even now was utter darkness, is studded over with innumerable lights? Just so it is with the firmament of God's revealed and written word; you cannot find a portion now so obscurely dark, but that to you, if thus in God's appointed way you are content to search it, and to dwell upon it, truth after truth shall be elicited, until the whole of the great and glorious scheme of man's redemption shall be laid open to your eye, and every separate truth, essential to salvation, shall shine out most clear and luminous to your apprehension, and, by God's grace, be applied savingly to your soul. Thus was it, even while the conversation upon which we are commenting was going forward: truth after truth was manifested by Jesus unto his hearers, until some were astonished, and convinced, and converted; and, as the evangelist tells us in the thirty-first verse, "Many of the people believed on him."

No sooner did the Pharisees hear this, than they resolved to expedite their schemes of cruelty, and sent officers at once to take him. Then, in the presence of the multitude, and even of the officers themselves, our Lord thus expressed himself; "Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me: ye shall seek me, and shall not find me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this, that he said,

Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?"\*

Well might they ask, "What manner of saying is this?" It was impossible for spirits such as theirs to enter into the meaning of such a declaration, "Yet a little while I am with you." In the very presence of the men who were sent to arrest him, our Lord speaks as confidently of the time which still remained for him to continue his ministrations, and therefore as decidedly of the inability of his enemies to effect their purpose, until his time was come, as if he had been at the head of "more than twelve legions of angels," which he declared were ready to obey his summons.

"Then I go unto him that sent me." "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" asked the blind and ignorant Jew; or did he mean to speak of something more than a mere journey, a flight from his pursuers? Yes, impossible as it appeared to spirits such as theirs, Jesus in these few and tranquil expressions, was speaking of his last removal from the presence of them that hated him; and when he said, "Yet a little while, and then I go unto him that sent me," he had in his omniscient mind, all the agony of Gethsemane, and all the horrors of the cross. We cannot doubt it; and well does it mark the voluntary nature of that high sacrifice, that he who was shortly to be its victim, could speak thus calmly of going in his own good time, and of not being driven at the will of his enemies, to the Father from whom he came. Happy that child of God among ourselves, who in the near approach of the hour which is to separate him from all

\* John vii. 33-36.

below, can look thus peacefully forward, and say with his ever blessed Master, "Yet a little while, and then I go unto him that sent me;" I am but a stranger and a pilgrim here; yet a little while, and I go home.

There is, however, another lesson, and a very solemn one, to be taught by these brief sentences. What our Lord then said to those around him, is as literally true to all. It speaks, therefore, to every soul here present before God this day. To each one among us, it is "but a little while" that the Gospel of Christ shall be preached, and the Saviour himself presented. It can but be a little while; life itself deserves no better phrase. And how much of that short space is now already over? how much had passed away, before, perhaps, the Saviour was ever really offered to us in all his fulness and his love? How much is now remaining? How long will he continue to "stand at the door, and knock?" "Of the times and the seasons knoweth no man;" but this we know, that most certainly the "little while" has become less, even since we entered these doors to-day; perhaps it is, almost, wholly over, and if the glass of time were now held forth before our eyes, some of us might almost count the grains of sand which still remain, and which have yet to fall, before we hear the bridegroom's cry!

We have still to consider the last sentence which our Lord delivered on that middle day of the feast, and one well calculated to find a passage to the soul, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Brethren, if the warning note which has been already struck, by the shortness of time, the nearness of eternity, "the little while," that Christ is with you, has not reached

your hearts, listen but a moment to this, his still more awful denunciation; "Where I am, thither you cannot come." You do not earnestly seek him now; you never have, in sincerity, and faithfulness, and prayer, so sought him; be warned, then, of this solemn truth, that it is possible to knock when there shall be none to open; to ask when there shall be none to give; to seek when you shall not find! While for those who desire no communion with their Redeemer here; who "will not have this man to reign over" them now; it is unalterably determined that they shall never see him in the kingdom of his glory: "Where I am, thither ye cannot come."

The transactions upon which we have been commenting, occurred about the midst of the feast, which would be the fourth day; and as we are not informed of any particulars respecting our Lord on the following days, it is probable that he remained in silence, to avoid the persecution of the rulers. But the eighth day was now approaching, after which the multitudes would again leave the metropolis, and depart to their distant homes.

Jesus, whose heart still yearned over those, who were putting from them the word of God, and judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life, resolved, therefore, upon making one last effort for their salvation, and offering one of the freest and most blessed of his promises.

Accordingly, "on the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."\* It is impossible to imagine a season better fitted for his purpose since

\* Verse 37.

the law declares, "On the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you . . . . it is a solemn assembly, and ye shall do no servile work therein."\* Jesus would, therefore find the assembled worshippers again together; and every servile work being suspended, their number would, no doubt, be greatly increased by the lower orders of the city. He would thus insure an opportunity of speaking once more to the multitude, which would, probably, never again re-assemble, until it meets before his judgment-seat.

To the other ceremonies of that high day, the traditions of the elders had added one, which, however useless and unnecessary, cannot but be pronounced to have been very significant, and very beautiful. A golden vessel was carried down to the pool of Siloam, and having been filled with its water, it was brought back again to the temple, amidst the blowing of trumpets, and the shoutings of the people, and poured forth upon the ascent to the altar, with great ceremony and many demonstrations of joy, so that it was a saying among the Jews, "He that never saw the rejoicing of the place of drawing of water, never saw any rejoicing in his life."

It was, then, on this day, and probably at the very hour of this singular ceremony, when all eyes had been intent upon the mystical rite of bringing up the waters of Siloam, that our Lord ascended to the temple. Let us for a moment place ourselves at his side; let us imagine that we see him standing on the highest point of the ascent, and there looking down on the assembled multitude, crying aloud those words of merciful invita-

\* Leviticus xxiii. 35.

tion, which the evangelist has recorded, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Now let us mark their effect on the thousands who attended that great festival. On one side, we behold a crowd so intent upon the pouring forth of the water, and all the outward forms and ceremonies attached to it, that they have not heard the Saviour's cry. On another, we see a group of persons, so occupied with their own conversation, or so much engaged in the thoughts of the business and pleasures of life, which have been for a short time suspended, but to which they are now immediately returning, that they are not sufficiently interested in the invitation of the Saviour, even to ask an explanation, still less to desire to be themselves partakers of the blessings which he proffered. Of all the thousands clustering round that hill, and within hearing of the Saviour's voice, perhaps we should scarcely have seen a single person at once arrested by the sound of the offer, and coming up humbly, yet boldly and unhesitatingly, to our Lord, and saying, in the language of the woman of Samaria, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not."\* No, some were too intent upon the forms to think of the spirit of holiness; some too deeply occupied, others too recklessly idle and indifferent, to close at once with the merciful invitation. We hear, indeed, that many said, "This is the Prophet;" and some, that "This is the Christ;" but these are widely different things from coming at once to the feet of our Redeemer, and saying, 'Lord, be my Prophet to teach, my Saviour to redeem me from all iniquity, and to accept, and sanctify my soul.' And so

\* John iv. 15.

it will probably be to-day. How many, who will hear that in Christ Jesus, and in him alone, are treasured up the waters of life, how few who will close with those offers, and resolve from this hour, to give up all that has hitherto stood between their Saviour and their souls, and come, at once, to him for pardon and for peace. Still would we desire to leave you with the words of the text upon your ear, praying God they may descend into your heart, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." There is nothing to control, nothing to abridge this invitation; it is free as the air you breathe, and yet firm as the earth you tread upon. But, are there any among you, who have so long preferred the broken cisterns to the living fountain, that you feel 'this cannot be addressed to me?' be assured that you are mistaken; though you have drunk at every polluted pool of this world's vanities and pleasures, if only now you thirst for the living water, it shall be yours, and yours as certainly, and as freely, as if you had never had any wish, or one desire beyond it.

Or, have you tried all other sources of relief, and found all fail you; and do you shrink from the thought of coming now to Christ, lest he should remind you of your worthlessness, and take advantage of your necessity? It is plain you do not know the Saviour, with whom you have to do; all he requires at your hands, is the deep sense of this poverty, of which you are ashamed. There is no need of shame for this; be ashamed of your sins, of your indifference, of your neglect of Christ, but be not ashamed that you begin to feel it; the more you are conscious of your poverty, your emptiness, your thirst, the more will he delight to bestow upon you his riches, his fulness, his living water.

Or lastly, and how many are at all times kept away from Christ, by this conviction; do you fear that the promise speaks no word of comfort or encouragement to you, because it only proffers its blessings to them that thirst, and you are afraid to use so strong a term for so weak a feeling as your own; you are even constrained to confess that you never yet have thirsted either for the water of life, or for him from whom it flows. Even here there is no cause for despondency; your case is not hopeless; the Saviour, of whom we speak, delights to give the thirst, that he may be able to bestow the water of life.

Be assured, that if there be one soul among you who is saying at this moment, 'God, who knows the heart, knows that I would gladly come, if I could but thirst for all these spiritual blessings, which are treasured up for the believer in Christ Jesus,' we say, unhesitatingly, to that soul, Come, the way is open to you; pardon for sin, and reconciliation to God, are offered you; Christ and his Spirit are your own; come with the little thirst you now possess, and you shall find that every step by which you approach the Saviour, shall increase that thirst, until your desires for God and his grace, for the Holy Ghost and his influence, for Christ and his salvation, shall be so large that nothing but himself can satisfy them.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."\*

\* Revelation xxii. 17.



## LECTURE III.

ST. JOHN xi. 43.

“ And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”

IT is one of the peculiarities, I had almost said, one of the disadvantages, of the sublime history in which we are engaged, that its most interesting features are in themselves so touchingly simple, that every addition which man attempts to make to them, only impairs their beauty, and detracts from their perfection. This may be well illustrated by the incident at which we arrive to-day, where the whole affecting story is told with such inimitable propriety, that nothing which man can add can increase its interest, or enhance its usefulness. With the fullest conviction of this truth, my endeavour shall be to let the inspired historian speak his own language, adding a very few and brief observations, which, like the darker shadings of the picture, will derive their only value from affording a contrast to its richer colouring, and brighter lights.

The evangelist thus commences, “ Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.”\*

\* John xi. 1.

The family to whom St. John thus, for the first time introduces us, have not been left wholly unnoticed by the preceding evangelists, for by an allusion at the close of the 10th chapter of St. Luke, we find our Lord, probably on his return to the country from the feast of tabernacles, resting at the house of Martha and Mary, which was situated at Bethany, just across the Mount of Olives, as you travel eastward from Jerusalem, and about two miles from the city. Both these pious sisters were affectionately attached to our Lord; and although the elder manifested her affection by her constant and unwearied services for him, and the younger by sitting at his feet and hearing his word, there can be no doubt that each was equally the object of the Saviour's love, and preparing, though by a different education, for his kingdom and glory.

Our Lord's visit appears to have been but short, perhaps a single night was all that he at that time spent beneath their roof; yet even those few hours of peaceful converse must have been a delightful solace to the Saviour, after the last eight days of harass and fatigue which had been passed in Jerusalem; while most blessed and most profitable must have been that season to the holy family who were so shortly to need every aid, which the recollection of a Saviour's love, and of a Saviour's counsel, could bestow.

How frequently does our Lord, even at the present hour, thus preface some great temporal affliction, by equally great and unexpected spiritual blessings. Are there none, even among ourselves, who now, while looking back to days of trial, can see behind us vestiges of some visit from the Saviour, which had so armed our hearts and strengthened our hands against the day of

affliction, that we were carried through it, assisted and supported by the memory of the past, almost as powerfully as by the outpouring of present grace and present consolation. It is delightful thus to trace our comforts, and to draw our strength from a source which the world can never know, to see a hand they cannot see, and hear a voice they cannot hear; while it adds a powerful additional motive to prize every hour of spiritual communion, when we reflect that it may be the last opportunity that will be vouchsafed in which to arm ourselves against some dark temptation, some fearful trial, or some overwhelming visitation.

After this short and passing visit, our Lord journeyed onward into Galilee. Days and weeks went by, marked by miracles of mercy, and words of instruction; many of which have been recorded by the evangelists, although many more have doubtless been suppressed; and Jesus was now at Bethabara beyond Jordan,\* before we hear again of Martha and Mary.

It was while our Lord "abode there," says St. John, that a messenger arrived from Bethany, the bearer only of this brief but affecting sentence, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick." Of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, and the subject of the message, we have never before heard, probably he was from home at the time of that short visit of the Saviour to which reference has been already made. However, the sisters were certainly right in thus describing him, for the inspired historian expressly says, that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus." The message then, short as it was, said all they needed; it communicated

\* John x. 40, 42.

the brother's sufferings, and the sisters' anxieties; they believed that if the Saviour were but with them, all would be well; but did not ask him to return, they knew his considerate tenderness too well to think it necessary, and therefore contented themselves with the simple expression of their need, leaving it to Christ himself to suggest the remedy.

As soon as our Lord had heard the message, he assures his disciples that this sickness of their friend should not terminate fatally, *i. e.* should not finally be "unto death," but should be for the glory both of God and of the Son of God; and having said this, he appears to dismiss the subject from his thoughts, occupying himself in his daily round of mercies, and remaining for two days longer in Bethabara.

How differently, in the mean time, passed those hours to the inhabitants of that sorrowing house in Bethany. How did they watch the return of their messenger! How did they calculate the days that must elapse before he could reach the Saviour; how certain did they feel, that he would not return alone; how often, like the mother of Sisera, had they "looked out at the window, and cried through the lattice,"\* Why is he so long in coming? Why does the Saviour tarry, since by this time he must have been made acquainted with our deep and pressing necessity. While probably from time to time, they gazed intently upon the sufferer's face, hoping suddenly to see the flush of health return, and the fever fly, at some word of sovereign power, spoken, perhaps, beyond the banks of Jordan. But all in vain, the messenger comes back, and comes alone. This must have

\* Judges v. 28.

been to them the death of hope, and from that hour, even Martha's energy, and Mary's love, must have begun to fail them. Lazarus grows daily worse, the last sad scene comes hastening on, all remedies are cast despondingly aside, and he whom they had vainly thought the Saviour loved, is permitted to pass through every hour of human suffering, even to the darkest, and the last.

We must not stop in this affecting narrative, to mark each lesson of spiritual instruction as it springs; far better that you should seek it, and apply it for yourselves. Only remember, that neither the depth nor the length of an affliction is any evidence that the Lord has forgotten to be gracious, or that you are not the objects of his love. Were it so, then never would the tears of sorrow have flowed so freely in the house of Martha. Remember also, that a prayer unanswered by no means signifies a prayer unheard; if so, then Jesus never saw the messenger from Bethany, or cared for the woful tidings which he brought. No, in all cases, the Lord's time, not mine; the Lord's way, not mine; the Lord's will, not mine; must be the language of the believer's heart. Enough, if it be but "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."\*

And now four days had passed away, since the silent train of mourners had conveyed the body of him they wept, to that place where "the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;"† and according to the custom of the Jews, the sorrowing sisters were within, surrounded by sympathizing friends, and

\* John xi. 4.

† Job iii. 17.

fulfilling the days of their mourning. At length, but alas! how much too late, they hear by the clamour of the approaching multitude, that Jesus, attended by his disciples, is drawing near the town; Martha, who even in the extremity of her sorrow, is still the same energetic being that she ever was, hastens forth to meet him, while Mary, how true to nature is the narrative! "sat still in the house."

As soon as Martha meets the Saviour, the single feeling with which, during those days of trial, her heart was full, finds ready utterance, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" and then, as if to soften a declaration which seemed almost reproachingly to imply, Could friendship find no shorter road from Bethabara to Bethany? she immediately adds, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." It is a common feature to every child of Adam, in moments of disappointment or despondency, to speak hastily or unadvisedly with the lips, and Martha did not, as we have seen, escape it; but then it is a feature equally uniform in every child of God, that the second thought corrects the first, and here also, Martha was not found wanting. Her faith, though still imperfect, rises immeasurably in degree between the utterance of these two sentences; in the first, she appears to believe that all was lost; in the second, she has already attained to the conviction that the prayer of Christ would be undeniable; she wants but one step more, viz. that the will of Christ was as omnipotent as his prayer, and her belief would be perfected: and even this advancement was not long withheld. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again;" intending evidently to prepare her for the stupendous miracle he was

about to perform. "Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Plainly inferring, but what comfort can this minister to me now?

How poor a thing is human faith, even at its best estate, let Martha tell. She could believe the distant miracle, that all the thousands and tens of thousands of the inhabitants of the earth should rise, but she could not contentedly rest upon the present promise, and believe that the brother whom she loved, should be called back again out of his sepulchre at Bethany. How easy is it, comparatively, for our faith to give full credence to those high promises of God, which require centuries to bring them to perfection, how difficult to receive unhesitatingly, and to rest upon implicitly, the promise of to-day. Yet this, which seems the simplest, is in truth the highest achievement of faith; to live contentedly, amidst our daily wants, and daily trials, and daily temptations, upon the present enjoyment of God's promises, in the full assurance, as each season of difficulty comes, that there will accompany it, grace, and love, and patience, equal to our need, and God's requirements.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Wonderful and blessed declaration! Martha had before acknowledged her belief that at the prayer of Jesus, the Almighty would restore her brother; but how much more glorious a hope did these words convey, "I am the resurrection and the life," by my own inherent power, the resurrection of every created soul shall be effected; what then have you to fear either for Lazarus or yourself? I tell you, he shall rise again,

and I can command the resurrection which I promise. Here was power more astonishing than the imagination could conceive, united to mercy more tender than the heart could venture to hope.

How well and how wisely does our Church appropriate this striking declaration of our Saviour, when she places it at the opening of her burial service. When you are called to follow to the grave the remains of some beloved relative, or some dear friend, your mind filled with the thought of committing the departed to its kindred clay; your recollection dwelling with painful intensity upon the last solemn scene, upon the perishing nature of all worldly relationships; every sight, and every sound, connected with this last sad ceremony, tending only to increase your grief, and sink you deeper in the dust; you are met at the very entrance of the abodes of death, by this encouraging declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord!" The very first words which greet you here, are well calculated to banish despondency and to reanimate hope; they are worthy of the house of God, and the gate of heaven; they speak no more of death and of the sepulchre, but of life and the resurrection: they call back your wandering affections from the poor helpless tenement before you, the mere wreck of what you once have loved, and carry them forward to the scene, where if he have died a child of God, he is now arrayed in light, partaking of all the unutterable happiness of the blessed. Nay, they do more, they carry you from the thoughts of death and its fearful ravages, to him who has robbed it of its sting, and the grave of its victory; they transport you at once to the side of that Saviour who is "the resurrection and the life," who, when your own "heart and flesh shall fail



you, will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.”\* “Believest thou this?” said our Lord to his sorrowing disciple; “She saith unto him, Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” Here was the perfecting of her faith; not Peter himself, in the hour when he received that great and blessed commendation, which marked his confession of faith as the rock on which the Saviour should build his imperishable Church, evinced a stronger or more accurate belief in Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah of God, than was manifested in that brief sentence.

“And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, the Master is come, and calleth for thee.” “As soon as Mary heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave, to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” The very same sentiment, in the very same words, which but an hour before had flowed from the lips of Martha. How natural! probably during those days of deep anxiety, when at the sick bed of their brother they had been momentarily expecting the arrival of their Lord, this sentence had a thousand times formed almost the whole of their communication,—‘If *he* were but here,

\* Psalm lxxiii. 26.

Lazarus would not die.' How precisely, then, is it what we should have expected, that although thus meeting the Saviour separately, each sister should greet him with the self-same words. Still we must not permit the fact that the observation was a natural one, to disguise from us the sin of heart, which we fear these little words betrayed. They plainly show that these afflicted sisters both believed, that had they been permitted to order the course of events, the result would have been far happier; "If thou hadst been here," if something had happened which has not happened, the event might have been less wretched. O how often do reflections similar to this, barb the arrow of affliction with a poignancy which nothing else could give. These are the thoughts that in our wretchedness make us doubly wretched, 'If we had taken such a course!' 'If we had acted in some other and some wiser manner;' 'If we had consulted such a physician, how different would have been the issue!' There can be nothing more unwise, perhaps few things more unholy, than reasoning thus. In dwelling upon secondary causes, we overlook the first great Cause of all—the God of heaven and earth, who alone ordereth all things, and doeth all things well. Has he had no share in the decision? Did he not direct our present disappointment? or, was he not present when our friend was taken from us? Is the departure of an immortal soul a matter of such trifling import, as to escape the cognizance, or be unworthy the appointment of him, without whom not a sparrow falleth? Or, have we not yet forgiven God for interfering with our happiness, in a manner which we think might have been prevented? Refrain, brethren, we beseech you, from all such unholy reasonings, which

are the fruitful parents of pain, and grief, and self-reproach, and which never yet have taught those who entertain them, to "hear the rod, and him who appointeth it." Be satisfied that this is the only course of safety and of peace, to seek earnestly and faithfully the guidance of your Heavenly Father, to act according to the judgment which he has vouchsafed, and having done so, to leave the event with calmness and confidence in his hands, whose word is pledged to you that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him." "Duties are ours, events are God's."

