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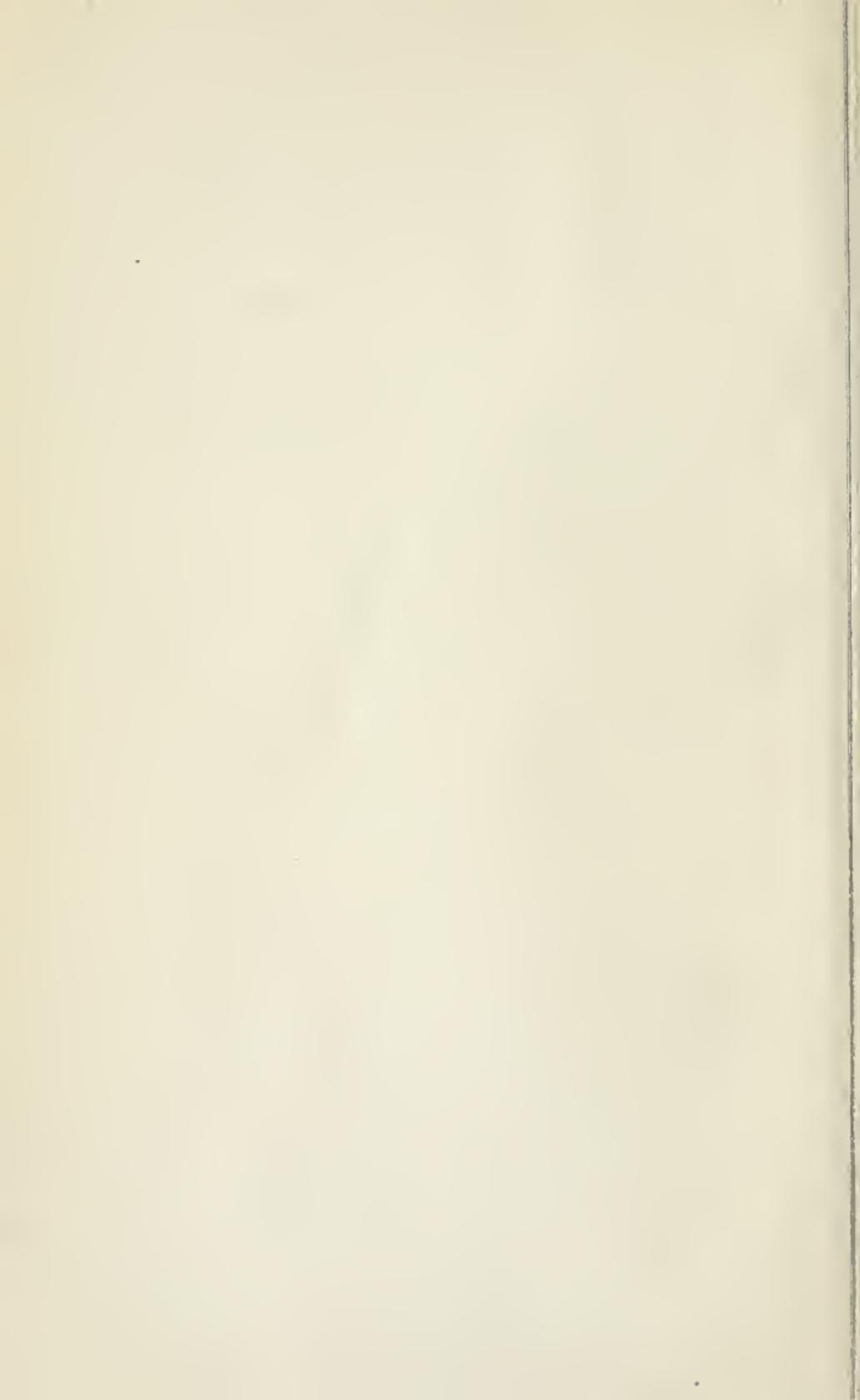
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Relig.  
& heal.

PLAIN SERMONS,

ADDRESSED TO A

COUNTRY CONGREGATION.

\*

BY THE LATE

REV. EDWARD BLENCOWE, M.A.

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# PLAIN SERMONS.

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## SERMON I.

THE WEB OF LIFE.

JOB vii. 6.

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”

SUCH was the complaint of Job in his affliction, when trouble and bereavement were come upon him, and he looked back at the days of his ease and prosperity which had passed as a dream—as a vision of the night. And similar to it was the cry of king Hezekiah—the cry he uttered in his sickness, when he thought that death was at hand;—“I have cut off like a weaver my life.” (Isaiah xxxviii. 12.) ‘As the weaver, when his work is done, his web woven, and his cloth completed, cuts it off and lays it aside, so am I about to finish my span of days, to end my earthly work, and to lay me down in the grave among the dead and the forgotten.’

The words of Job fitly and strikingly describe the quickness with which the days of our life

glide away. Have you ever seen, brethren, the weaver at his frame? Have you ever watched how swiftly he throws the shuttle from side to side, backwards and forwards, and how every throw leaves a thread behind it, which is woven into the piece of cloth he is making? If you have, you will feel how well Job compared human life to the shuttle's motion; and if you have not, yet it is a thought you can all understand. Something like it you may see going on in many a cottage around us here.\*

The truths brought before our minds, and which may God's grace and Holy Spirit bless to us, are the following:—

I. The swiftness of our days.

II. That each day, as it goes, adds a thread to the web of life.

III. That what we weave in time, we shall wear in eternity.

Hence, how needful it is for us to consider what sort of thread it is that our days are weaving in the web of life! Is it dyed in the light of heaven? when God at last shall cut it off, will it appear that we have been doing His work? will He accept it for Christ's sake? shall we be found clad in our Redeemer's righteousness—in the garments of salvation?

I. How swiftly do our days pass! How soon has the year again run round! Its months and

\* Many of the inhabitants of Teversal and the neighbourhood are frame-work knitters, or "stockingers."

its days are numbered; it is reckoned among the days that are past: yesterday was its last day. There is always something sad and touching in that word "last." When anything is gone, and gone for ever, then we begin to think more than ever before of its value. When it was with us, perhaps we little prized it; when it has passed away, we see too often that we might have used it far better. And is it not so with the departed year, the days of which have so quickly sped? Though they were swifter than the weaver's shuttle, yet their hours, and minutes, and moments were so many opportunities for us to seek God, to lift up the heart to Him, to think upon His love to us in Christ Jesus, and to say, in the words of Holy Scripture, "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou so regardest him?" "Man is like a thing of nought; his time passeth away like a shadow." "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." And we might have prayed more earnestly to Him with whom time is not, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, to give us a part in His everlasting covenant of grace—in the precious redemption of Jesus Christ, and to make us of the number of those, who, "doing the will of God, shall abide for ever."

II. Our days have passed swiftly, but each,

as it has gone, has added another thread to the web of life. For what is our life but a collection of days? so many times we rise up, so many times lie down; so many times the sun cheers us with his light, and withdraws again; and then we lie down in death. But meantime, as in the weaver's work each thread contributes to the form and texture of the cloth, so does each passing day add something to the colour and complexion of our whole life—something, for good or evil—something for sin or holiness—something either for God or Satan. Thus each day is, as it were, a representative of the whole life. Of how great importance, then, is every day! The tradesman casts up the sum total of his accounts at the end of the year, but all the different parts are taken from his day-book. Brethren, the unconverted man—he who has never turned to God, thinks not of this. He considers not, when he gets up in the morning, 'This day I have a work to do for God,' for he knows not, cares not for God. He does not pray, "So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom," because he has no heart to seek that wisdom. He does not reflect what thread each day is weaving, how dark is its colour, how terrible it will be to look at when the web is done—when the Almighty shall allow it to run on no more, but shall cut it short in a moment, and call him to appear before His judgment-seat.

III. And here then fitly follows the solemn

thought which I have mentioned, that what we weave now we shall wear in eternity. Thus Scripture elsewhere and in other words declares: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) Understand this rightly, my brethren. Do not suppose me to mean, that we can deserve heaven by our own good works. It is only faith in what Christ has done for us that can bring us thither. But then the Scriptures also declare that our life will be brought into evidence to show whether we were believers in Christ or not. "We must all appear," says St. Paul, "before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "If we live after the flesh, we shall die," that is, if we now follow, indulge, and obey the sinful lusts and desires of our own hearts; if we live only to please ourselves, and forget that God has given us a law which we are bound to obey; if we do not accept that salvation which He offers us in Christ, and submit not to His righteous, holy, and spiritual yoke, then we shall die, not only in body but in soul:—God will cast us out for ever from His presence.