Mary, having uttered the words upon which we have been commenting, does not accompany them by such a declaration of faith as Martha did; but this seems rather owing to the excess of her emotion, than to any defect in her belief; for no sooner did she reach the Saviour, than "she fell down at his feet."

Again, how characteristic and how natural! She who had sat at his feet in the days of health, finds a refuge there in the hour of trouble. Martha can reason, Mary can only feel. And yet it would seem as if Jesus were more affected by this touching manifestation of Mary's tenderness, than by all the accuracy of her sister's creed. For the evangelist continues, "When Jesus, therefore, saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see." Perhaps at that moment, speaking after the fashion of men, Jesus almost regretted that he had set their faith so hard a lesson, and felt half inclined to wish that he had not suffered the malady to run its fatal course.

"Jesus wept." Yes, brethren, there was nothing

strange or wonderful in this. The Saviour was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; intimate with every sinless infirmity of our nature, our hunger, our thirst, our weariness, and our afflictions. He did not suppress his grief; for he well knew that to many of his mourning children, it would in times to come, be a most heart-encouraging reflection, while standing near the new-made grave, and unable to repress their tears, to know that Jesus himself had shed tears of natural sorrow at the tomb of Lazarus.

At length the sorrowing company arrive at the sepulchre. "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it;" or rather against it. "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." What man can do, man must do, or God will never interfere to effect what man is unable to perform. Martha, who had long been silent, but who had accompanied our Lord, a deeply interested spectator of all that had gone forward, could not longer restrain herself, and her anxieties once more got the better of her faith. While they are advancing to obey the commandment of the Saviour, and to remove the stone, she addresses herself to Jesus, and, as if to deprecate the almost sacrilegious act for which she sees them preparing, exclaims, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." How often at the very crisis of our fate, when another hour of patience, another act of faith, and all would be well, does God permit us thus to stumble, as it were, at the end of the journey! that the discovery of our weakness, when we least expect it, may teach us yet more of the plague of our own heart, and send us yet the nearer and the oftener to God for help.

"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if

thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" How mild and gentle a reproof; he who knows our frame, remembers that we are but dust. Christ knew that with all the graces possessed by this beloved and amiable disciple, she was imperfect still, and that if there were a time or place when those graces would be more than usually sullied by the taint of mortality, it would be, while standing for that moment of deep and terrible suspense, at the mouth of her brother's sepulchre. But not in Martha's heart alone did our Lord behold the workings of infirmity at that trying hour; from the sceptical Sadducee, who believed in no resurrection, and who stood by, the contemptuous witness of a miracle, which he resolved to discredit, even to the full assurance of hope, in the pious sisters themselves, all was infirmity, and needed the pardon and forbearance of him who reads the heart. In the hours even of our greatest mercies and highest privileges, how much does the God of all our mercies, discover utterly unworthy of the blessings he is bestowing upon us. Yes, at the very instant that we are receiving the richest gifts from the providence of God, we are needing, and perhaps more than ever receiving, the pardoning mercies of his grace. How ought the reflection to humble us, even unto the dust, with the sense of our own unworthiness and sin, and to fill us with unbounded gratitude to him, who measures not his blessings by our deservings.

"Then took they away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may

believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." How strikingly simple, how truly sublime, is every portion of this impressive narrative. What absence of all effort, of all display—Christ is "not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him,"\* and most convincingly did the manner in which he performed the miracle, illustrate the assertion. It was no greater effort to him to pour the tide of life anew into the stagnant veins, to reanimate the mouldering frame, to call that tainted and corrupted corpse back from the sepulchre, than in the garden of Gethsemane to awaken the sleeping Peter. Most astonishing evidence to the power of the only-begotten Son of God! Most convincing proof of the truth of his own remarkable declaration, that "Even as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."† A single word from him is sufficient to impart spiritual life to a soul in the shadow of death, natural life to a body amid the corruption of the grave, and eternal life to all the generations of Adam upon the resurrection day.

But why are we so struck with a single instance of our Lord's omnipotence? Surely it argues almost a want of faith, that we should think so much, and dwell so long, upon the fact of his calling one poor sinner back to life again. Can we not imagine that he would almost say to us, as he once said to the Jews, "I have done

\* Matthew xxii. 32.

† John v. 26.

one work, and ye all marvel,"\* "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth."†

Turn, then, from the thoughts of the resurrection of Lazarus, to that far more deeply interesting one which awaits yourselves. What a moment will that be, brethren, when "the voice of the trumpet sounding long, and waxing louder and louder,"‡ and yet the voice of the Son of man heard far above that fearful sound, until the mountains shall be moved by it, and the rocks rent, and the lights of heaven darkened, and the powers of heaven shaken, and all those ancient sepulchres in which the silence of death has reigned for centuries, shall re-echo to the cry, and in obedience to its summons, be re-peopled with their living multitudes, and cast forth the countless crowds of their inhabitants. The narrow house of the grave, in which our bodies shall have so long reposed, unable to retain us when called by the voice of the Son of man: the very chains of death no longer sufficiently powerful to bind us down; limb by limb, sense by sense returning, until breath, and sight, and motion, and consciousness, and personal identity, are all thoroughly restored, and we know and feel ourselves to be the same poor, helpless creatures that we were, when we were laid among our kindred clay. What will be to every child of God the feelings of that hour, the unspeakable blessing of recollecting at the first moment of returning life, that he is not alone, that he was made by sovereign grace, a member of that great and happy family who cannot perish, because all are

\* John vii. 21.

† John v. 28, 29.

‡ Exodus xix. 19.

united, closely, everlastingly united, to their imperishable Head, to him whose voice they hear, and to whom all the judgment of that great day has been committed. "Of them whom thou gavest me have I lost none,"\* was one of the latest sentences delivered by our Lord in the days of his flesh; and if the words of the prophet be true, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me,"† will still be the language of his lips upon the morning of the resurrection. Who, then, can anticipate the blessedness of the recollection at that hour, that he who is come to be our Judge, even God the Son, was "not ashamed"‡ while we were toiling and travailing upon earth, "to call us brethren;" that we had been permitted even then, to call the Most High God, "Abba, Father;" that God the Holy Ghost had even there, borne witness with our spirits that we were the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us."§

O, it is well often to endeavour to realize this solemn scene; it is a powerful corrective to the follies and pleasures, the ambition and pageantry of earth. Brethren, you who are still in the world, and of the world, suffer for a few brief moments the word of exhortation. What will all that your hearts are at present filled with, all that your hands are engaged in, all that your days and nights are now employed in, avail you, when the trumpet of the archangel, the voice of God, shall burst the sepulchre? You who are living to the world more than unto God, I solemnly charge you by the certainty of

\* John xviii. 9. † Isaiah viii. 18. ‡ Hebrews ii. 11. § 1 Peter i. 4.



that great event of which we speak, by the assurance that we shall meet before the tribunal of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that you this day carry away with you an abiding impression of death and judgment, and heaven and hell; that in your most thoughtless hours, amidst the giddy throng of those who, like yourselves, are living unto pleasure, and are therefore dead while they live, you make of yourselves this solemn inquiry, "What shall it profit me, if I gain the whole world, and lose my own soul? or, what shall I give in exchange for my soul?"\* And may the answer be, by God's grace, of such a nature, that you may resolve now, while time, and life, and sense remain, to be earnest in the great work of the salvation of your soul; now to cast yourself with Mary at the feet of your Redeemer, now to strive and pray that you may be with that happy family of whom we have this day spoken, among the number of those whom "Jesus loveth;" knowing for your consolation, that whom "he loveth," he "loveth unto the end,"† and that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."‡

\* Matthew xvi. 26.

† John xiii. 1.

‡ Romans viii. 38, 39.

## LECTURE IV.

## ST. MATTHEW xix. 16.

“ And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?”

THE incident in our Lord's history which we intend to consider at present as following next in order of time, among the striking events in the Saviour's life, to that which was brought before you in the last discourse, will not indeed possess the same intense or breathless interest, but we may hope, will, by God's grace, be quite as instructive, quite as improving. The subject of it is our Lord's interview with the rich young man, related with little variation by the first three evangelists ; we shall, therefore, take St. Matthew's narrative\* as our ground-work, filling in the additional details of the story from St. Mark† and St. Luke.‡ “ And when Jesus was gone forth into the way, behold, a certain ruler came running, and kneeling to him, and asked him, saying, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?”

The character of the applicant is almost as clearly developed by this opening passage of the narrative, as

\* Matthew xix. 16—22.

† Mark x. 17—22.

‡ Luke xviii. 10—23.

his station in life. He was evidently an amiable, warm-hearted, affectionate young man. It was not common at that period for any of his order to seek the Saviour of the world. True it is, that, as we have seen, Jesus was followed, and followed readily, by many, but they were usually the poor, and the destitute, and the afflicted. Indeed, we have hitherto only heard of one ruler who ever sought him for the purposes of spiritual instruction; and he crept to his lonely dwelling under the shadow of the night, glad to escape the observation and the sneers of those who would have, no doubt, unkindly criticised a daylight visit. There was no such apprehension in the mind of him of whom we speak, Jesus was "in the way," in the high road, surrounded by his disciples, and still attended, probably, by many of "the great multitudes," who, as we are told in the second verse of the chapter, had followed him out of Galilee, and yet this young ruler came "running," and boldly and openly acknowledged his respect for our Lord by kneeling at his feet, while he made the solemn and important inquiry. The very terms also, in which his question was expressed, are characteristic of the same frankness and good feeling. Many other applicants had called our Saviour, "Master," but I know of no other instance in his history, in which he was addressed as "Good Master;" while the inquiry, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" at once pronounces the speaker to have been in earnest in the search, and although doubtless, very defective in his views of divine truth, and probably too well satisfied with his own imaginary attainments in religion, yet apparently very desirous to learn, and not unwilling to make some

sacrifices, and to expect some difficulties in the attainment.

Our Lord, before he returns any reply to the deeply interesting inquiry, comments for a moment upon the singularly unusual epithet, which the young man had applied to him. "He said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God."

It is remarkable that Socinians should have selected so slender a foundation upon which to build so largely as they have done, when they attempted to erect upon this simple declaration, the ponderous superstructure of a denial of the Divinity of our Lord. Here, say they, is a distinct disavowal, from the lips of Christ himself of all right to the title of essential, independent, infinite goodness, which belongs to God alone; therefore does he equally disavow all claim to that identity, or co-equality with Deity, with which his followers would invest him. It is, however, evident, that the answer of our Lord implies no such disavowal. The young man came, earnestly seeking truth, and the first words of Christ convey a very important portion of divine truth to his mind, "None is good," essentially and perfectly, but God, why, therefore, callest thou me good, since thou hast never yet been taught, like the holy Peter and the spiritually enlightened Martha, that truth, which flesh and blood cannot have revealed to thee, that I am indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God, co-equal in dignity, and power, and goodness, with God himself; yea, that I am "God of God, light of light, very God of very God." Had the young ruler professed a belief in this vital truth of the religion of Jesus, most certainly our Lord would never have called in

question the propriety of his epithet, but would have confirmed it, as he did the declaration of Pilate by the strongest possible affirmative and acquiescence. However, for the moment, let this pass; the epithet was applied in kindness, though in ignorance, and the exposure of that ignorance is sufficient. Here, then, is the answer to the question; "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "The young man saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou knowest the commandments. Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It seems at first sight remarkable that this reply of our Lord should differ so widely and so importantly, from other answers given both by himself and by his disciples, to similar inquiries. When, for instance, the Jews asked our Lord "What shall we do that we might work the works of God,"\* Christ at once and unhesitatingly proposed the Gospel to them; † "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." So, again, his disciples, in answer to similar inquiries, replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Why, then, was our Lord's reply so remarkably different upon the present occasion? Did he indeed intend that all around him should suppose that obedience to the commands of God, such a poor, miserable, imperfect obedience, as even the best of men could offer, would open the doors of the kingdom of heaven? If so, then indeed "is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also;" ‡ nay, then was the blood of the only-begotten son of God wasted upon

\* John vi. 28.

† John vi. 29.

‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 14.

Calvary, and we must reverse the apostle's declaration, and say, We are not under grace but under the law.

Doubtless there is some other and some better explanation of our Lord's reply, and more in accordance with the whole tenor of his precepts and his doctrines, than this. - Probably we shall discover it in the state of mind of him whom he addressed; he was a man evidently living under the covenant of works, and our Lord simply meets him upon his own ground. He inquires what particular commandment he must obey, that he might enter into life. He saith unto him, Which? Christ repeats almost the whole of the second table. The young man, not at all aware of the spirituality of the law of God, and therefore not abashed at the extent of its requirements, answered and saith unto him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" This is often supposed to be the language of presumption and self-conceit; it rather appears to be the language of ignorance and honest inquiry. There is little doubt that, viewing the decalogue as the generality of the Jews of our Saviour's time were in the habit of doing, this young man, carefully educated in all outward observances, and very little acquainted with the state of his own heart, might really have believed that what he said was the language of truth, and that seeing only as man sees, and judging as man judges, he had kept all these things from his youth up. He was now, therefore, precisely in that state best adapted to the test which our Lord was about to apply. His attention had been distinctly called to the requirements of that covenant of works within which he stood, and to the power of his own heart for fulfilling its demands; and knowing, even to the degree to which he knew it, the exceeding breadth of the law of God,

and the extreme weakness of the heart of man, he could yet confidently make the inquiry, "What lack I yet?" "I do not find these things difficult, I have never found them so; tell me, then, what remains for me to do; show me something, if there be any thing so difficult, that I cannot achieve: I long ardently for heaven; I burn with the desire of meriting its joys; no command so arduous that I shall not attempt it, few so impracticable that I shall not fulfil them."

"Now, when Jesus heard these things, he beholding him, loved him." He loved his zeal, his ardour, his early obedience, his present anxiety and hopefulness; and said unto him, "Yet lackest thou one thing: if thou wilt be perfect, go thy way, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross, and follow me,"

What a test was this for his new-born desires after heaven; what a touchstone for his sincerity! What a trial of the power of the law, to convict of disobedience all who profess to keep it! But was it nothing more, was there no gospel hidden in this brief command? Shall we who hear these words, presume to say that Christ never preached faith to this inquirer? Why, what was implied by inviting him to take up the cross and to follow Jesus? It was the very language in which he called almost every one of the disciples; they doubted not the meaning; they knew that in following Christ they were to acknowledge him as the Messiah of God; and they knew that in taking up the cross, they assumed no imaginary burden, but were to bear the opposition and contempt, the persecution and malevolence, of their fellow-men, until that cross on earth should be exchanged for the crown in heaven.

Doubtless the young ruler also knew it well, he could not but know, the claim which so many had already acknowledged, and which all might see, in the prophecies fulfilled, and in the miracles wrought by him who thus invited him. But then he knew too well, the pains and penalties to which such an acknowledgment, and such an association with the Saviour, would expose him; and when he thought of coming years of penury, and then looked back upon the comforts and the luxuries which had become absolutely necessary to his happiness; and when he viewed the poor and poverty-stricken company who surrounded the Saviour, and then asked himself,—And am I to mingle in this train? to follow this despised Nazarene? to sit down, day by day, with that Galilean publican? to associate with those, no doubt excellent men, but still unpolished and uncivilized fishermen, and part with all, sell every thing, give up every friend, abandon every acquaintance, and cast in my lot, not for a day, or for a year, but for ever, with persons who never knew the enjoyment, and therefore never felt the loss, of the refinements amidst which I live? O, it is too much; heaven is too dearly purchased at such a costly sacrifice.

Who can be surprised at the result? It must infallibly be the same in every case, where man, poor, frail, sinning and sinful man, attempts to stand upon the covenant of works, and to enter heaven by his obedience. It may endure for a time, and to the outward view, which weighs no motives, and measures only by the eye, it may appear fair and plausible, but the day must come when some difficult test will be proposed, some trial of our patience or of our love, from which unassisted nature shrinks back, quite terrified and baffled, and the covenant of works is, even to



the apprehension of the least observant, for ever broken and destroyed. So was it in the case before us; all this young man's hope of heaven was built upon his implicit obedience: a single test decides its utter worthlessness. When he inquired, "What lack I yet?" he probably thought that the answer could contain no demand with which he could not most fully and most cheerfully comply. So different was the event, so thoroughly and entirely was he discomfited, that he appears not to have hazarded another word, and we know not that he ever courted another interview. All that inspiration has recorded, which certainly does not forbid our hope that his sorrow was one day turned into joy, though it says nothing to encourage it, is, that "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

My brethren, if we were to search from end to end the matchless history in which we are engaged, I know not that we could select an incident which appears more peculiarly adapted to a large proportion of this congregation, than the story you have just heard. How many are there at this moment within these walls, who answer, in many respects at least, to the character of him of whom we have been speaking. Young, rich, noble, well-informed, virtuous, amiable, affectionate, and in addition to all these, coming voluntarily, coming readily, with a real and earnest desire to know what they "shall do to inherit eternal life." It is a comfort to every Christian minister to find that even where there were no spiritual attainments to attract the affection of the Saviour, our Divine Master "loved" inquirers such as these. He did not say, as many a human teacher would have said, in such a case as that before us; There is no hope of

such a man, so much ignorance, so much inconsistency, listening to me to-day and living to the world to-morrow: No! a compassionate Saviour gladly seized the opportunity that was offered him, and while he felt kindly towards him, he spoke kindly to him, and seemed almost as sorrowful when that young ruler turned aside, uninfluenced and unconverted, as when weeping over the devoted city of Jerusalem. But then, brethren, while we thus mark the feeling with which our divine Master contemplated such a case as this, we must not overlook the manner of his treatment. It was, as we have seen, a very striking and peculiar instance, and yet our Lord did not modify his message to meet the emergency of it; there was no change, no diminution of requirement, because the applicant was rich, and a ruler. Our Lord addressed the self-same command to him, that he had to the poorest fisherman, or the most despised and degraded publican, "Leave that thou hast, and follow me." Whether it were a thousand acres, or one poor fishing net, makes no distinction in the sight of God. This was the command, no doubt peculiar to that time, but still, as long as it was required at all, it was required of each, and every one. The great truth, then, which we would deduce, is this; that the demands of the gospel never vary with the rank, or station, or age, or feelings of the person to whom they were addressed. As much is required of the highest, as of the lowest; the same is required of the richest, as of the poorest.

We say, then, to you who are among the class of inquirers to whom we have already alluded, that God speaks as plainly, that Christ addresses himself as authoritatively to you, as he does to the poorest and the most destitute who throng our aisles. Have you, for instance,

come hither this day, really making the inquiry in earnest, "What lack I yet?" Then must you learn, whatever be your age, or rank, or station in society, that we have but one answer, never modified, never changed. The Lord Jesus Christ says to every individual among you, "Come, follow me." I am still going through the world, accompanied by a little flock, whose rule of life, whose motives, pleasures, and desires, differ as widely from the great mass of mankind, and are perhaps as foreign to your taste, as the habits of those Galilean fishermen were to that young ruler. Nevertheless, if you will follow me, you must be one of this little company; yes, however it may oppose all your preconceived opinions, you must cast in your lot with the people of God: you must commence the life of faith; you must leave off all dependence upon your own merits, your own righteousness, and trust simply and implicitly to what I have already done, by pouring forth my blood upon the cross, to reconcile you to God, and you must live a life of holy obedience and preparedness for my kingdom and glory, the world being crucified unto you, and you unto the world. And this you cannot do in any age, or in any society, without differing widely from the multitude; without taking the word of God simply and absolutely for the daily guide and the only guide of your actions, and practically opposing, by your conduct, the opinions of all around you, when they run counter to that revealed will.