But equally sure is His promise to those who believe in Jesus; who, through the Spirit, do

mortify the deeds of the body. They shall live; they shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life.

Now then, my dear friends, standing as it were by the grave of the year departed, and yet met to hail the birth of another, when can we find a better moment for examining ourselves? for searching and trying our ways, that we may turn again unto the Lord? When can we better ask ourselves, What is the web my life is weaving; how have the days that are gone been spent? have they left a mark for evil or for good? What effect should the thought, that they are gliding by swifter than the weaver's shuttle, have upon us? With what new resolutions and purposes, prayers and hopes, should we begin the coming year? May God grant that some word now spoken may be of use to comfort, or to guide, or to warn us!

1. Let us then ask ourselves, On what are we resting our hope of salvation?

Many entertain hopes that will utterly deceive them, that will be swept away like the spider's web.

Such is the hope of the man who trusts that he can go to heaven without giving up his sins: for the Scripture declares, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Such is the hypocrite's hope, who seeks God with his lips, while his heart goeth after its covetousness; his sacrifice is an abomination. Such, too, is the

hope of the man who trusts in himself that he is righteous, who looks to his own good deeds to save him. Surely he will find his covering too narrow to wrap himself in; he will discover too late, that all his "righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Have we sought a better hope—a gospel hope; one that shall be as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, never to be moved by storm or tempest? Have we looked by faith? are we daily thus looking to Him who alone can be our all-sufficient righteousness? to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have we fled for refuge to Him? have we, I mean, been convinced of our own sin and wretchedness, and have we cried from the depth of our hearts to Him, 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on me! Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me!' Have we thus not only once believed on Him and called upon Him, but are we doing so day by day? Are we learning more and more our own weakness, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the imperfection of our best doings? Are we dying more to self, that Christ may be unto us all in all; that, being justified by faith in Him, we may have peace with God?

2. Let us ask ourselves again, Is it our sincere desire to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ? This is the will of God, even our sanctification. "He has called us unto holiness." "We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should

walk in them?" We are enjoined to put off the old man, and to put on the new; to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light. As those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, as those who are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, we should count it our privilege and our greatest joy to endeavour to do the will of God from the heart. Is this, then, our aim? Do we resist sin? Do we watch our own hearts? Do we try to keep God's commandments? 'Yes,' perhaps, some Christian may say, 'I do try, I do trust it is the desire of my heart; but the more I strive, the more I seem to feel my own weakness and sinfulness; when I would do good, evil is present with me. What must I do?' This you must do; look more entirely and simply to Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Cast yourself wholly on Christ's mercy; cry unto Him to help you; lament before Him your past falls and shortcomings and backslidings, and beseech Him to work in you by His Holy Spirit and mighty power that which is well pleasing in His sight.

3. And here, then, let us again ask ourselves, Do we live in the spirit of prayer? To have attained this, is indeed to be a Christian. Prayer is the breath of divine life; the secret of a believer's strength, and comfort, and usefulness. By prayer he must obtain daily food for his soul; by prayer he shields himself against temptation;

by prayer he holds communion through Jesus Christ with His Father in heaven. What should be so dear to us, so constantly used, as prayer? Yet from nothing are we more averse. The world, the flesh, and the devil combine to lead us away from prayer. Hence we are enjoined to watch unto prayer; to be instant in prayer; to pray always; to be, as it were, always in such an attitude of mind, as to be ready to pray. Let us, then, have our fixed times, at least morning and evening, and let us endeavour to allow nothing to deprive us of them. Better do without sleep or food than without prayer.

4. Lastly, let us, at the close of each day, take account how it has been spent; let us, ere we lie down to rest, try ourselves:—What have I done to-day for God's glory? What good have I done to my fellow creatures? Have I been found in the way of righteousness? What duty have I left undone, or carelessly performed? Have I indulged any sin, in thought, or word, or deed? Have I spoken any word which I ought not to have spoken? Have I given way to wrong tempers, to unholy desires? Have I walked with God, or have I been led astray by Satan and my own evil heart?

If thus we examine ourselves, and, where we are conscious of wrong, humbly seek pardon through the blood of Jesus; if thus we bring each day to judgment before our own conscience, and fly anew to Christ for forgiveness and for

strength, we may humbly hope that God owns us for His children and people, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, but will fulfil to us all His gracious promises of mercy and salvation. Then, though our days pass swiftly as a weaver's shuttle, though earthly hopes and comforts fade and fail, yet God shall be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

## SERMON II.\*

WATCHING FOR SOULS.

HEB. iii. 17.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.”

You will perceive at once, brethren, that these words speak of the duty of a minister towards his people, and of that of the people towards their minister, showing what each should render to the other. If, by considering them to-day, both myself and you may be led to a deeper feeling of our respective duties; if I may be enabled to convey to you a clearer view of what the ministry really is, and raise, not myself, but my office, in your estimation, so that you may be disposed, through God's grace, to value as you ought the Church's ordinances, and to give serious attention to the message which I bring you as the ambassador of Christ, to the saving of your

\* This Sermon was preached in July, 1842, and the author expressed an intention of having it printed for distribution in his parish.

souls, then I shall indeed feel that I have not spoken in vain.

The text includes,

I. The duty of a minister to his people.

II. The duty of the people to their minister.

III. The motive set before them both.

I. And first, the duty of a minister to his people.

Observe here, how the *office* of a minister is spoken of. He is said to have rule; "Obey them that have the rule over you." Some authority, then, is plainly given to the minister of God, but of what kind is it? and from whom has he received it? Other parts of Scripture will show. "Let a man so account of us," says St. Paul, "as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv. 1.) It is not in worldly—in temporal things that I claim any authority over you, brethren; it is in things spiritual only—in what relates to your souls. My office is to administer God's only sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the one the sacrament of our new birth, the other of Christ's body and blood; the one receiving your children into communion with the Church and into fellowship with Christ, the other nourishing your souls with the bread of eternal life. My office is also to lead your devotions in the church, to read to you the word of God, to apply it by preaching, to feed the sheep of Christ committed to my

charge. For these holy purposes it has pleased God always to set apart a particular order of men. In the Jewish Church the family of Aaron and the tribe of Levi were chosen to minister to the Lord. In the Christian Church the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons were ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ and by His Apostles. The Apostles appointed a bishop in every Church, and gave him power to ordain other ministers; that power has come down from one to another; none are now authorised ministers of God but those who have received their solemn call and ordination from the bishops and elders of the Church.

You see, then, my brethren, it is from that authority which Christ has for ever given to His Church that I take my commission to come to you as a minister of God. It is most necessary and important that you should understand clearly, that I am not—that no clergyman is—a minister because the state or the law of the land makes us so, but because we have received the authority of Christ to be so, given us by the hands of the bishop and the assembled elders of the Church.

At the time of ordination these solemn questions are put by the bishop to every person who is about to become a pastor and teacher in the Church, after he has been duly examined as to his fitness:—

“Do you think in your heart, that you be truly

called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order of this United Church of England and Ireland, to the order and ministry of priesthood?

“Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? and are you determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded maybe concluded and proved by the Scripture?”

“Will you then give your faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine, and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same, according to the commandments of God; so that you may teach the people committed to your cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same?”

“Will you be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God’s word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given?”

“Will you be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same,

laying aside the study of the world and the flesh?

“Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves and your families according to the doctrine of Christ; and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ?”

“Will you maintain and set forward, as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people, and especially among them that are or shall be committed to your charge?”\*

These questions being answered, after solemn prayer the bishop and all the priests present lay their hands severally on the head of every one that receives the order of priesthood; the receiver humbly kneeling, and the bishop saying:—

“Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of His holy sacraments; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Then the bishop delivers to every one of them, kneeling, the Bible into his hand, saying:—

“Take thou authority to preach the word of

\* The Form and Manner of Ordering Priests.

God, and to minister the holy sacraments in the congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.”

I have read so much at length from the Ordination Service, my brethren, because I did not think you knew, after what a solemn manner we who are ministers in the Church were ordained to our holy office. I wish also to show you what kind of authority is given us, since the Apostle in the text bids you obey and submit yourselves unto us. Thus much, then, of my office.