How many are there even among ourselves, of whom we are compelled to say, when such a test as this is produced, "Yet lackest thou one thing;" the heart has never yet been truly thus given to God in Christ Jesus. This is the one thing which carries a thousand others in

its train. Because you have not given your heart to God, therefore, there cannot be this real, vital change of life; therefore, there cannot be this conscientious renunciation of the sinful pleasures and follies of the world; therefore, there is not this hearty desire, by all holy obedience and separation from the world, to follow Christ. You may take a certain degree of pleasure in hearing his word, or attending his ordinances, and with respect to them, you may be able to say, All these things have I kept from my youth up; but then you consider this perfectly compatible with just as large and as unnecessary an intercourse with the world, as the most devoted of its followers. And you satisfy your consciences by saying, that, as you do not see these things in the same light as others do, who condemn, or disallow them, to you, they are immaterial. Doubtless the young ruler, as he walked away in sorrow from our Lord, contented himself with precisely the same plea, and reconciled himself to the course he was taking, by lamenting that so good a man as Jesus should so much have undervalued all the good works, of which he told him, and should know so little of the world as to require a sacrifice, so unreasonable and so preposterous; and thus resolved, like many among ourselves, to continue his own course, only deeply regretting that it was quite out of his power to follow the Saviour's recommendation. Brethren, what can we say which shall influence persons such as you are? of all classes, the most difficult, the most unassailable. Shall we urge you to weigh these pleas in the balance of the sanctuary, that you may learn their utter worthlessness? Shall we entreat you to look at these things by the light of eternity, that you may see them in their true colours? Or, shall we

adopt a different method, and, discarding the terrors of the Lord, only assure you that even at the very moment when you are thus virtually forsaking Christ, and rejecting your own salvation, Jesus loves you, and is as anxious as he ever was that you should decide differently, and that he even now beseeches you by us, "Be ye reconciled to God." But, then, Christ loved this ruler also, and yet he suffered him to depart in sorrow from his presence, rather than diminish one iota of his demand upon him, although it was to be thrown into the scale against the salvation of a soul. So is it with you to whom we are speaking; we do not scruple to say that the Lord Jesus loves you now, because he sees much that when directed by new motives, and tending to new results, when flowing from the love of God, and tending to the glory of God, will become truly and positively lovely: but then neither must we hesitate to declare that unless his promises be accepted, his commands obeyed, his requirements fulfilled, unless you close with the offers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive him, and by his grace become one with him and he with you, this love can only be succeeded in his mind by those feelings of regret with which a merciful judge pronounces the sentence that consigns the delinquent to utter and irremediable destruction.

Brethren, we say this, not in anger but in sorrow, that the most painful feature of our ministry among you—so painful that it almost tempts us at times to abandon it in despair—is the knowledge that you will, some at least among you, hear the plainest and most appalling truths of the gospel, the earnest, urgent calls to follow Christ, the command to come out and be separate from a world lying in wickedness, and after all, actually do not reach

even that point at which the ruler of whom we speak, fell short of heaven! You do not obey the command, and you do not go away sorrowful that you can disobey it; you return in many cases, only to plunge the deeper into sins and follies, which your hearts condemn. We can only say, God be merciful to us sinners!

“When Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he looked round about, and said unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.” This may be considered as the moral of the story, the extreme increase of difficulty which worldly possessions cast in the way, to the attainment of the heavenly glory. You may attempt to modify the declaration by adopting the addition which we meet with in St. Mark, “How hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God;”\* but then, brethren, where are they to be found who really possess wealth, and never trust in it; who knowing that they can say to their souls, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years,”† can still say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” with a heart as simply dependent upon their Father which is in heaven, for the food which that day’s necessities require, as the man who is literally compelled to look upward for his daily sustenance, and to gain his daily bread, by God’s blessing upon his daily labour? No! experience tells us, that except in some few, rare, and blessed instances, it cannot be; that the man who possesses an abundance, will find the difficulty of a simple faith immeasurably increased. He has something to look to besides God; and almost imperceptibly, that secondary source of comfort and consolation will

\* Mark x. 24.

† Luke xii. 19.

encroach upon the attention, and love, and devotedness, and dependence, which belong to God alone, and in his mind will occupy the place of Deity. Who is there that knows his own heart, who will for a moment doubt it? Is there an individual present, blessed even with a competency of this world's goods, who does not feel that there are times when they greatly clog his footsteps on the heavenward road; many customs which he would not imitate, many habits which he would not adopt, many pleasures which wean the soul from God, and of which he would not be partaker but for the allurements by which he is surrounded. May we not ask almost every individual among you, are you not conscious that you should at this hour have been much nearer to the kingdom of God, if yours had been a harder and more difficult path through life than your worldly circumstances have made it? But, perhaps, it is vain to seek the truth of this from him who has never known but one station in society; only ask the man, then, who has had a personal experience of the effect of both adversity and prosperity, of poverty and wealth, which state he felt to be the most conducive to the spiritual interests of his soul? in which he sought God the most earnestly, in which he walked with him the more closely, in which his communion with God was the most heartfelt, humble, and sincere? We do not hesitate to assert that he will say at once, "My days of poverty;" when I was the possessor of, it may be, but a single room, when all that I had was the produce of my labour during the day that was passing over me, there was then no cloud between me and my God, nothing that hindered the ascent of my prayers to him, or the descent of his spiritual mercies upon me: if I was not a happier, I was

certainly a holier man, than now, when surrounded by every comfort and every luxury which heart can desire. And, therefore, our Lord truly added, adopting a proverbial expression of the East, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." When his disciples heard it they were exceedingly amazed, saying, not "How then shall this rich young ruler hope for salvation?" but, "Who then can be saved?" Brethren, it is important to mark this inquiry of the apostles, because it throws much light upon the meaning of our Lord. Riches are comparative, and, probably, almost every one among you, when he reads the story, determines that the amount of wealth which constituted a rich man in our Lord's acceptance of the term, was an abundance, no doubt common in Eastern countries, but such as falls to the lot only of the more privileged classes in our less genial clime, or, at any rate, was most unquestionably something more than he possesses. The very question of the disciples refutes this prevalent opinion; they were poor themselves, and like all men in their station, their idea of what should constitute wealth would be but moderate, and yet they ask, "Who then can be saved?" evidently understanding our Lord to speak not of the overgrown possessors of untold thousands, but of the great majority of mankind; or their inquiry would have been particularly pointless and unmeaning. Neither does our Lord utter one word which is calculated to diminish the difficulty, or to correct their misapprehension; He simply replies, "With men this is impossible," "but not with God," "for with God all things are possible."

Be assured then, brethren, that the moral speaks



almost to every individual amongst us; few, very few at least in the middle classes of society, who can escape its point. If you enjoy a competency, if you are blessed with a large and liberal allowance of the good things of this world, you have enough to clog your wheels, to narrow the way, and to straiten the gate to everlasting life. Learn then, however men may speak of it, that the eternal salvation of a soul, although entirely the work of free and sovereign grace is to every individual, and more especially to those surrounded by the luxuries of life, a matter of the extremest difficulty, and requiring the most earnest, persevering, intense application of all the powers of the mind, and all the efforts of the will. Every declaration, even every single expression in the word of God, is calculated to convey this solemn truth: an apostle declares, that even the righteous shall scarcely be saved; our Lord himself does not merely say, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," as our translation renders it, but "agonize" to enter in. And can you hope that heartless efforts, cold prayers, listless endeavours, divided affections, will come up to the requirements which such words and such declarations convey; you feel that they cannot, you acknowledge at the very time that you are guilty of such feebleness of effort, such indecision of will, such vacillation of purpose, that these can never be the marks of men who are really born again of the Spirit, and renewed after the image of him that created them, or walking in that path of which your Lord has said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto eternal life, and few there be that find it."

Suffer me, however, to leave this to your own consideration and prayer, adding only a single sentence:

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, none ever sought that strait and narrow way in vain; "With man it is impossible, but not with God;" he has made that way so plain, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein;"\* but, then, it is the wayfaring man who is contented to be accounted a fool for Christ's sake, and who will not take one step but at his bidding, or venture to go one yard out of that path in which he can discern the print of the Saviour's feet, for all the wealth and splendour of the world. Be resolved by God's grace, ye rich and noble, to become such wayfaring men as these, and the gate of heaven is as widely open to you, as to the poorest follower of the Lord, and you shall sit down with many a Dives, as well as many a Lazarus, in the kingdom of our Father.

\* Isaiah xxxv. 8.

## LECTURE V.

LUKE XIX. 9.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.”

THERE are few things more affecting, even to the natural heart, than to listen to the prognostication of evils about to befall those we love, and yet over which we have no control: to hear them speak of coming woes which we cannot avert, of threatening adversities which we possess no means of alleviating, of sorrows which we must not share. At the period of the history at which we are now arrived, this trial was preparing for the disciples of our Lord. Twice before had he darkly and distantly alluded to the awful scene which awaited him in Jerusalem, but as the time drew nigh, it might indeed be said, “Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.” “Jesus going up to Jerusalem,” says St. Matthew, “took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the Chief Priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him, and the third day he shall rise again.”\*

\* Matthew xx. 17.

It is not easier to imagine plainer facts conveyed in more simple language. We should have thought that to have misunderstood such warnings would have been difficult; but not to have been deeply moved and affected by them, impossible. St. Matthew and St. Mark are silent upon this point, but St. Luke adds, immediately after the observation of our Lord which I have just read to you, "And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."\* Perhaps this was, in mercy, permitted by God, that while enough might be understood, to render them more than ever anxious to hang upon every word which proceeded from the Saviour's lips, and enough to satisfy them in after days, that all was known, distinctly and perfectly, to him who gave himself a willing sacrifice; the rest might be for the present hidden from their view, lest, as the apostle expresses it, "they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,"† and in the dreary apprehension of the future, lose every present joy and present blessing. How many are the instances in passing through life, in which, if we knew that the affection lavished upon us was manifesting itself for the last time, that the counsel offered us could be repeated no more, the corroding future would destroy the present, and render it at once wretched and unprofitable.

This "blindness to the future, kindly given," was evidently, at least in part, bestowed on the present occasion; had it not been, it were impossible that this most solemn, most awful prediction of thickly coming trials and sufferings, yea even of death itself, should only have

\* Luke xviii. 34.

† 2 Cor. ii. 7.

formed the prelude to one of the most ambitious requests ever proffered to the Saviour, during his earthly sojourn. It would appear from the language both of St. Matthew and St. Mark, that those words of awful and terrible prediction had scarcely passed his lips, when the mother of James and John drew near with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

Before we consider her petition, let us recollect for a moment, what the scriptures reveal concerning her who proffered it; for we shall have need of all our charity. It is well, when we are about to hear that which may lower the character of others, to endeavour for our own sakes to call to mind what we are able of the brighter and better portions of their conduct, and thus to neutralize the poison which is too often secreted even in the renewed heart, and manifests itself in the bitterness and unkindness with which a single fault will be visited, although it be preceded and followed by a thousand virtues.

The person, then, of whom we speak, was Salome, one of those truly pious and devoted women, who attended, through weal and wo, upon the footsteps of our Lord; followed him to the judgment-seat and to the cross, and, unterrified by the horrors of that dreadful scene, remained when others had forsaken him; felt the fearful shaking of the earthquake, witnessed the supernatural darkness, heard his last triumphant cry, and at length, when all was finished, accompanied his body to the sepulchre, and only retired from the heart-rending scene to prepare the spices for the embalming of him, whom she so devotedly loved when living, and so fearlessly honoured when dead.

Salome then came, evidently at her son's request,\* to Jesus, "desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou?" We are often told, on other occasions, that "Jesus knew their thoughts," and doubtless he did so here; and yet he would have those thoughts expressed before he noticed the petition they were engaged upon. What he did that day on the road to Jerusalem, he does at the present moment on the throne of his glory. He knows the most secret desire that is at this moment bursting into life in every heart here present, but this will not insure the fulfilment of that desire, however praiseworthy. He still says, "What wilt thou?" Let the thought ascend in aspiration, let the desire find utterance in prayer, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."† "She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom."

Ambitious this request most certainly was, and as such, must unequivocally and decidedly be condemned; and yet, it seemed to imply a faith which it is difficult not to honour. Our Lord had just spoken of betrayals, and mockings, and scourgings, and death, but he had also said, that he should "rise again"‡—and can we find nothing to applaud in a faith that at such an hour could look through the dark and lowering storm, to the coming sunshine; that could, like the penitent malefactor, think more of the crown than of the cross; and while even the disciples themselves were dreading the passage of their Master through the valley of the shadow of death, could thus look across that gloomy cavern, and fix a

\* Mark x. 35. Where the request is attributed to the children themselves.

† Psalm l. 15.

‡ Luke xviii. 33.

firm and settled hope upon the bright land which lay beyond it? I know not where the commentators have found a proof of their so readily made assertion, that the spiritually minded brothers, and that devoted woman, were looking only to a temporal kingdom, and to thrones and sceptres. This seems to be almost a gratuitous assumption. The request was faulty because it was ambitious; and this is enough; but it would require stronger evidence than I can discern to make me believe that this holy family were all acting in direct opposition to the feelings of their whole lives, and were thinking only of worldly emoluments, and perishing honours, when they preferred the request before us.

“Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask.” A reproof indeed; but like every reproof of our divine Master to those he loves, a reproof most mild and gentle, and tempered immediately afterwards by a kindness which converted even his reprehension into a blessing.

But, brethren, pass not this little sentence too quickly by, “Ye know not what ye ask.” Is it true of no other prayer that ever enters into the ear of the Saviour, except Salome’s? Christian parents, consider for a moment, what is the tenor of your petitions for your children? Do you seek great things for them? Seek them not. Who can tell how many a soul hereafter, shall for ever curse the day, when a parent’s prayers, or a parent’s efforts, obtained for them those gratifying distinctions of wealth, or honour, or worldly aggrandizement, for which their own hearts have panted. O, when you behold your children, in after life, following with avidity every golden bait which the world throws out to them, look back upon the prayers of their infancy, those

which you yourself offered from the blindness of an affectionate heart, and of which they are, perhaps, at this moment, only reaping the natural harvest. Did you “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,”\* for these objects of your warmest affections? Was the language of your prayers, Make my children thine, O God, give them the spirit of adoption, unite them to thyself, and then bestow upon them such a child’s portion as seemeth thee good? If every child were thus prayed for, faithfully, fervently, perseveringly, God only knows how much less frequently we should witness the triumph of worldly principles, not only over early instruction, but alas even over natural affection, until self and the world are the only deities which are worshipped in the hard and barren heart.

Our Lord continued, addressing himself to the brothers,—for although the mother preferred the request, Jesus knew that her sons had dictated it,—“Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” “Can you partake with me of the sufferings, deep and dreadful as you have just heard them to be, which now so shortly await me?” “They say unto him, We are able.”—“Yes, we have sat down first, and counted the cost; we expect no ivory sceptres, and no jewelled crowns; we wish for nothing higher, and nothing happier, than to be permitted to follow thee, even to prison and death, and through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God.” At least such would the tenor of our Lord’s reply lead us to hope were the feelings that filled the hearts of these best loved followers of our

\* Matthew vi. 30.



Lord ; still is it language which no future disciple must ever imitate. What he might, by God's grace, have achieved, who lived so near the Saviour's heart, and leaned upon his breast, we cannot tell, as the Saviour denies not his ability even to tread the path which he was himself shortly called to travel ; but this we know by bitter experience, that there never yet in our own lives has been a trial so light, a temptation so feeble, that we have not sunk beneath the burden of the one, and been crushed before the strength of the other, if we have ventured, even in the most secret hiding-places of our heart, to whisper, " We are able !" O, how surely and how bitterly do we learn this lesson, if we dare to raise an arm against the powers of darkness, in our own enfeebled nakedness. It is only when we have put on " the whole armour of God,"\* when our blessed Intercessor has prayed for us that our faith fail not, when we feel that of ourselves we are nothing, and have nothing, and can do nothing, but must lie at the foot of the cross, and receive all power, all strength, all ability, from thence, that we are alone able to adopt the triumphant language of the apostle, " I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me."† Our Lord continued, " Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." Half, then, of the request was freely granted : sorrows are yours, sufferings, such as no tongue can tell, are yours, " to you it shall be given not only to believe, but also to suffer for the sake of Christ,"‡ and doubtless, consolations which no heart can conceive, shall be yours also ; in all these things you shall be conformed

\* Ephesians vi. 11.

† Philippians iv. 13.

‡ Philippians i. 29.

to myself; "but to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

It is scarcely necessary to remind you, that the important clause in this verse, "it shall be given to them," printed in italics in our Bible, has no authority in the original, and that the verse, therefore, must always be understood with this omission, which at once restores the meaning to the passage, and makes it in full accordance with the whole tenor of scripture, which as the verse stands in our translation, it certainly contradicts. The declaration of our Lord is, "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of my Father." To any other, Christ himself could not, and would not, give it: but that it is his to give, is distinctly declared by our Lord, when he said, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."\*

When the remaining ten disciples heard of this request of James and John, the evangelist adds, "They were moved with indignation against the two brethren," or, as St. Mark adds, "They began to be much displeased with James and John." Would that we could believe that this was a righteous indignation, a holy anger, a heavenly zeal, for the spiritual welfare of these their companions: but alas! there is too much reason to fear from our Lord's reply, as well as from the frequent subject of their private quarrels, that their anger was excited, not so much because James and John desired the pre-eminence, for we are expressly told, that they had all disputed by the way, which should be the

\* John v. 22.

greatest; but rather they were indignant that the brothers had preferred their claim to the disadvantage of the remainder, and by obtaining the influence of Salome, had, as it were, forestalled them in their request. How difficult is it even in the purest hearts, carefully to distinguish where our holy hatred of sin terminates, and where our personal dislike to the sinner begins; how almost impossible to ascertain, whether their be nothing of pride wounded, vanity injured, counsel slighted, self-esteem trenched upon by the transgressor, against whose transgression we are so eloquently indignant, so virtuously angry. Be sure that the inspired apostle never spake a truer word than when he said, "Do not err, my beloved brethren,"\* "for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."† It is easy to lash vice with an unsparing hand, and to speak severe and cutting things against delinquents; but I question much, if a single soul were ever yet thus driven into the fold of the good Shepherd, or thus as it were dragged to the gates of heaven. Especially are we sure that the dwelling, as too many love to do, upon the faults of religious characters, and taking pleasure in holding up their frailties to the light, is one of the most dangerous practices to our own souls, as well as one of the most injurious to the Church of the Redeemer. If we could have stood by the side of the ten apostles, while their indignation was rising, and their displeasure finding vent against James and John, it is not very improbable, that we should have heard the voice of Judas among the loudest, and found his indignation the most violent of all who on that day condemned the sons of Zebedee.

\* James i. 16.

† James i. 20.

Following now the order of St. Luke, we pass on to an incident recorded by him alone, and which, in all probability, occurred on the evening of the same day, in which was held the conversation we have been considering.

“Jesus entered and passed through Jericho, and behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans; and he was rich.” This, then, was the second man of wealth of whom we have heard in the transactions of a single day; for it was in the morning, “while he was in the way,” or on his road, that Jesus met the rich young ruler, and it was at his entrance into Jericho, the same afternoon, that we hear of Zaccheus; perhaps to destroy the prejudice which our Lord’s remarks on riches might have excited in the minds of some of his disciples, and to show that if one rich man turned coldly away, there were others who would as ardently receive the salvation which he came to offer.

“And Zaccheus sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.” Of all the conversions which we meet with in the course of our Lord’s history, we know of none which does more honour the sovereignty and freeness of God’s grace than this before us. No motive on the part of the inquirer is even hinted at, beyond the simple desire to “see Jesus, who he was;” to gratify this very natural, but it would be difficult, without knowing more of the circumstances, to say, very praiseworthy curiosity, Zaccheus leaves his home, mingles with the multitude, and finding all other efforts hopeless, resolves to climb some overhanging tree, close to the Saviour’s path.

And there, while a thousand of his fellow-sinners were passing by below, did the grace of God discover, and call, and convert, and carry salvation to his soul. "For when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Surely, brethren, in such an assemblage as the present, this ought not to be an unheeded or an unprofitable incident. Is there one individual who, ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ, has come simply from motives of curiosity within these walls to-day? Then to that one would I address myself. You are, perhaps, the Zaccheus of this vast multitude. The Saviour whom you know not, has watched your coming; he has seen you enter these doors, and he has a message of kindness, and reconciliation, and love, expressly for yourself. Listen, then, to the history, and believe that what he there said to the publican, he is this day willing to say to you, although equally unseeking and unexpected. More than one instance could we at this moment record, if this were fitting opportunity, in which during the course of our ministry here, God has blessed his own word, listened to merely from curiosity, to the conversion of the heart, and ultimately, as we have every reason to believe, to the saving of the soul. How blessed a reflection does this give rise to in the heart of every true believer, that as the apostle says, "The word of God is not bound;"\* that although it is to be sought and received, through God's appointed means, and so sought, never is denied, yet is it also oftentimes vouchsafed where it is never sought, and that remarkable declaration of our God most fully verified, "I was found

\* 2 Timothy ii. 9.

of them that sought me not.”\* O, the depth of the riches, of the mercy, and the love, as well as of the wisdom and knowledge of God.† How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! It is thus that the Saviour comes to seek as well as to save them that are lost. He has searched for you, brethren, with the light of his grace, during many an hour of spiritual darkness, when you have never thought of him. He has followed you, it may be to the haunts of iniquity, or assemblies of folly, and there, unseen by you, has thrown his protecting shield over you, and when your foot was placed upon forbidden paths, and your hand outstretched to pluck forbidden fruit, has interposed to save you from yourself, and has never left you, until he has rescued you from the snares of your spiritual enemy, and brought you to his great salvation.