I proceed to speak of a minister's *business* and *work*. “He is to watch for souls.” We are set to be watchmen, my brethren. And for what purpose? Not to save your houses from the fire and the robber; not to secure your perishing goods: we watch for your souls. We warn you indeed of an enemy—it is sin; of one who will rob you, if he can, of your salvation—it is Satan; we warn you of fire—it is the fire that shall never be quenched.

Let me read to you again from the Ordination Service the words of the bishop, which he addresses to those who are entering into holy orders:—

“Ye have heard,” he says to them, “in the holy lessons taken out of the Gospel, and the writings of the Apostles, of what dignity, and of how great importance this office is, whereunto ye are called. And now again we exhort you, in the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you have in remembrance, into how high a dignity, and to how weighty an office and charge ye are called: that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord: to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. Have always, therefore, printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which He bought with His death, and for whom He shed His blood. The church and congregation whom you must serve, is His spouse, and His body. And if it shall happen, the same church, or any member thereof, do take any hurt or hinderance, by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and the horrible punishment that will ensue. Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of the ministry towards the children of God, towards the spouse, and body of Christ; and see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among

you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life."

Is not, then, my brethren, a minister's work one of labour and difficulty? May he not well say, Who is sufficient for these things? Has he not need of earnest and continual prayer for the gift of God's Holy Spirit to support, guide, comfort, and strengthen him? especially if you consider further,

The *responsibility* of a minister. "He watches for your souls as one that must give account;" account, not to man, but to a more dread tribunal,—to God, the judge of all. He must give account how he has discharged his office, how far he has been faithful to the trust committed to him. What says the word of God unto him? "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand." (Ezek. xxxiii. 8.) So awful is the charge, my brethren, which I hold amongst you.

II. And since it is so awful, since I shall have to give account to the Lord Jesus Christ how I have fulfilled my trust, do you not suppose there is an obligation, a responsibility resting upon you? What says the text? "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." In what sense are you to obey and submit yourselves?

First, Submit yourselves to every ordinance of the Church into which you have been baptized, and of which Jesus Christ is the head and chief corner-stone. Remember that He has been pleased to promise His grace through the Church. We read that in the Apostles' time "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." (Acts ii. 47.)

Secondly, Submit yourselves to the word of God, as spoken by us, His appointed ministers. We are commissioned to read it, to explain it, to apply it to your consciences. If you reject the truth from our lips, it will condemn you; if you receive it, and by divine grace obey it, it will save your souls.

Thirdly, Submit yourselves, beloved brethren, by hearing from my lips the word of reproof or exhortation, remembering in whose name I speak, and that my duty is to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." (2 Tim. iv. 2.)

III. Thus, having touched upon the duty of the minister and the duty of his people, I speak lastly of the motive set before both,—“that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.” I must give account, my brethren, both of myself and of you in the day of judgment. What account shall it be? a joyful one or not? shall I be able to present you faultless before His presence, yea, with exceeding joy? will you be my crown of rejoicing in that day? Shall I see you

take your place on the right hand, among the redeemed and sanctified of God, or on the left, with those to whom He shall say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed!"

O unutterable joy, to bring you to Jesus Christ and say, Behold, Lord, those whom Thou hast given me! Behold those who have washed their robes and made them white in Thy blood! Behold Thy servants who on earth believed Thy word and obeyed it, and were made holy by Thy Spirit!

O grief terrible and inexpressible, to see any of you in that day among the enemies of God; to see you cast out from His presence into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!

Think, brethren, of the mutual joy, if we, both minister and people, can then with confidence meet before our Heavenly Father! Think of the shame, the agony, and the despair, if we then must part for ever!

Submit yourselves, then, my brethren, to the Gospel of God, which I preach unto you; submit yourselves to the yoke of Jesus Christ; in all obedience to Him, submit yourselves to the Church's rules. I call upon you all to aid me in the work of bringing souls to Him; I enjoin every master of a family to care for the souls of his servants; I enjoin every parent to care for the souls of his children. Remember that you are bound to do what Abraham did—

to command your children and your household after you, that they shall keep the way of the Lord. Let there be no more vain excuses for not attending in the house of God. Let all who possibly can, be here twice; let none fail to attend once. Let the morning service be valued and frequented as it ought to be. Let me see, not some thirty communicants at most, but seventy, or eighty, or a hundred receiving that holy sacrament.\* Let the sabbath day be loved, honoured, and employed for God's glory and your own salvation. These are the means of grace which I exhort you to use; and remember the text,—“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief.”