In continuing the history, we are not surprised to read that Zaccheus “made haste and came down, and received him joyfully.” We might feel a doubt whether to ascribe the desire of Zaccheus to see an unknown Saviour, to any higher motive than curiosity, but we can have no doubt that other feelings were now kindling within him, when he demonstrated this marked alacrity, and at the Saviour’s call. This, then, suggests the practical inquiry, brethren, How have you acted, when Christ has manifested his search for you? when he has appeared to look for you? when you have heard him call? When he has said unto you, “Seek ye my face;”‡ has your soul answered readily and earnestly, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek?” Have you, like him of whom we are speaking, at once received him joyfully? If not, then how will you be one day self-condemned,

\* Isaiah lxy. 1.

† Romans xi. 33.

‡ Psalm xxvii. 8.

when you stand side by side with this poor publican, who had but one offer from a Saviour's love, and instantly closed with it, and for ever; while you have had—but who can tell how many similar invitations have sounded in your ears—and yet, even to the present moment, you have afforded them no entrance into your affections and your heart.

“And when they saw it,” continues the evangelist, “they all murmured, saying that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.”

Blessed be God, this accusation was indeed a truth, and one not confined to any person or to any time; as it was then, so is it now, the Saviour is the sinner's frequent guest. No heart so vile, so polluted, so sin-defiled, that Jesus refuses to enter there. If it were otherwise, where is the child of God, who this day calls him Father, who would not at the present moment be an outcast and an alien from that Father's house, and from the gates of heaven.

“And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor,” not *have* given; here was no boasting of what had been already done in days of his ignorance, but a simple declaration of what he was now ready, from this moment, unhesitatingly to perform; “and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” Observe the immediate fruits of a living faith; from the very hour that the tree is planted, it begins to bear, never even for one moment barren. How marked, then, would be the difference to all around him, when Zaccheus went, on the following morning, as usual, to the receipt of custom. The poor from whom he had before, in all probability, turned scornfully away, in all the pride of newly-gotten wealth, now

relieved to the amount of half his property. Those who had dealings with him, and who had hitherto, perhaps, been over-reached and defrauded, now receiving a retribution, such as the strictest law never yet awarded, even fourfold. These, indeed, were signs which none could mistake, known and read of all men. These were marks of true conversion, evidences that his was the religion of the heart.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso-much as he also is a son of Abraham.” This was our Lord’s own comment after hearing the declaration of Zaccheus.

\* Brethren, if salvation be truly come into your houses, we are entitled to ask, not what is your profession, but where are the fruits? Are they seen by the manner in which your households are conducted? Is God openly acknowledged and honoured there? Is there secret prayer in your chambers? Is there social prayer with your families? Is there retribution where your conscience tells you it is needful? Is there charity, expressed not in words, but in acts for your poorer brethren? How often must you be told, that true religion is a practical thing, influencing every temper, every word, every thought, seen in all the arrangements of a household, in all the converse of a family, in all the pursuits and pleasures of domestic life.

\* The profession of religion is extending at the present day, far and wide, and God be thanked, we believe also, its blessed reality; but be not deceived; they are not necessarily united; many deceive others upon this subject, some deceive themselves, but of this be assured, that there is no true test of discipleship, but holy consistent obedience, the fruit of faith, and springing from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Wanting



this, the Saviour has not yet entered your house, has not yet been received into your hearts; if you are at this moment self-condemned upon this great subject, if you feel, 'It is true, my religion hitherto has been far more nominal than real; there has been nothing purifying, nothing sanctifying, nothing really operative and influential in my creed, my desires are much what they ever were, my toleration of little sins in my own heart and conduct much what it ever was: my longing after this world's advantages, my thirst for this world's pleasures, as strong as I have ever felt them; be taught, we beseech you, by the example before us, that yours cannot be the religion of the Gospel, the salvation of Jesus Christ. You may have had a transient interest in the things belonging to your peace, but there has been no vital abiding apprehension of them; you may have had many feelings of respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, but there has not, there cannot have been a real, heartfelt, permanent reception of him in all his offices, into the soul. This, then, is the work, the great foundation work, which after all your profession, has not yet been done, which you have yet to do, and we most earnestly call upon you to do it this day; we address you in the beautiful language of your own Apostolical Church, and say, *Now*, therefore, "receive Christ, not for a time, but for ever;" now "believe his word, not for a time, but for ever;" now, "become his servants, not for a time, but for ever:" in consideration that "he hath redeemed and saved you, not for a time, but for ever; and will receive you into his everlasting kingdom, there to reign with him, not for a time, but for ever. To him, therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever."\*

\* Homilies, p. 364, 8vo.—Oxford, 1802.

## LECTURE VI.

MARK xiv. 8.

“She hath done what she could.”

AT the commencement of these Lectures for the present season, there were circumstances which rendered the undertaking more than usually arduous, and had it not been, that we were in some degree enabled to cast our burden of inability and weakness upon him, who in his own word has invited us so to do; and to look for that sympathy in your forbearance and your prayers, which a long and happy experience has taught us we might rely upon, we should scarcely have ventured to have engaged in it. “Having, however, obtained help of the Lord, we continue to this day,” and now have only, in this our closing discourse, to record our gratitude and our thanksgiving as publicly, as we aforetime did our weakness and our wants; praising the name of our God for such portion of aid as he has extended to our feebleness, and blessing him, if he has been pleased to speak one word of guidance to the ignorant, or of help to the weak, or of comfort to the distressed, by one of the meanest of his instruments.

After the important visit to Zaccheus, which took place during the Saviour’s last journey to Jerusalem, and which has been very distinctly proved to have occurred on the Friday, in the week preceding the sufferings of

our Lord, we hear of him next, in order of time, in the 12th chapter of St. John.

“Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.”—The time which is here so plainly pointed out, is a key to all the remaining circumstances in our Lord’s history. By an attention to it, we shall be enabled to follow the Saviour during the transactions of every day, and almost every hour, which now remain of his mortal existence; it is, therefore, obviously well worthy of a few moments’ consideration. We have seen that the evangelist narrates, that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover, on which he suffered. Now as there is no question that our Lord was put to death on the Friday, the Sunday preceding would be the sixth day, and as the days were calculated by the Jews from sunset to sunset, and our Lord apparently arrived in time for supper, he would necessarily go to Bethany on the Saturday evening after the close of the Jewish Sabbath. Where that last Sabbath was spent, does not appear, although it seems probable that it was passed at the house of Zaccheus, between Jericho and Bethphage, the village at which our Lord would turn off from the direct road between Jericho and Jerusalem, to fulfil his intention of visiting Bethany.\*

That the incident to which I am now about to direct your attention is the same, notwithstanding the apparent discrepancies, as that related in the 26th chapter of St. Matthew, and in the 14th of St. Mark, we feel no doubt, although the nature of these Lectures will not allow us

\* Luke xix. 28.

to state the proofs, or to answer the objections, which a casual reader would unquestionably raise. Feeling convinced, however, that the three narratives all record the same incident, we shall, as on former occasions, take the particulars from each of the three evangelists, for the purpose of amplifying the statement of St. John, the supplemental character of his Gospel leading him always to be diffuse where the preceding evangelists have abridged, and to be concise where they have already enlarged.

“Jesus being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,” “there they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.” It is impossible not to feel pleasure at finding ourselves once more in company, as it were, with this holy family. Of Simon, at whose house they were now assembled, we know nothing beyond the fact, that he had been a leper, and probably one whom Jesus had cleansed, and a near neighbour of these most intimate friends of our Lord. What an assembly must that have been, and how peculiarly well qualified to strengthen the hearts of the apostles for the trying week upon which they were entering. Their host, the healed leper; their companion, the risen Lazarus; their attendants, his devotedly pious sisters; their chief attraction the presence of their divine and blessed Master. To have passed but one hour in such a company would have far outbalanced all the pleasures, and all the privileges of the world! Jesus himself was clearly not insensible to the comfort and delight of such society, or to the sympathy of them that feared the Lord; he sought it, must I add, unavailingly, even in Gethsemane; he most assuredly found it in that tranquil evening hour with which

his last Sabbath upon earth closed in, surrounded by the objects of his mercy, and the partakers of his love, at Bethany. "Then came a woman, having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious," "and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair," "and breaking the box, poured it on his head" "as he sat at meat."

St. Matthew and St. Mark are silent as to the name of her who performed this costly act of love and gratitude to the Saviour, probably for the same reason that they are silent as to the resurrection of Lazarus; for if their mention of that astonishing miracle, while the object of it yet was living, would have compromised his safety, which was no doubt the cause of their silence, the introduction of his pious sister's name would have been equally dangerous, and therefore was withheld. When St. John, however, at a very advanced age, wrote his Gospel, great and many were the changes which had occurred, and no such precaution was needed. All that happy family had been gathered again to their Lord, and had once more sat down with him, but now at his everlasting table, therefore, all danger of persecution, which the mention of their names might have aroused, was for ever over. It is impossible, at this thought, not to digress for a moment from the persons of whom we are reading, to the writer himself, the beloved St. John. How often, while engaged upon this chapter, must his mind have travelled back to this well-remembered season; how blank and dreary would have been the retrospect, had not the rays of coming glory been sufficiently powerful to enlighten every by-gone mile of his long and weary journey. Of all who had sat with him at the evening feast in Bethany, not one remained. Simon,

Lazarus, Martha, Mary, the apostles, the Lord himself; all gone before him to their rest, and he standing alone, the last of his generation, "as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done."\* Melancholy yet blessed privilege, to be thus spared to record what none had told, and yet what the church has cherished, and shall continue to cherish, till time shall be no longer.

With her who performed the act of which St. John has written, we are well acquainted as one of the best loved followers of our Lord. While so characteristic was the act in which we find her now engaged, that had no name been mentioned, even by St. John, few who read attentively these Bible stories, but would have exclaimed, when they heard that the feet of Jesus had been anointed at Bethany, Then most certainly must this have been performed by her, whose accustomed place we know it was to "sit at Jesus' feet, and hear his word." And such the apostle assures us was the fact; "the woman" mentioned by St. Matthew and St. Mark, is distinctly declared by St. John, to be the Mary, with whose character we are already so well acquainted. Whether anticipating, that the time of our Lord's departure was at hand, or only guided by the dictates of a grateful love, we know not, but certainly never was there a more acceptable, or a more precious offering, than this, now tendered by his affectionate and simple-hearted follower.

"The house was filled with the odour of the ointment." As we are not told that a single word was exchanged between the Saviour and her who brought the offering, it is more than probable that the attention of the com-

\* Isaiah xvii. 6.

pany was first invited to the act of devotedness and love which Mary had performed, by the delicious perfume of the ointment. We are sure that she herself would not have courted observation, and that if no eye but his had seen the deed of which we are speaking, she would have been far better satisfied. But love like hers cannot be hidden—it is too prodigal a feeling: had she felt less, she would certainly have offered less, and thus have escaped both the observation and the censure by which her deed was followed. But where the love is strong, the offering will be large; so large, as in the eye of the world to look like profusion and extravagance; and this, not so much because the requirements of God are great, as because all that we have, and all that we are, will appear to ourselves far too little to cast upon his altar, whom we desire to love with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Brethren, your love is then most like the love of Mary, most like that grace which the Saviour values highest, not only when its fruits are abundant, but when it is revealed only by its effects, when your whole house is filled with its fragrancy, and every inmate can discover by your kindness, and affection, by your gentleness and self-denial, by your meekness and charity, at whose feet you have laid the offering of a broken and a contrite heart.

But we must pass from the feelings of this poor woman, to those of one who belonged, alas! to a far different order, and who served another master though he sat at the same table, and was admitted outwardly at least, to the same delightful and blessed intercourse. “Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the

poor?" "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." "Was a thief and had the bag." How remarkable a union! Did, then, our Lord so little know the characters of those by whom he was surrounded, as thus to entrust the only dishonest man among them with their wealth? No: he who knew the heart of man, knew that none so urgently desired the office as that covetous apostle, and therefore to him he gave it. Dreadful mark of God's purposes of judicial vengeance, when he thus, as David says, gives the sinner the desire of his heart, and does not estrange him from his lust, leaving him blindfold on the path which leads directly to the edge of the precipice, where no restraining arm will be outstretched to prevent his fall. It might be also for something more than the well deserved punishment of his covetousness, or his dishonesty, it *might* be, to mark how lightly Christ esteems what men consider the good things of this world, that we find him thus, in two successive passages, promising the cup of bitterness, and the baptism of suffering, to James and John, but giving the bag to Judas.

As soon as Jesus heard what was going forward, he said unto them, "Why trouble ye the woman, for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For you have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Brethren, "this day is this scripture fulfilling in your



ears ;” what Mary did, is this day spoken of as a memorial of her, and the commendation of the Saviour recorded as an honour to her, and presented as a warning, and as an encouragement to yourselves ; “She hath done what she could.” There is not a more affecting tribute of approbation to be met with throughout the scriptures of truth, not one which comes home more directly to the heart, “She hath done what she could.” The poorest, and weakest, therefore, among us, could have done as much ; the highest archangel who stands at God’s right hand, could do no more. It is, then, a most fair and reasonable subject for self-examination. You have been sent into this world with a specific object set before you, which all the wealth, and pleasures, and honours of life, have been unable to conceal from your view ; that object is, to prepare for an eternity, to be spent in the presence of our God, and of his Christ, and amidst the unfading joys of his everlasting kingdom. Or, in other words, but practically, precisely the same thing, to live to the honour and glory of God, during this, your only time of preparation. Now we solemnly ask of you, as those who have “the charge over you in the Lord,” and who “watch for your souls, as they that must give account,” can we say of each one among you, or rather can you say of yourselves, ‘I have done what I could ?’

Surely this does not sound like the demand of “an austere man,” “reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed ;” what could the most indulgent parent ask of you less than this ? Not, have you done great things for Christ, have you achieved much for the glory of God in your day and generation, but simply, have you done what you could in the pro-

motion of God's glory, in the work of your own salvation? You could, brethren—for this is far too important a matter to dispose of in a single sentence; we must follow you into your homes and into your hearts—you could have been, day by day, and year by year, throughout your lives, very urgent with your heavenly Father in secret, heartfelt, faithful prayer, to correct that which conscience, under the teaching of God's Spirit, has long since told you was hateful to God, and destructive to your own souls; your pride, your lust, your covetousness, your temper, your self-sufficiency, your worldliness. You could have dedicated a portion of every day to the earnest, prayerful searching of God's revealed word. You could have practised such self-denial with regard to the things of this world, such an obedience to the command, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord," as would, by God's grace, have tended most materially to quicken your progress on the heavenward road, and your attainment of far higher degrees of sanctification, and nearer spiritual communion with your great and glorified Head. You could, by the same grace, never withheld from those who seek it, have checked many an improper desire when first kindling in your heart; have carried forth into holy and consistent practice many a good resolution which the Spirit of God has implanted in your mind, and have become by this period of your lives, the holy, firm, and consistent follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, even in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation. These and a thousand others, which your own hearts will have suggested, even while I have been speaking, you most unquestionably could have done; now then, brethren, we repeat the inquiry, Have

you done what you could? How many among you stand self-sentenced, self-condemned! O, may the inquiry be to them a warning word in season; that they may gather up fresh strength, fresh resolution, fresh energy to begin as it were from the present moment, a course of earnest, faithful, persevering holiness; and whatever their hand findeth to do, doing it with their might; knowing that "there is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we are going."

While to some among you, how sweet and blessed a word of encouragement does it suggest. You have grieved deeply over efforts after holiness which sin has frustrated; prayers which Satan has spoiled; hopes which your own corrupt hearts have withered; you can hardly mark the slightest increase of spiritual strength, the least advance in godliness, the smallest approach to a more perfect conformity to your Saviour and your God. Yet you can say, "That which I do, I allow not, for what I could, that I do not, but what I hate, that do I;"\* "to will, is indeed present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not."† Then take courage, be not cast down; many as weak a follower as yourself has trodden the king's highway, and is now safe within the walls of Zion. Only persevere faithfully, earnestly, and simply, in doing all you can, seeking more grace, practising more self-denial, trusting more implicitly, and in the end the commendation of Mary shall be your own, "She hath done what she could." And if it cannot be strictly said, "Well done, good and faithful servant," it may yet be said, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

\* Romans vii. 15.

† Romans vii. 18.

By comparing the different narratives of the evangelists, there seems little doubt that our Lord remained during the whole of the following day in retirement at Bethany. This would be, as we have seen, the Christian Sunday; and the day, although not then consecrated to the glory of God, must have been spent in a manner peculiarly appropriate to the duties by which it was soon about to be so highly honoured. For the rumour having reached Jerusalem that our Lord was tarrying within so short a distance of the city, "much people of the Jews," as St. John tells us, "flocked from the city to Bethany during that day," and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see the risen Lazarus, who had probably absented himself from the period of his resurrection, almost to the very time of our Lord's present visit. Thus the Sunday would no doubt be spent in the most profitable spiritual intercourse with the inquiring Jews; while, as many were going to and fro, the fame of our Lord would be carried back into the city, at this time the resort of the thousands and tens of thousands who came up, from all parts of the country, for the Passover, and men's minds would be prepared, and a great and solemn expectation of the coming Saviour excited, to insure the King of Israel that degree of honour which he now for the first and last time claimed, and which it was necessary, for the fulfilment of prophecy, should be awarded him. It was on the following morning, then, the Monday of what we now denominate Passion week, that the first procession of our Lord to Jerusalem took place. The time had at length arrived, when all the reserve which, for wise and obvious purposes, Jesus had hitherto assumed upon the subject of the Messiahship, was to be cast aside

for ever. Now the hour had come when the Son of man was to be glorified; publicly acknowledged as the Prophet, openly recognised as a King. Having, therefore, sent forward two of his disciples to fetch the ass, and the colt, the foal of an ass, upon which, as the prophet Zechariah had most distinctly foretold, the King, even the spiritual King of Israel, should enter Jerusalem, our Lord commenced the descent of the Mount of Olives. It was then, that for the first time, the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. The crowds which accompanied him from Bethany, were soon met by the multitudes which had poured forth from the overflowing city; many with branches of palm trees, and others, according to oriental custom, with loose garments in their hands to strew in the way, while, as we may gather from the narrative, at the confluence of these two mighty streams, all with one heart and one voice, raised at once the exulting cry, "Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

How striking a fulfilment of the words of the prophet, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

Now let us for a moment turn our attention from the enthusiasm of the multitude, seldom excited in so good and holy a cause, to him who was the object of it. Behold him, like the prophets of old, seated upon an ass, and yet receiving the acclamations of the unnumbered multitudes who hailed him as a king. Riding in the midst of that vast concourse, totally indifferent to their applauses, his soul overwhelmed with the deepest feelings of commiseration and pity; at that triumphant mo-

ment as sensible of the melancholy truth, "They know not what they do," as when upon the following Friday, they were nailing him to the cross. It was at the lower part of the descent of Mount Olivet, when they were drawing near the city, that the vast procession halted. Their divine leader appeared about to speak, and every tongue was hushed, and every eye was turned to him, of whose praises they were then so loudly prodigal; when as they look, behold the Saviour, no longer controlling his emotion, burst into a flood of tears, and poured forth his threatened wo upon their country, their families, themselves. For "when he was come near," says St. Luke, "he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now, they are hid from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

What vast additional force, what a powerful increase of interest, does this memorable prediction acquire from the circumstances under which it was delivered. The very enthusiasm, and turbulent rejoicing of the multitude, only bring into stronger contrast the deep depression, and awful denunciation of the Saviour. He felt no joy from the ten thousand acclamations which at that moment awoke the echoes of Mount Olivet; he was looking down upon the condemned and guilty city which lay at his feet, thinking of the miracles he had wrought in her market-places, the sermons he had preached in

her streets, and the multitude of her devoted inhabitants, the great mass of her population, utterly insensible to all that he had ever taught, utterly ignorant of their own approaching fate; while, of the crowds whose voices then rent the air with benedictions, how many ere that week was over who would join as loudly and as heartily in the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Brethren, it is a thought of no ordinary solemnity, that the sentence then passed upon Jerusalem, was passed not upon her walls and her palaces, not upon her towers and her temple alone, but upon her children; upon many thousand families as happy and as thoughtless as your own, upon millions of individuals as regardless as some among yourselves. And what was it which had thus sealed their condemnation, and shut them out for ever from the hope of a reprieve? Was it sin, open, flagrant sin? No, if that were the cause, then indeed might we repeat the disciple's inquiry, "Who then can be saved?" What would become of all the generations of men, of our families, of ourselves? It was not that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were sinners above all who ever lived—there is no reason to imagine this; for is not even their crime of deepest dye, the murder of the Lord of life, repeated every day by those who, as the apostle declares, "Crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."\* It was not, then, their sin. No, it was their impenitence, their unbelief, it was simply because they refused to attend to the things which belonged to their peace, rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, with every offer of his mercy and every promise of his salvation. Our Lord distinctly asserts that this, and this

\* Hebrews vi. 6.

alone, was the cause of their condemnation. "If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace"—surely no one can doubt that the remainder of the sentence would have been, "even thou mightest have been saved."

But the time was past, the hour run out, and our Lord checks himself in that unfinished sentence, and only adds this most appalling conclusion, "But now they are hid from thine eyes."