Yet, while I bid you thus be diligent in the use of means, think of the preacher's words on Sunday last; think that all ordinances are but as buckets let down into the well of life; and that he who uses them amiss is like one who lets

\* The population of Teversal is nearly 400. From a reference to the book in which the author entered the names and number of the communicants, it appears that the average monthly attendance was rarely more than twenty-five. They varied, of course, as must be the case everywhere, especially in a small village. Those who might be considered regular communicants amounted to fifty in number. Some of those were the infirm and old, who never failed to receive this holy sacrament every month at their own cottages.

down the bucket, but never drinks of the water it contains. Use them, but rest not in them; seek to drink of the living water; look to Christ through all.

## SERMON III.

GOD THE GUIDE OF OUR YOUTH.

JER. iii. 4.

“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?”

IN the second and third chapters of the book of Proverbs, which have been read this morning and afternoon,\* Almighty God speaks to us under the name of Wisdom. He invites us by kind and gracious promises to receive His words, to apply our hearts to understanding, to seek after the fear of the Lord, and to find the knowledge of God. His words are addressed to all, but more especially do they suit the young. God in those chapters warns you who are young to fly from the company and the example of the wicked—the way of the evil man; and from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words, which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. These words show us the gradual manner, the steps by which, one after another, the young harden their

\* This Sermon was preached October 23, 1842, being the twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

hearts from God's fear, turning away from the holy paths of righteousness and peace, and going after those things which they have promised to renounce, viz., the works of the devil, the lusts of the flesh, and the vanity of a wicked world. When any of us act thus, then we forget the covenant of our God,—the covenant of our Baptism which God has made with us; we forsake the guide of our youth,—even His Holy Spirit, which He has bestowed upon us.

Now, after hearing the warning and the exhortation given us in the second and third chapters of Proverbs, the words of the text convey a very suitable and impressive question. Think that God is speaking here to each of you, but more particularly to the young. Think that the Lord, the Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, is tenderly reasoning with you and inviting you; that He is making a most gracious proposal to you when He says, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, 'Thou art the guide of my youth?'"

I. Now here is, first, a proposal made to you. When the Almighty says, "Wilt thou not cry unto Me, My Father?" He means not only that you should use that word, not only that day by day you should cry, "Our Father which art in heaven;" (for to call Him "Father" will avail us nothing if we do not the things which He says;) but God means that you should really look to Him as a Father; as One who has loved you

first, and chosen you to be baptized in His name; as One who gave His own Son to redeem you from sin, and has set before you the blessed hope of everlasting life; as One who has given His Holy Spirit to sanctify you, and lead you in the way to heaven; as One who guarded you when you hung yet upon your mother's breast; who has fed you from day to day; watched over you night after night in the helplessness of sleep; protected and shielded you from dangers, and crowned you with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies. God means, that you should look to Him as a Father with reverence, affection, and dutiful fear; that you should commit yourselves to His care and holy keeping—surely and confidently trust to His fatherly protection and love; that you should be careful for nothing, but in every thing, great or small, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto Him; that you should go to Him as a little child runs to its parent to ask for what it wants, feeling sure that it will be given if good for it; that continually, every hour and minute in the day, the eye of your mind, the thought and desire of your heart, should be lifted up to God, rejoicing in His presence, and seeking to please Him in all your ways. This is what God in the text invites you to do; this is the privilege of His children whose bodies have been washed in Baptism with pure water, whose hearts have been sprinkled from

an evil conscience, who are justified by His grace in Christ, who are the temples in which His Holy Spirit dwelleth.