My beloved brethren, can we close the present course of lectures with a more solemn warning? We apply ourselves especially to you, whom we have the privilege at this season, and only at this season, of addressing. Before we meet again, if God in his mercy should ever permit us such a meeting, great and many will be the changes which the revolving year will bring; some may, no doubt, some shall be called from the indistinct vision of the word of God, reflected from the glass of man's infirmity, to the immediate presence of the living Word, and of his glory, to see face to face. Suffer, then, one word of exhortation before we part. The things belonging to your peace have, we trust, plainly and faithfully, according to the degree of light with which God has blessed us, been declared to you, so that we may say with Moses, "See, I have set before thee this day, life and death and evil."

Is there, then, one who has heard within these walls invitations of mercy, without exception and without reserve, and yet has heard them unmoved, uninfluenced, unconvinced? to him we would say, Here is yet one more, it may be one last entreaty, from the God of all your mercies, he invites you, nay, beseeches you by us this day, that you would throw down the weapons of



rebellion, and receive the engrafted word which is able to save your soul. Do you again refuse, do you again procrastinate, is our Lord still compelled to say of you, ye will not come unto me that ye might have life? then who shall assure you that the sentence passed upon Jerusalem shall be withheld from yourself: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace"—but now the time has fled, that moment is for ever past,—“now they are hid from thine eyes.” Years of health and happiness may perhaps await you, time may roll on, and bring you every delight, and every comfort which the world can proffer; your lot may excite the admiration and the envy of all around you, and yet it is possible, that never from this hour may you again be visited by the convictions of sin, the desire for Christ, the longing for salvation. All things temporal may be joyous around you, and yielding an abundant harvest, while all spiritual may be dark and barren, “the things belonging to your peace” for ever hidden from your eyes, no God, no Christ, no heaven.

Who will refuse to pray that our great and glorious Intercessor may avert so fearful, so unutterably dreadful a sentence from every individual here present; that God, even our own God, may bless us, and that the truths now preached in great infirmity, may be received in the love of them, and bring forth fruit a hundred fold to the honour and praise of God; until that hour, when through the merits of his dear Son, both we who speak, and you who hear, without a single exception, shall re-assemble in the many mansions of our Father's house.



**EXPOSITORY LECTURES.**

EXHIBITORY INSTRUCTIONS

## NOTICE.

THE Expository Lectures which follow were written merely for the purpose stated in the first discourse, of attracting if possible a larger proportion of the congregation to the valuable week-day services of our Church which immediately precede Easter. That such an exertion should be needed, is perhaps neither creditable to minister nor people; but all must have remarked how thinly the prayers of the Church are usually attended, unless accompanied by some such addition as was aimed at in the present Lectures. That they were never intended for publication will perhaps be sufficiently obvious from internal evidence: as all were delivered during Passion week, each was hastily composed in the evening preceding the morning on which it was preached, and every aid within reach was made use of, that could render the Lectures more instructive or more interesting.

It need hardly be added, that the author never contemplated employing these familiar expositions as a conclusion to his history of our Lord; but in the pros-

pect of not being permitted to finish a work in which he has long been deeply interested, he has thought it well to attend to the often expressed desire of members of his congregation, and rather to suffer these very inadequate representations of the last days of the Saviour to accompany the former Lectures, than to leave the subject, as he must otherwise have done, wholly uncompleted.

# EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

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## LECTURE I.

ST. JOHN xvii. 24.

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”

THE solemn season which is approaching, brethren, has led me to select the words of the text from one of the most important portions of Scripture, which mark the close of the earthly sojourn of our divine Master. My object in this is to second the admirable arrangement of our Church during the week\* upon which we have this day entered, by concentrating all our thoughts, and all our affections, on him who is the great subject of her services; and as I have on former occasions grieved to observe the comparatively small proportion of our congregation which attends upon the week-day service, when prayer is wont to be made, I purpose, if

\* Passion week.

the Lord will, to accompany the daily prayers by a short exposition of Scripture, appropriate to those high and blessed subjects, which ought in an especial manner to occupy the mind, and to fill the heart, of every sincere follower of our Lord, during the commemoration of this his time of greatest and most appalling sufferings.

For this purpose, we commence to-day with the last hour of our Lord's life, which preceded that time of his suffering: intending in these daily services to consider each period of his sufferings in the order in which it occurred, hoping that by God's grace, we shall thus obtain far juster, and far deeper views, of the countless price at which our redemption was purchased, than we have ever yet attained to.

We shall begin by endeavouring to ascertain the place and time in which the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John were spoken by our Lord. We shall discover from the context, that the place was the large upper chamber at Jerusalem in which the Lord Jesus Christ had just partaken of the Passover with his disciples, and the time from eight to eleven o'clock at night.

First, with respect to the place. In all probability, "the house in which the supper occurred, was in the eastern division of the city, for the messengers sent by our Lord to prepare the Passover would enter Jerusalem necessarily from the direction of Bethany, where our Lord had slept on the preceding night; and they may be presumed, to have found the house almost as soon as they entered the city."\* It is interesting to

\* Greswell's Dissertations.



remember this, because it marks the distance of this spot, as well as its direction, from those scenes in the Garden, and on the Mount, which we shall shortly endeavour to investigate; and nothing will tend more to impress them upon our memories and our hearts, than their possessing a local habitation in our minds.

The disciples, then, having, as our Lord directed them, followed "the man bearing a pitcher of water," whom they were to meet as soon as they entered the city, occupied by his permission the large upper room, which they found furnished and prepared, and there partook of the Passover with their divine Master. Having concluded the Paschal feast, Jesus proceeded to institute the Sacrament of the Lord's supper; either immediately before, or immediately after this, Judas the traitor left the apartment, for the purpose of concluding his horrible arrangements with the chief priests and elders. Our Lord's directions to him, "That thou doest, do quickly," which the disciples understood to mean, "Buy those things which we have need of against the feast," will very readily help us to determine at what part of the night this incident took place, since it must have been before the shops were shut up in Jerusalem,\* and probably at the second or third hour of the night, *i. e.* between seven and eight o'clock on the Thursday evening, preceding the day of our Lord's great sacrifice: from this time, then, until the time they went forth into the garden, which was between eleven and twelve o'clock, Jesus was alone with the eleven disciples, and

\* See "Rev. T. Greswell's Dissertations." Not having the work at hand, and having made no note at the time, I am unable to refer more particularly to this, and to many other ingenious suggestions for which I am indebted to that elaborate and interesting work.

these are the hours that were occupied in delivering the discourses which are contained in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of this Gospel, and that sublime and beautiful prayer, which is contained in the 17th chapter, and which forms one of the richest and most invaluable legacies that the Church has ever received from its divine and blessed Founder.

I shall content myself this morning with giving you some general idea of the prayer itself, and with dwelling briefly upon two or three of its most important passages.

First, then, with respect to the prayer itself: it may be divided into three distinct portions. In the first of these, which occupies the five opening verses of the chapter, our Lord prays that he may be glorified with the Father, with that glory which he had with him before the world began.

2. From the 16th to the 19th verse, our Lord petitions for two great blessings for the eleven apostles; "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me," and "Sanctify them through thy truth;" while each of these petitions for divine keeping, and for sanctification, are urged by different arguments, and pressed upon different grounds.

3. From the 19th verse to the end of the chapter, our Lord prays for his whole Church, in every age, under the name of "them which shall believe on me through their word," *i. e.* through the preaching or writings of the apostles. And he asks for them these unspeakable blessings.

I. Spiritual union with God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ; "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

II. The spiritual unity of the Church itself, "That they may be one, even as we are one."

And, lastly, in the words of the text, that all his Church, as it shall, in answer to his prayer, be united to him here below, may also be re-united to him in heaven for ever. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Thus much for the analysis of the prayer itself. We proceed to offer a few observations upon the three practical points in it; upon God's keeping—God's sanctifying—and God's glorifying the people of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Upon God's keeping: "Holy Father," said our Divine Master, 11th verse, "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me;" and again, 15th verse, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Observe here, our Lord's great and high and solemn reverence in prayer, when publicly made before his disciples, as a model for their intercessions, "Holy Father." Who, with such an example before him, would presume to draw near unto God with any feelings of levity, or carelessness, or familiarity, when we see even the only begotten Son, as Mediator, speaking thus humbly, thus reverentially. Observe again, that our Lord does not entreat his Father to take his people out of the world, *i. e.* to remove them at once by death from the face of the earth, but to keep them under his divine guidance and protection, while tarrying there. If, therefore, yours, brethren, be, as every Christian's at some period or other is, the mourner's lot, whatever be your griefs, your anxieties or your difficulties, learn

that God's time is assuredly the best time both for their removal and your own, and is to be patiently and thankfully waited for.

Neither does our Lord ask his heavenly Father to keep his beloved people from the troubles, the distresses, the heart-rending sorrows of the world; not a word is expressed upon this point throughout the whole of the prayer before us; "Keep them from the evil," is the great subject of our Lord's entreaty. There is no evil necessarily in sorrow, certainly none in sanctified sorrow; sin, and sin alone, is unmixed evil, and therefore from this alone did our Lord so urgently petition that his people might be kept.

Now let us examine for a moment the manner in which our Lord describes those for whom his petition is offered. 16th verse, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Brethren, this then is the description of persons for whom Christ prayed! "Not of the world." It is no uncommon thing to hear advanced, in favour of a certain degree of conformity to the pleasures and follies and habits of the world, that our Lord described his people as being "in the world, and not of the world." Our Lord assuredly never drew any such distinction, in the manner, or with the intention, which such persons would wish us to understand. When he prayed that his disciples might remain in the world, it is perfectly obvious that he used the word as expressive of the globe itself, the earth on which we live, move and have our being; that, in fact, he simply meant that they might continue to live. When he declares that they were not of the world, he clearly uses the word as we are accustomed at the present day to use it, meaning the people of the world, and therefore asserts that they for whom he

was interceding were not conformed to the world, were not living in its follies, were not numbered among its people. He even makes this distinction still more clear, and pointed, and undeniable, in the 9th verse, when he says,—“I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” Is it to be believed, brethren, that the Lord Jesus Christ now intercedes in heaven for those for whom he prayed not while on earth? Can we conceive such a change in an unchangeable Being? That declaring while on earth, that he prayed not for those who, wedded to the world, refused his Gospel, despised his promises, rejected himself, he should now be employed, throughout all time, in interceding for these in heaven, for whom, while upon earth, he prayed not. No, surely the same limitation must exist now, as existed then, “I pray for them whom thou hast given me;” all, in every age and every clime, who hear and receive the Gospel of salvation, and resolve, by God’s grace, to devote themselves in body and soul to the service of our Lord. Is it, then, an object of earnest desire to your souls, to be the subjects of the Saviour’s prayer? Could you have any hope of pardon, any assurance of grace and strength, any prospect of a glorious eternity, if you were excluded from those divine intercessions? Then let these words of your Redeemer sink deep into your hearts, “I pray not for the world.” So long as you remain undistinguishable from the world of the ungodly, you can derive no comfort, because you can feel no assurance that our Lord intercedes for you; doubtless he does intercede for many who still swell the ranks of an opposing world, and who will, ere long, desert those rebel forces, and take arms under their rightful sove-

reign, the captain of their salvation. But no individual there is justified in believing that he is one for whom the Saviour prays. If you would have this most important point cleared up to the satisfaction and comfort of your own soul, there is no other way but that which God himself has commanded, "Come out, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you:" in other words, "Come out and be ye separate" from those for whom your Saviour prays not. Let the line between you and them be plain, obvious, undeniable; as much so now in your principles, your motives, and your conduct in time, as it will one day be in eternity, when that line, now almost imperceptible, shall have widened into a great, a fixed, an impassable gulf.

Is this, by Divine grace, already the case with many among you, and although constrained to live in the world, can you say with an apostle, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;" I desire not its trifling pleasures, I distrust its empty promises, I abhor its sinful practices, and "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" Then have you the surest pledge that the Lord Jesus Christ prays for your keeping, for your sanctification, for your glorification. For this is the very argument which he makes use of with his Divine Father that his prayer should be heard and answered; and be assured that he prayed only for that which he had purchased; and that if he have drawn you out of the world by the attraction of his cross, and have given you a far better and far holier inheritance even now among the people of God, making their pleasures here to be yours, their Sanctifier and

their Saviour yours, then will he make their joys hereafter to be yours, and their God, their heaven, to be yours also; for he has pledged himself to "keep you from the evil," until he has built you up, and given you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

This leads us, therefore, to the second point in our Lord's petitions; that his heavenly Father should sanctify those whom he had promised to keep, "Sanctify them through thy truth."

It is evident that those for whom our Lord first offered these petitions were, even when the petitions were made, both converted and sanctified. Yet this did not prevent our Lord from praying that they might be still further sanctified, from entreating that they might be carried on in holiness, until they were perfected in happiness. Learn, then, from this, the necessity of growth in sanctification. Not to grow is to decay. It matters not what knowledge, what experience, what feeling of Divine things you possess within you, even what inherent grace; these will not keep you from the evil of the world, unless you are not only sanctified, but growing, advancing therein. Therefore are these petitions united, Holy Father, keep and sanctify. The surest method by which even God himself keeps the believer, is by promoting his sanctification. How blessed an arrangement of Divine grace, that that which God has made our duty, he should also make our safeguard and our happiness! How merciful a provision of Divine love, that the very sanctification of the believer, which is elsewhere said to be the will of God concerning us, "This is the will of God, even our sanctification," is here shown to be entirely the work of God; for our Lord Jesus distinctly seeks it of him by prayer, "Sanctify them through thy truth."

Therefore, brethren, learn while you are constantly striving after higher degrees of holiness, to lay the matter of your daily sanctification faithfully and contentedly upon God in Christ Jesus. Acknowledge your own inability, cease from all dependence upon your own efforts, and rely simply and entirely on him who will perfect that which concerneth you, and having begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ ! Only bear in mind that your daily sanctification is to be instrumentally wrought out by the same means as your conversion was, viz. by the power of God, and by the word of truth ; “ Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth.” This is not only affirmed by the scripture before us, but corroborated by all scripture. So St. Peter, “ As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” You never grow so rapidly and so strongly, as when your nourishment is drawn simply from the Divine word, by daily reading, daily meditation, daily prayer. While dwelling on its commands the Spirit of God renders them effectual to press your duties upon your soul—while dwelling upon its promises, to encourage your performance of those duties—while dwelling on the great and blessed doctrines, the same Divine Spirit sheds forth that light and warmth which, beaming from the cross, strengthen and purify, guide and sanctify, the affections and the heart. Thus he who wills your sanctification, while you are striving to effect it, himself “ worketh in you to will and to do,” and thus carries on and perfects that which he recommends and commands.

Lastly, we are briefly to consider our Lord’s petition for the glorification of his people, “ Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory.”



How beautifully, and how naturally, does each portion of this heavenly prayer succeed the other: they whom God has given, them he also keeps; and they whom God has kept, them he also sanctifies, and they whom God has sanctified, them he also glorifies.

As our Lord began the prayer with the endearing word "Father," so does he also conclude it; the same sweet spirit of filial intercourse and filial love pervading every petition. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." It is a remarkable expression—"Father, I will." Who but God could with propriety have spoken thus to God. Yet there is nothing authoritative, nothing imperious here. It is rather the language of a dying testator, willing away possessions which were his own to give. I Will this to my people. I Will that they spend an eternity in my presence and glory: such is my love to them, that heaven will not content me unless they "be with me where I am."

Christian brethren, let me ask you a solemn question, and one which you probably never asked yourselves. Are you as anxious to enjoy your Redeemer's company and society, as he unquestionably proves himself by this petition to be for the enjoyment of the company and society of his people? His last thoughts on earth were occupied with the desire of meeting them again in heaven. Such a feeling was by no means confined to his disciples; it comes in that portion of the prayer which is expressly occupied with those "who shall believe on him," and of these, yes of all these, and therefore, if we are the children of God, of us, even of us, did he declare, "I will that they also be with me where I am." As if the happiness of the Saviour would be incomplete, the travail of his soul unsatisfied, if every member of

his beloved family were not with him, if even the youngest, weakest, feeblest, were not there. "I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Yes, my beloved brethren, the most spiritual among you here below, know little of that glory which shall be revealed both to us, and in us; we could not bear the sight, while clothed in these fleshly tabernacles; they must be laid down in the dust of which they are made; this corruption must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality, before we shall be able to endure the vision of that, which shall one day constitute our highest happiness, and our eternal joy. Be much engaged, then, in fixing your thoughts and hearts on the Lord Jesus Christ, on all his abounding love, on all his tremendous sufferings. Nothing will, by God's grace, tend more to banish this world, its trifles, and its follies, from your memories and your hearts, than to have them thus occupied, thus filled. Nothing will, by the influence of the same grace, be so effectual in fitting you for that day, and for that place, and for that vision, which even now your Lord is beseeching his heavenly Father to prepare for you, while he is engaged with God the Holy Ghost in preparing you for it. Do you, then, to whom God hath in mercy given a taste for these things, meditate upon them, pray over them, and be continually occupied with them, bearing in mind that the time is short, that eternity is approaching, but that eternity itself will not be long enough to repair the loss of opportunities such as these, for now only is the accepted time, now only, to us, is the day to know the Lord Jesus Christ, to be conformed to his image, obedient to his will, clothed with righteousness, and rendered meet to be with him where he is, and to behold and to partake of his glory.

## SECOND EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

ST. JOHN xviii. 8.

“Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”

IN pursuance of the plan we proposed, of reviewing the series of our Lord's sufferings, from the Paschal Supper on the Thursday evening, to the Crucifixion on Friday noon,—for all were crowded into a single day of his mortal life, that day of humiliation, that day of glory!—we are this morning to call your attention to the circumstances of the first scene of his final trials in the Garden of Gethsemane.

That you may enter into the subject more fully, let me carry you back in imagination to that large upper room in the eastern division of Jerusalem, where our Lord, in company with the eleven disciples, had just finished the prayer upon which we commented in the last Lecture. The time which had been occupied by the lengthened discourse of the preceding chapters, 14th, 15th, 16th, and the prayer of the 17th, would bring the period of the departure of Jesus and his disciples from the city, to eleven or twelve o'clock at night. For though it is said at the close of the 14th chapter, “let us go hence,” it is the opinion of the best harmonizers of scripture, that

they did not then depart from the house, but only made preparations for leaving it, probably by quitting the table. It says, indeed, expressly, at the opening of this chapter, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples," and, therefore, not before. The Garden of Gethsemane, to which they were about to bend their steps, lay on the eastern side of Jerusalem, across the valley or brook of Cedron, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and distant from the city about three-fourths of an English mile. To this garden, as the evangelist acquaints us, our Lord was in the constant habit of resorting with his disciples, for the purpose, no doubt, of intimate communion with them, and of still more intimate communion with his God. But he was now going thither, for a widely different purpose,—to bear that weight of sin which would have crushed the world.

The evangelist, whom I intend exclusively to follow, omits all mention of the agony of our Divine Lord, because it had been largely told by the other apostles, and it is the peculiar character of St. John's Gospel to be highly supplementary, that is, to pass lightly over those things narrated in the other Gospels, and to dwell much upon all that they have omitted. It will be enough, therefore, for me to remind you of that most trying portion of your Redeemer's woes; that season when he was sore amazed, and very heavy, and his soul exceedingly sorrowful even unto death; when, in the intensity of mighty prayer, he fell upon the ground, crying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" when, in the extremity of mortal agony, "his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" of that hour when he, who had been the loudest in his protestations of fidelity, and when even

the dearest of his disciples, he who had leant on his breast while at supper that very night, in the closest intimacy of friendship, were both of them unable to watch with him for a single hour; and while their Lord was bleeding from the intensity of his agony, they, overpowered by fatigue and sorrow, were three times found asleep. Surely this must be mentioned among the sufferings of our Lord; for who can tell how deep an additional pang such conduct at such a season must have inflicted! And, brethren, what an additional stigma does it for ever fix upon man's affection and man's fidelity.

If a peculiar curse has settled upon the one sex, because in the Garden of Eden the woman sinned, says the apostle, "being first in the transgression;" surely in the Garden of Gethsemane the mouth of the other sex has been for ever silenced; for if the first Adam was beguiled by the woman, the second Adam was most certainly betrayed, denied, deserted, by the man.

St. John resumes the narrative, soon after the omission of the agony, at that period when our Lord, coming for the last time to his slumbering disciples, inquires of them,—for it is probable that this should have been translated as an inquiry, and not a command,—“Do you sleep, even now, and take your rest?” “It is enough, the hour is come; rise up, let us go; lo! he that betrayeth me is at hand.” Then it was, even while he yet spake, that Judas and his band drew near; and as St. John tells us, in the 4th verse, “Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.” What supernatural composure, what blessed meekness; and after the agony of the Passion, what a holy calm of

peace. How mercifully does God deal with us, in thus always giving us grace equal to our day, or making our day equal to our grace; never permitting our inward and our outward trials to come on simultaneously, so as to overwhelm and crush us, but in mercy withdrawing the one before he pours forth on us the other. Our Lord had but just before, as we are told by St. Luke, been comforted by an angel sent from heaven, to strengthen him; and now, instead of shrinking from this dreaded hour, he voluntarily goes forth to meet its perils. How easy are outward trials, where there is inward peace. Get but the peace of God within your hearts, and, like your Lord, there will be no trial, no peril, no foe on earth, that you will shrink from going forth to meet, if the Lord call you to the conflict.

No sooner did Jesus declare that it was he, than we read that "they went backward and fell to the ground." Doubtless this was to prove that all which followed, was of our Lord's own free will, that, "he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair." Little do the enemies of Jesus, little do even the dearest of his friends, yet know of the power of the word of Christ; "As soon as he said, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." They required no stronger power to be exerted against them than the word of the Lord. How differently does the same voice, and even the same word, spoken by that voice, sound, according to the persons to whom it is addressed. Do you not remember, another time, when he said, "I am he," or, "It is I," and then immediately every fear in his disciples' hearts was hushed, and they received him into their vessel, and the ship was at the land whither they went? Who can express the difference of the same words,

spoken by the same Saviour, to his enemies, or to his people! So shall it be at the end of the world, when the cry of the Bridegroom, "I am he," shall come upon the four winds, and sound from one end of heaven to the other: it shall be to every one of his children, as the Lamb's voice, the accents of tenderness and love; while to the whole world of the risen unbelievers, it shall be as the roaring of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, full of terror, dismay, and everlasting death.

A second time our Lord asks the question, "Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth." Again he makes the same reply, but now accompanied by this affecting addition, "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way. That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, of them which thou gavest me, have I lost none."

Even in the most trying moment of our Lord's own peril, what care, what thoughtfulness, what affectionate consideration, for his disciples! And is there no encouragement here for us, brethren? Yes, truly, these little words are replete with consolations. Did our Lord thus stand between these bands of armed ruffians, and his poor, weak, trembling followers? then not a storm which blows upon the Church, not a trouble which assails yourselves, but Christ is present, to stand between you and your enemies, and all that would otherwise overwhelm and ruin you, is borne by him alone. Again, does justice come and plead against you? does it recall sins unnumbered, for which you can make no compensation, and from the justly merited punishment of which you can discover no escape? then behold your Lord again stepping forward, offering himself to justice in your stead, and again pleading, "Let these go their

way ;” “ ye seek me ;” for “ I am he,” who alone can satisfy, and who alone have satisfied, all and every demand which you can bring against my people.

Thus is the scripture again and again fulfilled, as every succeeding generation of our Lord’s believing people pass onward through a world of sins and trials, to a world of purity and peace, “ Of them which thou gavest me, I have lost none ;” most mercifully manifested in part, every day, and at every period of the Christian’s life, but to be still more triumphantly, O, how triumphantly declared, on that great day, when he shall stand before his Father, and say, “ Behold, I and the children” —yea, all the children,—“ which thou hast given me.”

“ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the High Priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath, for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword ; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?” There was almost more severity in the reproof here given to Peter, than in that which our Lord is elsewhere recorded to have given to Judas. So true is it, that when Christ reproofs, it is a mark of love. Thank God, brethren, for your food, but thank him still more for your medicines. One hour of divine chastening, will often in its effects outweigh a century even of spiritual prosperity. But if we mark our Lord’s correction of Peter, let us not overlook his own divine submission, for he was himself at that very moment under a far heavier chastening than all that he inflicted. “ The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?” were the words with which he welcomed the first of that series of indignities and cruelties, which were to



end only in the grave. Here then, again, in his blessed example is strong consolation for ourselves. In all our trials, it matters not how bitter be the cup, if we have but the privilege of throwing in those two little words, "my Father," to sweeten it. Only know by the Spirit of adoption, that the cup is mixed with a Father's love, and presented to you by a Father's hand; and where is the child of God who will refuse to drink it? Impatience and rebellion are the very curse of crosses; but filial love and submission turn the heaviest and the worst, into a real and substantial blessing.

No sooner had our Lord thus marked his determination to drink the cup which his heavenly Father had prepared, and to resign himself into the hands of his enemies, than we read, "Then they bound him, and led him away."

This closes the first scene of our Redeemer's trial; may he, by his divine Spirit, enable us so to occupy ourselves in meditating upon it, and upon the many important personal lessons to be derived from it, for which the few hints which have now been thrown out are only intended as mere suggestions, that our hearts may be brought nearer to himself, and strengthened, stablished, settled against every trial, and under every temptation, by the affecting instances of our Divine Master's love for his people, and by the review of all that he said, and all that he did, and all that he suffered, during his day of agony.

### THIRD EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

ST. JOHN xviii. 19.

“The High Priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine.”

No sooner had the captain and officers of the Jews taken our Lord, to which point we traced the history in our last Lecture, than they led him at once to Annas, whose house, we find from Josephus, was in that quarter of Jerusalem through which they must necessarily pass to the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest.

This, probably, was entirely the act of the persons immediately engaged in arresting Christ, and not commanded by their superiors, for we find it parenthetically stated in the 24th verse, that Annas had sent him on, bound as he had been in the Garden, at once to Caiaphas; there is, therefore, no doubt that the whole of the examination recorded in this portion of the chapter took place in the palace, not of Annas, but of Caiaphas.

As far as we can ascertain, this examination was a private examination before the High Priest only, and not before the Sanhedrim; that examination having been related at length in two of the other gospels, St. John, according to his usual custom, to which we have before referred, omitted it altogether. The reason, pro-

bably, for this double examination, was, that the hour when Jesus was taken was so early, being about two o'clock in the morning, that the Sanhedrim could not be called together, and therefore Caiaphas received him alone: for we are expressly told by Maimonides, that there was a law among the Jews that no trial should be commenced during the night, a regulation no doubt necessary, since their courts of justice usually met at daybreak, and one which, as the persecutors of Jesus throughout the whole of his different trials were very observant of ceremonial exactness, was not likely on the present occasion to have been infringed.

“The High Priest then,” says the evangelist, “asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine,” intending to impute to him, as appears from the examination which took place afterwards, sedition in assembling his disciples, and heresy in the doctrine which he taught them. Such, at least, were the nominal charges; the real offence which had excited all this enmity, was of a far different nature; but this has ever been the method adopted by the enemies of our Lord. Thus at one period of his life he was persecuted as a gluttonous man and a winebibber; at another he is accused of sedition and heresy, then again of blaspheming the temple, and never until all these had failed, is the real charge brought forward, “because he made himself the Son of God.”

There will be consolation in this consideration to those among you who suffer, I will not say persecution, it is in general too strong a term, but opposition for the truth's sake. Be assured of this, that Satan is too cunning ever, if he can help it, to let you enjoy the comfort of knowing that you are really suffering for righteousness' sake. You

will be condemned by some for your worldliness, by others for your pride, by others for your enthusiasm, by others for your want of judgment, by others for your inconsistencies; but Satan will take care that the real reason, because you are a child of God, because you are a true follower of your Lord, shall never meet your ear. So it was in the days of the first Christian martyrs—they were put to death as enemies of Cæsar, and seditious; so it was in the days of the Protestant martyrs, they were carried to the stake as despisers of the Church, and heretics; while, in both cases, the real head and front of their offending was, that they lived too near the God of the Bible. It is matter of Christian experience that this is one of Satan's most favourite and most malignant devices, to persecute you simply because you are a real Christian, and then to take from you the consolation which the assurance of such a fact would infallibly bring, in the hour of trouble, to your soul.

Perhaps, then, one of the reasons for which our Lord condescended to lie under the imputation of sedition and heresy, a destroyer of the temple, an ambitious man, who wished to make himself a king, and all the other charges of which he was as innocent as a newborn babe, was to sanctify every false charge which he well knew would so often be brought against, and afflict his brethren, and to give them the comfortable assurance that in this trial also, their Lord has gone before, and that he, at least, would know how to strengthen, and support, and sympathize with them in their like hour of need.

In his reply, we find our Lord taking no notice of the inquiry respecting his disciples, but confining himself simply to that which regarded his doctrine, and manner

of teaching. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." There were times during these examinations, in fact, whenever they were strictly judicial, as we shall see, when our Lord fulfilled the prophecy, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth;" and when he was arraigned as a guilty man, utterly refused to avow his innocence, and "answered not a word," probably to mark the fact that he was suffering as the surety of a world of sinners, and therefore had no reason to give why judgment should not be passed upon him: for of all, and more than all, that he was ever charged with, his people had been guilty; and all, and more than all, that could be laid on him, their sins had well deserved. But there were also times, and this was one, when he "witnessed a good confession," and declared that all the truths he had ever preached were open to the world, and would stand all tests that the inquiry, the opposition, the hatred of the world, could ever bring to bear upon them. What need have we of this divine wisdom of our Lord, to know when to speak, and when to be silent, when to declare openly for God, and when to bridle the tongue. Far less likely, brethren, are we to err on the side of "speaking openly to the world," than of preserving a guilty silence on these great points. Remember, if God has intrusted you with his truth, that pearl of great price, he has given it you as a talent to improve, and not to bury, or lay up in a napkin. Doubtless you are "not to cast your pearls before swine;" but be not too speedy

in thus denominating your fellow-sinners. At least make the experiment before you pronounce upon them, for many whom you in your wisdom, or in your cowardice, would think unworthy of one word of Christian counsel, you will, perhaps, hereafter find to have been among the sheep of the Redeemer's fold; and you unquestionably neglect your Master's interests, if in going into society you withhold the truth from any to whom you have an opportunity of clearly and plainly stating it. St. Paul speaks of himself as a debtor, until he should pay away to others something of the riches with which God had intrusted him. It is a remarkable expression; he says, "I long to see you, that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift;" and then continues with reference to this, "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." Thus should you feel, who have received the truth as it is in Jesus Christ; that with regard to every society into which you are thrown, you are to go there as "a debtor;" that you have wealth, to which as children perhaps of the same family, they whom you meet with, also have a claim; you know not to whose heart God may carry home a word in season; but this you know, that if you speak it, you have done your part; you have at least cleared your own conscience, nay, you have done more, you have imitated your divine Master, who passed not through the most barren field, without scattering around him the good seed; and you must leave it to him, without whom neither is he that soweth any thing, nor he that watereth, to give the great and blessed increase.

In the account of the judicial proceedings, before the same High Priest, when all the Sanhedrim were ga-

thered together, at a late hour in the morning, omitted by St. John, because fully given in the 26th chapter, by St. Matthew, you will find that to every inquiry, our Lord answered nothing until the High Priest said, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." This was the authorized legal method among the Jews, of putting a witness or criminal upon oath; our Lord, without perjury, could be no longer silent. It was in answer therefore, to this, that he so solemnly replied, "I am;" adding those words of awful import, which will no doubt be fearfully remembered by many throughout a long eternity, who were his hearers at that hour, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." "Then the High Priest rent his clothes;" not, as might be imagined, in a sudden paroxysm of rage and anger, but as a solemn judicial act; for it was ordained by the Jewish law, that when any criminal was convicted of blasphemy, the High Priest should rend his garment in a manner which was expressly prescribed. This, therefore, may be looked upon as the act, which, while it sealed the sentence of our Lord, sealed also the fate of his persecutors. They had now judicially pronounced him a blasphemer for assuming the title of the Son of God, and in return, he now solemnly summoned them before his judgment-seat, to answer for their rejection of his divinity, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven. Who can think without emotion, of that tribunal, where Caiaphas and the chief priests shall stand among the trembling criminals, and that despised Nazarene be the inexorable Judge? Who can anticipate the hour when he shall see Jesus sitting on the right hand of God, and

saying, "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth," without asking himself, Have I by faith acknowledged this man to be my Saviour? Am I trusting in his great atonement? united to him now in love and holy obedience? and am I able to say with the Church of old, if this day were the day of his return, and this hour the hour in which he should come in the clouds of heaven, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend?" Brethren, ask yourselves as in the presence of God, this solemn question, and may you receive an answer of peace unto your souls.



## FOURTH EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

ST. JOHN xviii. 38.

“ Pilate saith unto him, What is truth ? ”

AFTER the private examination of our Lord Jesus Christ before Caiaphas, recorded by St. John, and the public one before the Sanhedrim, which took place in the palace of the High Priest, and is recorded by the other evangelists, and which concluded with the solemn sentence of blasphemy pronounced against Jesus, nothing remained but to carry him to the Roman governor, to confirm the sentence already passed by Caiaphas. You will bear in mind that the Jewish law awarded immediate death as the punishment for blasphemy, and that, therefore, the natural step for his enraged persecutors would have been, to have carried Jesus forth, like Naboth of old, and have stoned him immediately at the conclusion of his trial. But times were now greatly changed; since Judæa had been in the hands of the Romans, the powers of the Sanhedrim had been so contracted, that it was necessary, before its mandates could be enforced, to obtain the aid of the civil power, who alone could carry it into effect, and to this, reference is made in the 31st verse of the chapter, where the Jews said to Pilate, “ It is not lawful for us to put any man

to death :” “ That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, signifying what death he should die.” There is reference here, as you are no doubt aware, to our Lord’s declaration, “ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ;” and again, “ I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Had our Lord been put to death immediately after his sentence had been passed in the Sanhedrim, which, although illegal, he might have been, as Stephen afterwards was, in a popular tumult, he would necessarily have been stoned, and thus his prediction would have been falsified, that he should be “ lifted up from the earth ;” but by carrying him before the Roman governor the Jews were unwittingly fulfilling his oft repeated prophecy, since nothing could more literally be termed a lifting up from the earth than crucifixion, the only capital punishment that Pilate could inflict. This, then, was the next object of the persecutors of our Lord, to obtain his condemnation from the Roman governor : accordingly we read in the 28th verse, “ Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment ; and it was early ; and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled ; but that they might eat the Passover, Pilate then went out unto them.” It is usually considered that there is more difficulty in reconciling the account of our Lord’s examination before Pilate, as recorded by St. John, with his examination as recorded by the three other evangelists, than almost any other point in our Lord’s history. We shall, therefore, dwell a little upon the subject, that we may obtain a clear and intelligible view of a very important and interesting incident.

First, as to the difficulties :

It is distinctly stated by St. Matthew and St. Mark, that when Jesus stood before the governor, the chief priests and elders witnessed many things against him, but that he answered nothing. In St. John it is as distinctly stated that they never entered the judgment-hall, for fear of ceremonial defilement ; and further, that to every inquiry with respect to him, our Lord replied freely and unhesitatingly.

Next, as to the solution :

It appears that the examination recorded by St. John, differs in these details from the examination recorded by the other evangelists, just as might naturally have been expected, because it is a totally different transaction. To prove this, you need only compare the accounts in the 27th of St. Matthew and 15th of St. Mark with this in the 18th of St. John. You will find in the former, that the examination there recorded, took place when Pilate "was set down on the judgment-seat," while, if you carefully read this chapter, you will discover that the examination here recorded, took place in some inner hall of justice, before Pilate ascended the tribunal, therefore, when he was not "set down on the judgment-seat." Again, we find that the chief priests and Jews were never present during any period of this examination, for it is said in the 29th verse, "Pilate then went out unto them;" in the 33d verse that he returned again into the judgment-hall to Jesus ; in the 38th that he again left Jesus, and went out in the vain hope of pacifying the people ; in the 4th verse of the following chapter, that he took Jesus out with him and showed him to the multitude in the purple robe and the crown of thorns ; then, after once more taking Jesus back

again, and interrogating him privately upon the accusation, that, "he had made himself the Son of God," Pilate comes forth, in the 13th verse, and for the first time "sat down in the judgment-seat in a place called the Pavement."

Now, therefore, for the first time, Pilate proceeds in his judicial character to try our Lord; and this change both of place and intention, this proof that Pilate was now about to do what he had not before done, is distinctly marked by the mention of "the pavement," for "the tribunals of the Roman magistrates were placed in the midst of an elevated area, the floor of which, at this period of their history, commonly consisted of ornamental pavement, Mosaic or tessellated, of which so many specimens still continue to be found." And this, as historians tell us, was not only the case in Rome, but carefully imitated in all its provinces and dependencies.

The accounts which the other evangelists give of our Lord's examination by Pilate, refer to this precise period when he had "sat down on the pavement," or, was actually upon the tribunal. St. John, therefore, as you will see by the following narrative after the 13th verse of the 19th chapter which I have already quoted, does not record a single incident of the public examination, but says at once, that Pilate delivered Jesus unto them to be crucified. Thus omitting all that took place after Pilate had sat down on the open tribunal before the chief priests and elders, that having been already so largely told; and confining himself strictly to the private, or extra-judicial examination which preceded it, of which no mention whatever had been made by any other evangelist.

Having thus, perhaps at the cost of too large a portion of the little time allotted, endeavoured to clear up a difficulty which, while it may have perplexed many, may have been overlooked by more, let us proceed to consider some of the most interesting points in this examination of our divine Master.

By the first inquiry which Pilate made of our Lord, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" one thing is obvious, that all Pilate's fears were the fears of a politician; he looked at our Lord as a pretender to the throne; he thought of the reckoning to which he might himself be called at Rome if such a man escaped; and his chief anxiety was to determine this one point.

How admirably adapted was our Lord's reply, at least to set this at rest for ever, and to discover to Pilate his own folly and credulity. "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" If of thyself, what folly, to believe that I, thus poor, deserted, and alone, should shake the throne of the Cæsars. If others told it thee, what credulity in thee to credit; or not crediting, what cruelty thus to persecute.

Pilate, doubtless ashamed of any share in so weak, or so wicked an invention, at once declines the authorship of the accusation, declares that not being a Jew, he knows nothing of the business beyond what others told him, and yet concludes by asking, "What hast thou done?" "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." Thus far our Lord condescends to gratify the curiosity, or allay the fears of the Roman governor. If I am a king, still may Cæsar sleep in peace upon his throne, for "my

kingdom is not of this world." Would that every follower of the Lord Jesus might bear this declaration inscribed upon his heart for ever.

Brethren, are you his followers, and do the riches, the pleasures, the honours of the world, still possess great and powerful attractions for you? then know that your Master's kingdom is not of this world: and think you that he who could not tolerate a worldly kingdom, can tolerate a worldly servant? No! either you or he must greatly change, before the servant can be as his Master, the disciple as his Lord. "Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Yes, blessed be God, Christ is indeed a King, and wherever he gathers a people, there he establishes a kingdom; there his word is received and his laws are obeyed, and there he undertakes the security, and the welfare, and the happiness of his subjects. Brethren, it is a blessed thing to live even here, the subjects of such a King as Jesus. For it brings with it an assurance of strength in weakness, of support in sorrow, of peace in death. Have you never yet acknowledged him as your King? Be assured, then, that where he is no King, there he is no Saviour. That only where he rules, he sanctifies and saves. For he is the Author of eternal salvation only to them that obey him. But where he is really received as a King, there, in that breast, will his rule be indeed a rule of power, and a rule of love. Do temptations assail you? you have a King who will vanquish them; do sorrows and afflictions burden

you? you have a King who will bear them; do the powers of darkness trouble you, you have a King who will scatter them: only continually draw near to this King; think what a privilege it is to have such a Sovereign, and such a throne of grace open to you; be a daily suitor at his feet; do nothing without him; "cast all your care upon him," for be well assured, that "he careth for you."

Pilate saith unto him, "What is truth?" and having disdainfully and contemptuously asked the question, as though he had said, Do you, a poor, ignorant, persecuted man, profess to know the truth? what is this mighty truth of which you predicate so largely? without waiting for a reply, which he never appears to have sought, goes forth again to bear a final and most solemn testimony to the perfect innocence of our Lord, "I find in him no fault at all." And why was it necessary that Pilate should thus speak? To prove even from the lips of the enemies, of the murderers of Jesus, that his was a perfect, an unspotted sacrifice, that he was indeed, "the Lamb without blemish and without spot."

Let us then, brethren, dwell for a moment upon Pilate's unanswered question, "What is truth?" There can be but one reply, be it what it may; for though there are ten thousand shades and degrees of error, there can be none in truth; truth is indivisible, and can be but one. If, then, the word of God be true, this is truth eternal, as well as life eternal, "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." For this, then, brethren, sacrifice, and be content to sacrifice, every thing. Nothing will sustain you in a dying hour, nothing will support you upon a dying bed, but

truth. Be not, then, content to live upon that on which you cannot die. There may be much indistinctness in the mind, something even of error; but if the truth be there, if the scriptural knowledge of God in Christ Jesus be the one great influencing motive there, Jesus will himself be there as a Prophet, Priest, and a King, and all will be peace. Well said the wise man, "buy the truth, and sell it not;" search for it in God's word as for a hidden treasure, go nowhere where you cannot hear it faithfully delivered; when you hear it, hear it with constant, fervent prayer for a blessing; when you have received it, resolve in God's grace, faithfully, resolutely, constantly, to act upon it. So the peace of God, which invariably, sooner or later, accompanies the truth of God, and which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.



## FIFTH EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

ST. JOHN XIX. 12.

“And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend.”

PILATE having publicly and unreservedly proclaimed the innocence of our Lord in that remarkable speech to which we alluded in the last exposition, “I find in him no fault at all,” appears to have been extremely anxious to procure his deliverance. For this purpose, he first reminds the Jews of their annual custom of obtaining from him the release of a prisoner during the Passover; and puts it to them, to consider whether it would not be well to exercise this mercy of theirs on behalf of Jesus. When this contrivance fails, he next imagines that by appearing to agree with them in the propriety of a lesser punishment of Christ he may preserve him from the greater; for this purpose, apparently, and not from any gratuitous feelings of cruelty, Pilate scourges Jesus, and allows the soldiers to dress him in mockery with the purple robe, and to put on him the crown of

thorns, and then brings him forth to the people, saying, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him." Hoping that they would consider him now sufficiently punished, and accede to his release.

Miserable temporizer! If he had found no fault in him, why permit him to be thus wantonly insulted, thus cruelly tormented? The fact is, for we see it throughout every feature and lineament of Pilate's character, that he would have been the friend of Christ if he could have been at no sacrifice of popularity, or self-interest; he would have liberated him, for his conscience told him that he ought to do so, but he feared the people, and therefore hoped by taking a middle course, to satisfy his conscience, to please the people, and to save Jesus. Remember, then, brethren, it was not open animosity, not undisguised and reckless hostility, but this middle course, this temporizing policy, which placed the crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head. Had Pilate been a bold, bad man, he would at once have given way to the dictates of self-interest, and have condemned the innocent Jesus upon the first application of his enemies. And though Jesus would in that case have been hurried from the tribunal to the cross, he would have escaped the purple robe, and the crown of thorns. Had Pilate on the other hand been an honest and upright man, he would not "have *sought* to release him," as we are expressly told he did in the text, but would have instantly and at all hazards have set him free. But Pilate was neither bad and bold, nor honest and upright; his character is often much misunderstood, and he is looked upon by many as a blood-thirsty judge, anxious to tor-

ture, and not unwilling to condemn his prisoner. Yet this was certainly not his character. There was, indeed, as far as we can see, nothing remarkable in Pilate; he was one of the most common characters to be met with in passing through life; a timid, time-serving man, with just conscience enough to make himself uncomfortable, and with just integrity enough to ruin the best of causes, and even to increase, as he obviously did, the sufferings of him whom he desired to save. There are many and most valuable lessons to be learnt from this view of Pilate's character; I can but hint at them, and leave you to follow them out in your own reflections.

I. You may learn from it, how little, how less than little, Christ and his people have ever profited by human policy and carnal friends. Nothing could have appeared more hopeful than Pilate's scheme for the liberation of Jesus, nothing was more detrimental to the divine Sufferer. We believe that in all ages, Christ and his followers have been more injured by weak defenders, than by avowed enemies. That while the open blasphemers tread under foot the blood of the covenant, counting it an unholy thing; weak, temporizing, worldly friends, again and again place the crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head, and hold him forth once more to the mocking and derision of the world.

II. You may learn from Pilate, that though you may acknowledge a duty, and even make a conscience of it, and take some little pains in its performance, for all this he evidently did, it will avail nothing before God, unless you strive to the very utmost, and if need be, at the loss of reputation, power, place, and profit, to carry it into effect. Pilate thought well of Christ and spake well of

him, for he openly avowed his conviction of his innocence. What then was wanting? He did not act well for Christ. This alone was wanting; but it marred and ruined all the rest. How many are there who will take every step that Pilate took, and just stop where Pilate stopped, the very moment that self is to be denied, or any worldly advantage given up, or even risked for Christ.

III. Yet further, another lesson you may learn from Pilate's conduct, that it is not only difficult, but absolutely impossible, to follow the convictions of conscience firmly, and the guidings of divine light faithfully, without being careful to keep only a loose hold of all worldly enjoyments, and worldly interests, and especially upon worldly popularity. More persons in society make shipwreck of a good conscience from this temptation, popularity, the desire of obtaining the suffrages and good opinion of all parties, and all people with whom they converse, than any other. It was this which especially ensnared Pilate. While he conversed with our Lord he felt so deeply interested in his case, that he resolved upon releasing him; when he went out again to the Jews, he felt so strongly the value of their good opinion that he resolved to destroy him. Then at his next interview with Christ, the influence of the present Jesus was stronger than the fear of the absent Jews; until at last the dread of not being considered Cæsar's friend, a fresh feature in the case, a new party to be satisfied, resolves the question, and this weak and vacillating man, after doubting for hours, as it appears, between an obvious duty, and an apparent interest, decides, as in all such cases the temporizer

does decide, by serving, as he believes, himself, and by sacrificing the Saviour.

Brethren, aim at and pray for, decision of character, especially in religion. There is nothing so ruinous to any course as half measures adopted from timidity, never acted heartily upon, and discarded at length from irresolution or self-interest. Learn to be indifferent to the opinion of an ungodly world upon all points affecting your soul's best interests and your Saviour's honour. Act firmly upon present duties, never letting the future exercise any control, where the present path is plain, and your course as a child of God undoubted; always bearing in mind the well-known, but much-neglected truth, that "duties are ours, events are God's."

And now for a moment observe a new ingredient thrown into our Lord's cup of sorrow. We allude to the decision of the multitude when directed to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, "Then cried they all again, saying, not this man, but Barabbas." It is impossible not to see how much of feeling is conveyed in the brief, but striking comment of the apostle upon this act of the persecutors of our Lord; he simply adds, "Now Barabbas was a robber." Surely, if our divine Master was tried in all points like as we are, he could not have been indifferent to this heartless ingratitude, on the part of those, some at least of whom, in all probability had been cured by his mercy, or fed by his bounty, and yet joined in the coarse and brutal cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas."

Brethren, it was doubtless to sanctify to you, the people of God, the peculiar trial to which you are sometimes subjected of being worse esteemed than

others, who are far less deserving, that your Saviour suffered this; to teach you to bear in mind that salutary truth, "The world will love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." You have, then, no cause for sorrow when the world exerts its unquestionable prerogative, prefers Barabbas, loves its own, and passes over you. Would that I could add, that you have equal cause of gratulation when no such preference is shown; when the world itself looks on you with complacency; but alas, like him of old, who when the multitude applauded, asked what he had done amiss; the Christian should then rather retire into his own heart, and examine himself in the presence of God, and see whether there be not something of inconsistency, something unworthy of his holy calling, something unlike the conduct of his divine Master, which accounts for his enjoying countenance and favour, where his Lord would at once be banished and despised. "The world will love its own," but none beside.

And might there not be another lesson in this new trial of the Saviour? to sanctify to his people their disappointments in deliverance from trials or from troubles. Speaking after the fashion of men, we should have said, Does the governor interfere for Jesus? then surely he will be released. There are many times when your deliverances also from trials, from sickness, from affliction, will appear as certain, and yet never be realized. It is good even in these things, even in disappointments, to be able to trace the print of your Saviour's feet; to know, that let the path of trial be what it will, in which you are called to walk, he has

once preceded you, and is still ready to accompany you, to support you by his example, and to cheer you with his presence.

One word only, in conclusion, upon the terms in which Pilate presented our Lord to the populace, when anxiously engaged in endeavouring to save his life. "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!"

We apprehend the meaning of the words was this, 'Behold the man whom you fear will make himself your King; he cannot protect himself from outrage and mockery; is there any danger lest he should shake the throne of the Cæsars? Be satisfied, and consent to his release; he is a worthy subject of derision, but can never be the object of apprehension to any human being.' Brethren, we also would say to you, "Behold the man," but with what widely different intentions! Behold him as he then was; in the very depth of his humiliation, the reedy sceptre of imaginary monarchy, the purple robe of mockery, the crown of cruelty; and then remember, that this was all for you, as much individually for you, if you are among the number of his believing people, as if no other soul than yours had needed cleansing, no other human being but yourself required a pardon. Again, "Behold the man;" the selfsame man as he now is, standing at the right hand of God, "ever living to make intercession;" and then remember, this also is for you; as much for you as if your prayers, and yours alone, required to be presented at that throne, amidst the incense of a Saviour's merits; as much for

you as if none other sinner but yourself needed an Intercessor there.

Once more, "Behold the man;" but as he soon shall be, vested in all his majesty, and coming in the clouds of heaven. And yet again for you; for not more certainly did he wear that crown of thorns for you, not more surely does he now intercede for you, than that he shall thus one day come to receive you to himself, to make you the beholder of his glory, the inheritor of his kingdom, the partaker of his throne.



## SIXTH EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

ST. JOHN XIX. 17.

“ And he bearing his cross went forth.”

WE have now reviewed the greater portion of the instructive particulars of the last day of the mortal life of our Lord and Saviour, as they are recorded by St. John. In this review we have studiously avoided dwelling upon those points in the history which were likely to affect the natural feelings of the heart, and have confined ourselves to those particulars from which some useful, spiritual, or practical lesson might be deduced. We shall endeavour to adhere to the same plan in the expositions which still remain, in which we purpose to consider, to-day, our Lord on the cross; to-morrow in the sepulchre; and on Sunday, as rising triumphantly the Conqueror of death and the grave; and may his Holy Spirit be present to bless and prosper the word spoken, that its manifold imperfections may not prejudice the solemn subjects which it desires to impress upon your hearts.

We have already seen the vacillations of Pilate, so strikingly manifested during the whole examination of our Lord, and at last brought to a conclusion by the

terrifying clamour of the people, who as we are told, Luke 23, "were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them, and of the chief priests, prevailed." "Then delivered he him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst."

The other evangelists having dwelt upon all the heart-rending particulars of this dreadful scene, St. John, according to his usual custom, despatches it thus briefly. And yet what lengthened detail could have told, what narrative have done justice to the lengthened horrors of that hour, every moment of which came laden with fresh anguish to the meek and lowly Saviour. It was, says St. John, "about the sixth hour," when Pilate delivered him to be crucified; answering, therefore, to our twelve o'clock at noon; and when we consider the manner in which the preceding twelve hours had been passed by our Lord, in one succession of dreadful sufferings, it excites the most unfeigned astonishment that that weak mortal frame of his could have endured so long. From the time, between eleven and twelve o'clock on the preceding night, that Christ had left the supper-room with his disciples, it had been one continued season of excitement and agony. From that tremendous scene in Gethsemane, in which, oppressed by the weight of the sins of the whole world, he had sunk overwhelmed with agony, he had been dragged before the High Priest bound as a malefactor; thence he had been carried before the Sanhedrim, to be again

questioned and insulted; then before the Roman Governor, where, after another private examination, he was scourged, and arrayed in purple, and crowned with thorns; then sent to Herod, where the same contumelious treatment was again inflicted, and from him driven back again to Pilate, to be officially examined and condemned; and all this amidst the scoffs and jeers, the hootings and the clamour, the smitings upon the head and face, the "shame and spitting," of an infuriated multitude. Yet sad and painful as they were, even these things were not alone; all the finer feelings of his human nature were outraged by the denial of one friend, and the desertion of almost all; at the very time too, the hour, of affliction, when the feelings are most sensitive and most acute, and when the affection of one truly sympathizing friend outweighs the malice of a host of enemies. This solace was denied to him who loved as man never had loved, and therefore must have suffered, even from this peculiar portion of his trials, as never man either before, or since, has suffered. Well might the prophet say, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Yet worn out with suffering, and wearied even unto death, by twelve such hours of agony, our Lord is led away to be crucified, "bearing his cross." It is true that another evangelist tells us, that Cimon, a Cyrenian, was compelled to aid him in this heavy trial, probably by bearing the lower end of the cross after Jesus; but it is obvious that he himself was at least a participator in this cruel labour, or the word of God would not have so expressly mentioned it. Let us then in imagination, follow our divine Master, thus toiling up the hill of Calvary, wearied and faint, beneath the heat of a mid-day sun, and bearing a burden which would at

any time oppress the strongest man ; but let us not be content unless we gather lessons as we go.

Learn, then, brethren, that your heavenly Father sometimes sees good in the treatment of his spiritual children, as here in the treatment of the only-begotten Son, to let great trials and great weakness meet together ; to lay on crosses at those very moments when we appear the most unfit to bear them ; to permit wave to follow wave in such quick and terrible succession, that the eye of faith grows dim, and even the undying flame of the Christian's lamp is flickering in the socket. If such a season ever visit you, remember there is One to whom even this case is no new case ; One upon whom his cross was laid when he was weak, even to faintness, and yet of whom we are told, that without one repining, one reproachful word, "He went forth bearing his cross." He cannot, then, although now in heaven, ever forget that hour on earth, and never does he see a weak and fainting sufferer, upon whom fresh trials are accumulating, and fresh crosses laid, without calling to mind that heavy cross, that toilsome journey up Mount Calvary, or without stretching forth a hand to help and succour him. How merciful is it of our heavenly Father, that there is not that sorrow in life, that peculiar state of trial, that bitterness of anguish, from which the believer can look upwards to the throne of grace, without beholding one beside that throne to whom that sorrow, trial, bitterness, are all experimentally well known.

At length the summit of the mount is reached, and the assembled thousands who have poured forth from the intensely crowded city are hushed in silence, while the last sad scene is acting, and the Saviour nailing to the accursed tree. We will not dwell on those par-

ticulars upon which the apostle whom we follow, dwells not. He is content to say, "There they crucified him." And doubtless while he wrote the words, every feature of the dreadful scene, the savage soldiery, the infuriate priesthood, the maddened populace, were all again as freshly impressed upon his heart, and every curse, and scoff, and execration, again rang as loud and sharply in his ear, as when he witnessed all, and stood on Calvary. Thankful must he have been, that he, the beloved apostle, was not selected to chronicle the details of all these horrors. It was permitted to him, perhaps in mercy to the peculiar tenderness of his disposition and love for his divine Master, to pass over the narrative of the crucifixion in a single word, and to leave to other pens those taunts, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," "If he be the King of the Jews let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe him," which priests, and rulers, and malefactors, in that hour of suffering cast in the teeth of his beloved Master, and which we cannot read this day without feeling the burning flush of shame and indignation.

There are those who delight to argue upon the possibility of a God of mercy finding some easier expiation for the sins of men, than the blood of the only-begotten Son of God. To the humble Christian this admits not of an argument. It is enough for him, that St. John has told him that the Saviour died. He needs no more to convince him that nothing short of death, death of the Son of God, death under its most dreadful and appalling form, could expiate our sins, or make atonement for our souls. Each nail, as it was driven through the hands and feet of the suffering Saviour, corroborated what the scripture of truth had long since told, "With-

out shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." We know not which lesson is preached most loudly from the cross of Christ, the infinite love of Jesus which could willingly endure so great a torment, or the appalling depth of sin which could require so vast an expiation! But this is certain, that if you can thus, as it were, stand on the summit of Mount Calvary, and looking full upon the cross, and upon him who hangs upon it, still nurture in your heart one cherished lust, still think indifferently of one favourite sin, which sent that innocent sufferer to that accursed hour of torture, we must say to you in the language of the apostle, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation." For if this miracle of love touch not the heart, all other miracles must be hopeless; he whose rebellious soul is not subdued by the thought that the crucified Redeemer was crucified for him; he who can see those arms stretched forth upon the cross, and know that they were thus stretched forth that they might embrace and succour him, and yet experience no feeling of gratitude, no sorrow for sin, no love for such a Saviour, no desire for his salvation, may well look to be spoken to in other language than that of invitation; or if he be eventually saved, must, as the apostle says, be saved as by fire; called in the seven times heated furnace of domestic misery, or of personal affliction and suffering.

We pass over the refusal of Pilate to alter the inscription which he had written upon the cross, "This is the King of the Jews;" a refusal so much at variance with his inconstant nature, that it distinctly marks the providential interference of our God, who would thus publish to the world an eternal truth, even by the instrumentality of that truth's greatest enemies.

We pause, not to notice that remarkable fulfilment of minute prophecy, when the four soldiers who crucified Jesus, "parted his garments among them, and for his vesture," "without seam woven from the top throughout," "did they cast lots;" and we call your attention to the next improving incident in this most awful scene. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." Another evangelist expressly tells us, that these pious women were looking upon him; and may we not believe, since it was deemed of sufficient importance to form part of the Psalmist's prophecy of the trials of this day, that his enemies should "stand staring and looking upon him;" so it was also recorded as among the mercies of this day, that there was yet a little band of friends to "look upon him," with an eye of pity and of love. Many a scornful and a hateful look had the Saviour borne that morning. Who will imagine that these looks of deep and tender sympathy were not sweet to him? No, we cannot but believe that if there were any thing of human consolation in that dark hour which came with healing to the Saviour's heart, it came from the looks of those holy women who had followed him from Galilee, and of that one disciple, who appears never to have fled, never to have forsaken him, but to have been in the garden, in the palace of the high priest, at the foot of the cross, and at the opening of the sepulchre. "When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." In the extremity of his own anguish, Christ thought of her

who had once watched at his cradle, as she was now watching at his cross; and by this act, he for ever consecrated the duties of the relationship between the mother and the son, as some of the dearest and the closest on this side heaven.

If there be one ungrateful child in this assembly, one who in the declining years of a parent, is living unmindful of the mother's care which nurtured, and the mother's love which blessed his infancy; if there be one child of godly parents here, who has suffered them to drop into their graves, neglected and dishonoured, deprived of the heartfelt satisfaction of enjoying one fruit of all their efforts, prayers, and tears: or, if there be one, living himself in affluence or comfort, and suffering the later years of his parents to be spent in penury and wretchedness; let that hard-hearted child be this day melted by the spectacle of a Saviour's love; let him bid the stagnant waters of affection flow; let him, ere it be too late, make some slight return, alas! how slight it now must be, for all his early blessings; but above all, let him leave this house of God to-day, heart-stricken for that sin, and smiting upon his breast, and saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

But who can worthily appreciate the extent of filial affection which the Saviour manifested at that awful hour? It is impossible. It would require us to be partakers of the Redeemer's sufferings, before we could conceive aright of this most touching instance of the Redeemer's filial love. One other lesson may, however, still be taught us by it; that if our Lord, even in this extremity of his agony, bleeding at every pore, burning with an unquenchable thirst, could still think of, and provide for, even the temporal necessities of his mother,



then who will for a moment fear that now, on the throne of his glory, where he hungers no more, neither thirsts any more, and has no wants, no pains, no thoughts of self, he should ever, by any possibility, be regardless of the necessities, whether temporal or spiritual, of his people. For, has he not said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Is there, then, a sinner here who can suppose himself forgotten? or who, under any circumstances, will ever doubt again, that he has a merciful High Priest who is touched with the feeling of all his infirmities, since he has heard these messages of mercy, even from the cross, "Mother, behold thy son." "Son, behold thy mother."

Little more is recorded by the beloved apostle after this touching incident. Others have told us that Christ refused the wine and myrrh, usually given in mercy to stupify the sufferer in this most cruel death. St. John tells us, that he received the vinegar, the common drink of the Roman soldiery, offered him no doubt in mockery, but accepted, that no single word of prophecy should be left unfulfilled; for that had long before declared, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

After this, the only incident recorded by St. John, is this brief description of the dying moment, "When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." Literally he dismissed his spirit; for nothing more remained to be performed. Every prophecy, even to the most minute and circumstantial, had been fulfilled; every type had now received its antitype; but more, far more than this, a world's redemption was wrought out, a perfect righteousness brought in, and God and man were reconciled.

It was of this, no doubt, above and beyond all other, that the Saviour spake, when he uttered that loud and piercing cry, "It is finished." The great work is for ever consummated, the everlasting gates are lifted up, a world of sinners may enter in. It is of this, then, brethren, that we would speak during the few moments that remain. In these mysterious words, read the nature and the tenor of our commission as ministers of the everlasting Gospel. We proclaim to you a work completed, a redemption finished. We do not now ask you to make atonement for the sins of your past life, we do not ask you to propitiate an offended God, to satisfy his justice, to deserve his love; all this was done on Calvary. All this, it was utterly impossible for you to do; but why do I say for you? it was as impracticable for the highest archangel who stands at God's right hand, as for the vilest sinner among ourselves: that angel's blood, could he have offered it, would have been as valueless as the blood of the lamb out of the flock, or a he-goat out of the fold. There was but One, the current of whose blood could flow, for he was man; the value of whose blood was infinite, for he was God. To this One, whose blood so freely flowed for you, do we invite you this day; we ask you, as sinners, to come and partake of his finished sacrifice, his perfect work, to "receive the atonement" by faith into your soul, and so receiving it, to stand before God, a sinner still, but penitent and believing, cleansed in the blood, and clothed in the righteousness, of the Crucified; a sinner saved by grace, freely, O how freely, for his sake alone, pardoned, accepted, justified, reconciled to God; the handwriting of ordinances that was against you, taken away and nailed upon his cross; every repented sin

blotted out in the blood that flowed from it; all forgiven, all forgotten, every trace of enmity for ever done away; and love, nothing but love, unmerited love, infinite and eternal love, infinite in extent, eternal in duration, passing from God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in one unbroken stream of tenderness and compassion to your soul for ever. May God of his infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, grant that there be not one sinner among us, whom that stream shall this day pass beside and leave uncleansed, unsanctified, unblest.

## SEVENTH EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

JOHN xix. 41, 42.

“ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus.”

FROM the point with which we concluded our observations yesterday, the evangelist thus continues: “ The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, for that Sabbath day was an high day, besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” How closely do men cling to the shadow of religion, long after they have forsaken the substance. Throughout the whole of the closing narrative of our Lord’s life, nothing strikes us more frequently, or more forcibly, than this. These very men, who scrupled not to crucify the Son of God, and put him to an open shame, would “ not enter the judgment-hall lest they be defiled;” would not put Judas’s money into the treasury, “ because it was the price of blood;” would not suffer the bodies to remain on the cross, because they polluted the Sabbath. Well did our Lord know these men, when he said, “ Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

Beware, brethren, of putting any formal observances in the place of spiritual obedience; whether they be church goings, or sacraments, or Bible readings, remember that they do not in themselves constitute godliness; they are but as means to an end, and that end is plainly set before you by the apostle, when he says, "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "That in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you may have your conversation in the world." But false and worthless as were the real motives of the Jews in this attention to outward observances, while they were neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice and truth, the ostensible motive is not to be despised. It marked a regard for the Sabbath, when there was so much anxiety for the "preparation." How much better would the Lord's day be observed among ourselves, if the day which precedes it were in some degree made a day of preparation. If the Saturday evening, for instance, were devoted to those subjects and employments which are to occupy the Sunday. How differently, at least among a very large and influential portion of society, that evening and that night are spent, we need not tell.

But if the word of God be true which says, "The preparation of the heart is from the Lord;" and if of all his blessings, God has said, "Nevertheless, I will be inquired of by you;" we need feel no surprise at neglected Sabbaths, or unhallowed Sabbaths, or unprofitable Sabbaths, where "preparation" is unthought of, and the heartfelt desire of the blessing is unknown. Very much in proportion as Sabbath blessings are

sought in faith, and expected in faith, will God give their increase, for here in an especial manner that word is constantly fulfilling, "To him who hath, shall more be given."

"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other, which was crucified with him." So is it, as the wise man said, that "All things," that is, all outward things, "come alike to all." The one was the reprobate blasphemer, the other the happy and accepted penitent, he who was that very day to be in Paradise with Jesus; yet here there is no distinction made; they brake the legs of both. We might have thought that he, to whom in a few short hours such glories and such happiness should be revealed, might have been spared this last infliction, but God appointed otherwise; perhaps to teach us in our own case, that where sin is pardoned, though justice has no claim against us, love still holds the rod, and will punish many a pardoned child of God, perhaps for sin long since forgiven, as David's was, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die; nevertheless the child that is born unto thee, shall surely die." Perhaps, I say then, for sin long since forgiven, but certainly "for our profit," as the apostle says, "that we may be partakers of his holiness;" for "when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

There is nothing more striking throughout the whole of the instructive narrative in which we are engaged, and nothing will better repay a close and careful investigation, than the different methods in which the several prophecies of God were fulfilled. Observe a single instance. God had declared many centuries before by the type of the Paschal Lamb, that "a bone of Jesus

should not be broken." See, then, from the manner in which it was fulfilled, how little need God has of miraculous exertions and supernatural means to fulfil his appointments; how often does he bring about his most special purposes in the most common manner, and by the most ordinary actions of men. Had we read the prophecy, we should have been perplexed to imagine how God would have ruled and overruled the power of his enemies, to keep it from this last forbidden act of wanton cruelty; when the time comes, how naturally do we see it fulfilled; no control whatever laid upon the actors; their will was perfectly free, to treat Jesus and the malefactors alike, or differently, as it seemed good to them, and yet the purpose of our God standeth sure, and is fulfilled by them of their own accord, upon the plainest and most rational ground imaginable, "When they saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs." No! the object was already gained, life had departed, and no bone of him was broken. And yet men argue, that if God really thus appointed our down-sittings and our up-risings, our wills would be coerced, and we should be mere machines! Yet in practice, we are every moment of our lives verifying God's foreknowledge, and fulfilling God's appointment, with a will equally unbiassed, equally unfettered as the Roman soldiery, and that foreknowledge cannot fail, and that appointment must stand, and man or angel cannot alter it. This is a great mystery; wait with patience for a little while, until you get within the veil, and all will be clear.

But though they brake not his bones, yet could they not refrain from another act of the most gratuitous barbarity. "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his

side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." The soldier's intention was sufficiently obvious; it was to make assurance doubly sure, to search for life at the well-head, that he thus thrust his spear into the heart of Jesus. But while merely gratifying a savage nature, that Roman soldier was adding the strongest testimony to the Christian's hope, by proving beyond all doubt and past all controversy that Christ was really dead. The most incredulous of beholders, when he saw the heart's blood gush forth upon the ground, could doubt no longer.

There is little question, however, that even more than this was taught us by that soldier's act of fierce barbarity, or the mingled stream which flowed from the heart of the Saviour, would scarcely have been so plainly alluded to by the Divine Spirit, when he says, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood."

Each, then, typified a blessing of which we equally stand in need, and both freely purchased for us at that hour on Calvary: the blood to obtain for us remission, to sprinkle the conscience, to quiet the soul; and the water to regenerate, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Justification, then, and sanctification, were in that stream; What God there ordered to flow together, let not man attempt to separate. Seek both at the same source, and from the heart of the same Saviour, and with the pardon of every past sin, you shall receive grace and strength for future holiness.

But, brethren, do not deceive yourselves. Are you really engaged in doing this? It is a daily work; that blood needs daily application to the conscience; no sin, however small it may appear, however deeply repented



of, is pardoned, until it has been carried there to that blood of sprinkling. That water needs daily application to your heart, no accession of grace is ever granted until it is truly sought in those life-giving streams of the Divine Spirit, sanctifying while they cleanse.

This act, again, fulfilled another prophecy, "They shall look on him whom they pierced." So minutely was every outrage registered, that even this insult to the dead body of the Saviour was thought worthy of a place in prophecy. Again, to teach you that every blow is numbered, that in every trial and affliction, not one pain, one sorrow, more than God has wisely and mercifully appointed, can fall to his people's lot; that every thrust of the spear, every stroke of the rod, is registered on high before it is inflicted here, and therefore, that it cannot in the slightest degree depend on the will of your enemies, but on your Father's word.

And now as the evening drew on, when the Sabbath commenced, it was necessary that the bodies should be taken down and committed to the sepulchre. Here, then, we find Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, both secret followers, and yet as it appears, both earnest followers, of Jesus, begging the body of Pilate.

It is a hopeful sign when men's faith grows in times of danger. These men during the lifetime of our Lord were secret followers for fear of the Jews, and one at least would only come to him at night. Then there was comparatively little danger in the avowal; and now both go openly, and as St. Mark declares, "boldly, when his dearest friends were scattered." Who shall despise the bruised reed, or the smoking flax, or the day of small things? Many a timid follower, if he be sincere, is in time strengthened by God's grace for the front rank of

the battle, and the most fearful onset of the enemy. Take courage, therefore if you have entered upon the good course, if you have enlisted in the army of Christ; only persevere, and you shall one day be "more than conqueror through him that loveth you."

Having, then, obtained the consent of Pilate, "They took the body and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore"—yes, brethren, even in the sepulchre, to prove to us the blessed truth that the grave shall retain none of his followers, for that it could not retain, even though it held himself. It is truly an unspeakable consolation to the Christian, to know that his Redeemer passed through the valley of the shadow of death; for let men talk as they will, there is no man except he be indeed rooted and built up in Christ, who can look forward to that last great wrench which separates us from all here below, without a pang. And, weakness though it be, it is not death alone that gives this feeling; there is something in the prospect of the cold, dark prison-house of the grave, from which all nature shrinks. Happy, then, is it for the believer to know, that even there his Lord and Master has gone before him, that he has sanctified not only the believer's death, but the believer's grave, and made the corruption of that last bed, sweet by lying down there. When, therefore, you are called, as most of you must one day be, to follow to that last abode the parent of your love, the husband or wife of your bosom, the child of your affections, take comfort from the thought, I go to place them there, where Jesus lay;

in the house appointed for all living, but still in the house which my Lord has swept, and garnished, and furnished, for himself, and where he will watch over those dear remains, until he reunites them to their never-dying spirit, and glorifies them with himself.

When your own turn shall arrive, and you are summoned to that narrow dwelling, let the same reflection cheer and enlighten it for yourself. I go to lie where Jesus lay, to sleep where Jesus slept: it was a dark and cheerless dwelling till the Lord of heaven left even there some rays of light and love. He came to "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," and he will deliver me. I cannot fear the power of death, when I know that Christ has long since drawn his sting, and that the moment I depart, my soul shall be with Christ, which is far better than all here below. I cannot dread the sleep of the body in the grave, when I also know that the word of my God is pledged, that "all those who sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him."

Brethren, if you would sleep in Jesus, you must live in Jesus; for so only can you insure the blessing, that when your heart and your flesh fail you, he will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.

## EIGHTH EXPOSITORY LECTURE.

## ST. JOHN XX. 13.

“ And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

WE resume the expositions in which we are engaged at the beginning of the chapter from which the text is taken. The Jewish Sabbath which has succeeded the day of our Lord’s crucifixion, was now over, the day-break of the first Christian Sabbath had not yet dawned, and while yet in the gray twilight of the morning, cometh Mary Magdalene unto the sepulchre.

A sense of great benefits received from God will invariably produce great activity for God. Out of Mary Magdalene Christ had cast seven devils ; and if she were also, as many suppose, the person who loved much, because she had been forgiven much, there is still less cause for astonishment, that she was now first at the sepulchre. She came not, however, alone, but as we find from the other evangelists, with that company of pious women who had so frequently attended our Lord, and who, doubtless, all expected to find him still in the

grave, and had brought the ointments for his embalming. There was much of love, mingled with much of ignorance, in their errand. There was love in that they came to honour him, whom all the rest of the world had deserted; there was ignorance, in that they thought to find him in the sepulchre, who had so often and so plainly told them, that the grave could not retain him.

The great difficulty which occurred to the minds of the women, and which formed their conversation by the way, was, as we learn from St. Mark, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre," for it was very large: doubtless they were convinced, that if this were overcome, all would be well, and they should find their Lord. They were equally mistaken in both these expectations. The stone was no impediment, for it was already removed, and yet they did not find the Saviour. How often in passing through life, do the same results occur. We view from a distance difficulties which we never expect to overcome, some event that will be too much for our fortitude, some trial that will be too great for our faith; yet as the day of trouble approaches, the difficulty has subsided, or the providence of God has made it easy, or all that we feared to do is done for us, and the stone which the utmost efforts of our strength could not have stirred, some unseen hand has rolled away.

Yet even here the parallel does not finish between these women and ourselves; we meet it again in the disappointment which often follows the removal of our difficulties; the change of circumstances brings with it too frequently only a change of sorrows, or a change of temptations. Thus, for instance: Are you withheld

by outward situation from many of the privileges of the gospel, perhaps obliged to lead a life as regards spiritual things of perpetual privation or restraint? and is the constant feeling of your mind, Were this but different, would it please God to release me from this thralldom; could my present occupation be altered, my present relationships changed, then, indeed, I should enjoy so much more of spiritual communion, then I could act so much more easily according to the light which God has given me, that I might indeed be said to have found the Saviour, which under present circumstances I shall never do? Brethren, such feelings as these are of far more frequent occurrence than you imagine. It would be painful to say, how often they are to be met with, and how often they end only in disappointment. The difficulty has been removed, but the promised benefit has never been realized. The stone is rolled away, but the Saviour is not found.

There can, indeed, be little doubt, that the expectation of great spiritual benefit from any change of outward circumstances is generally a mere delusion of our spiritual enemy, to induce us to procrastinate repentance, to postpone the time for drawing nearer to God; that so far from present difficulties, or present impediments, really forming hindrances, they are just those very things which God sees we have most need of for the spiritual growth and benefit of our souls. In this we are fully borne out by the experience to which I have alluded, for oftentimes, the persons whom we have seen watchful, prayerful, humble Christians, while surrounded by difficulties, have become froward, self-righteous, and even careless in their walk and conver-

sation, when all outward difficulties have vanished. It is within only that all desirable change must be effected: as is the heart so is the life, and so is the man.

Immediately upon the disappointment of Mary Magdalene, we read, "Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." We might almost have imagined, from the lamentation of Mary, that the loss of the Saviour's body was a greater trial than even the crucifixion itself. Her lamentation seems to infer, it was true that Jesus was dead, but still while even the body remained, there was some opportunity to testify gratitude and love, but now that this is taken, hope itself seems utterly extinguished. How true it is, that every trial of the Christian flows from unbelief. Unbelief, even though joined with great affection, as it here unquestionably was, will often mistake God's dealings so far as not only to paint supposed trials in the darkest colours, but to convert mercies themselves into afflictions. "Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." Immediately upon receiving her report, they hastened to the sepulchre, and finding it to be as she had assured them, untenanted by him for whom they searched, "They went away again," says the evangelist, "unto their own home."

We will not say that they were speedily satisfied, that a little more time, and a little more faith, and a little

more patience, would have brought a full reward; but this we may say, that she who waited the longest received the richest recompense. God seldom disappoints a waiting servant. David knew this when he said, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait for him; yea, my soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning." And as he elsewhere adds, "None that wait on thee shall be ashamed." "But Mary," says the evangelist, "stood without at the sepulchre, weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." What a remarkable evidence of the intensity of Mary's grief is afforded by the fact, that even a vision of angels does not interrupt it. She is so completely absorbed by this one feeling, that there is no surprise, no symptom of astonishment; she answers the angelic speaker as if she had conversed with angels all her life.

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back," that is, from looking into the sepulchre, "and saw Jesus standing and knew not," probably because her eyes were blinded by her tears, "that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Observe! no mention of the name of Christ; her own heart is too full to imagine that any reference



more distinct than this can be needed, "If thou hast borne him hence." "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master." There was something in the accents of that well-known voice when it pronounced her name, which left no possibility to doubt the speaker. How touching and beautiful a comment upon our Lord's own words, "My sheep hear my voice;" they know the voice of their Shepherd, when they hear it in his word and in his providences, in his blessings and in his chastenings, as distinctly and as immediately as Mary Magdalene knew who was speaking to her at that moment in the garden of the sepulchre. This is a high mystery, but I speak as concerning Christ and his Church: for is it not said that he shall manifest himself to them as he does not unto the world; and does not experience fully justify it, when they hear a voice which the world cannot hear, and see a hand which the world cannot see.

Upon Mary saying "Master," she had probably thrown herself at his feet, for our Lord immediately adds, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

How blessed, how soul-encouraging a message for the poor, trembling disciples. They perhaps would have felt, the moment they were satisfied of the resurrection of Christ, Now all communion of feeling between us will be for ever at an end; what can he who stands at the right hand of God feel in common with us, poor worms of earth? To tell them, therefore, merely that he was risen, would have brought comparatively but

little comfort to their souls. How considerate, then, in our risen Lord, that this should be the message in which the great and glorious event of the resurrection should be announced to them. The God to whom I go is your God, the Father to whom I now return is your Father, your reconciled Father in me. What assurance could the weakest disciple, what could the fallen and penitent Peter himself desire, that was not conveyed to him in these words?

Derive much comfort, then, my Christian brethren, from this most blessed announcement: you worship, and serve, and love a risen Saviour. Death could not hold him, the grave could not confine him, Satan could not vanquish him; over all these he triumphed, and he triumphed gloriously, going down into their own dominions, and in the grave, the very stronghold of their citadel, meeting death face to face, and there for ever vanquishing him, and having slain the tyrant, breaking in pieces the fetters wherewith he had bound all the generations of men as hopeless captives. But in what manner are you individually interested in the triumphs of the Saviour? It is not merely that as Christ died for your sins, so he rose again for your justification; it is not merely that as he went down as your surety into the grave, after paying the great debt to man, so the very fact that he came up again, the very freedom of the surety, proves that all that mighty debt was cancelled, that infinite justice itself has now no demands against his people. But you must feel your own individual share in these great benefits, and this can only be done by an individual appropriation of those most comfortable words, "I go to my Father, and your Father;

and to my God, and your God." Have you reason to believe that these relationships hold good as regards yourself? By nature you are the children of wrath, even as others; have you by grace been made the children of God? Has God now become your Father? As St. Peter asks, Have you "been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance uncorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you?" If you have good reason to believe that you have, then what peace, what joy, are yours. The humblest, feeblest believer among ourselves, may ask in the triumphant language of an apostle, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?" All that Christ on this day did, he did for me; for me he died, for me he descended to the grave, for me he rose again. Not one covenanted mercy then purchased but was bought for me, not one blessing by this act secured for the most beloved of his apostles which is not secured to me, although the chief of sinners, the most worthless of his people. Well, therefore, may you this day unite in that most affecting song of the Church militant, which shall never be equalled but by the new song of the Church triumphant, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast; Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him; Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Therefore may we, his people, sleep in peace, when we commit our bodies to the ground, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus

Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."\*

\* Burial service.

THE END.

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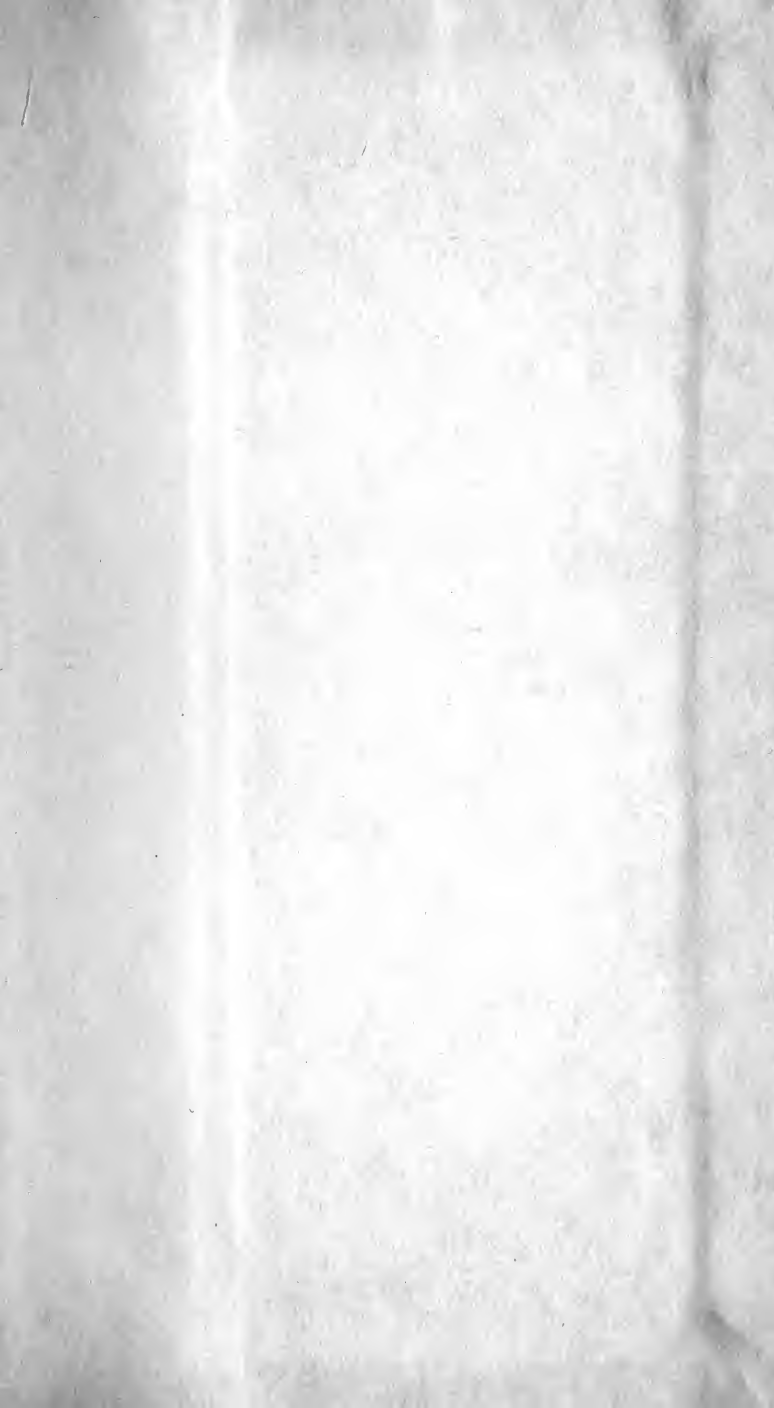


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