But are there not many among you who might say, 'Alas! however it be with others, this is not so with me. I know well I have stained the white robe given me in Baptism; I know that, instead of being a child of God, I have been an enemy to Him by wicked thoughts, by bad words, by evil tempers, by deeds of sin. I have disobeyed God; I have been a prodigal son; I have wholly forfeited His favour, and have disinherited myself from His family. My body, that should have been His temple, has been defiled by sin, and my heart has been polluted by worldly and carnal lusts. And does the Almighty yet bid me cry unto Him, My Father? How can I look up to Him as one? How can I hope He will regard me as a child? How can I have confidence towards Him? Have I not, like Esau, sold my heavenly birth-right for a mess of pottage—for the things of earth? Have I not despised the eternal blessings which my Father's hand held out to me? And is there hope for me?' Yes; even to you the proposal of the text is made; even to you God says, 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father? Let the time past be enough to have given to sin and folly; henceforward let Me be your Father and your God.'

But do you still ask, How is it that I, a sinner,

may yet dare to call God, My Father! may yet venture to rely on His fatherly love? The way is this. You have broken His covenant; you must, then, renew that covenant. God in great mercy invites you to do so; He Himself has opened for you a way, through the blood of Jesus Christ, your Saviour. Kneel, then, before God and say, 'Lord, I am a miserable, unworthy sinner; I have offended Thee. Forgive me, O God, for Jesus Christ's sake; be Thou yet a Father unto me in Him, for Thou hast redeemed me with His blood, and take me for Thy child, and let me be Thine for ever!'

Thus let the thought that you have a Saviour encourage you to draw nigh to God, to call Him Father, to think of Him with love, and endeavour to please Him. He is willing to be a Father to you; He says to you, 'Give Me thine heart; behold, I stand at the door and knock, open unto Me, that I may enter in and may fill and bless thy soul. Thou shalt be My son, My daughter, My pleasant child. I will watch over thee to help thee, and will supply all thy wants.'

II. Thus, when you are come back to God, the text bids you choose Him for the guide of your youth. Can you choose a better? And what is it to take God for your guide? How does a good and dutiful son behave to an earthly father? If a child really loves his parent, he will do what that parent tells him; he will honour his father, he will regard his authority, and will follow his

directions. So must you do to your Heavenly Father—you must try to do His will.

Now there are different ways in which God makes known His will to you. One is inward—within you. It is the voice of His Holy Spirit in your heart; the warning of your own conscience, which reproves you when you do wrong, commends you when you do right. O try to follow that secret monitor; let its voice be heard; listen to its holy pleading; cherish it, for it is a holy thing; grieve not away the good Spirit of God by anger, for He is a gentle Spirit; or by envy, for He is loving; or by uncleanness, for He is pure; or by lying, for He is the Spirit of truth; or by excess in eating and drinking, for this debases and defiles the soul, and He is the Spirit of holiness: but give yourself up to His blessed guidance when He puts into your mind good desires, and pray and endeavour that the fruit of the Spirit may appear in you, even “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, patience, temperance.”

Another way in which God makes His will known to you is by His word—the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is God’s word, because He taught the holy men who wrote it what they should write. It is given us to be “a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our paths.” It tells us what to do and what to leave undone; what is pleasing to God and what He hates. It tells us about Jesus Christ, that He is “the

way, the truth, and the life;" that we must believe in Him for the saving of our souls; that we must pray to the Father in His name for all we need; and it promises, that out of His fulness we shall receive a full supply for all our wants.

That this word may be set before you, explained to your understanding, pressed upon your attention and conscience, God has provided the ministry of His Church. Take heed, then, how you hear; value the privilege; try to obtain a blessing; let the seed sink into your heart; cover it over with meditation and prayer. After you have gone out of church, endeavour to call to mind some word at least which may stay by you, and do you good, and be a warning, or a guide, or a comfort to you for the coming week.

But if you would have the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, you must not be content with hearing it at church: you must study it for yourselves at home. Find at least a few minutes each day to read a few verses of Scripture, and to pray over them, and think upon them. Do this constantly and sincerely, and you will surely experience the happy effects of it; for what does the Psalmist tell us? "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to God's word." Yes, my dear brethren, it is that word which must guide you aright amid the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The Bible tells us what sin really is, what its wages are, what is its end. You see sin little thought of by most around you; drunkenness, lewdness, wickedness are treated as light and trifling matters. But turn to the word of God, and what does He tell you there? "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9.) "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." (1 Pet. ii. 11.) "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." (Eph. v. 6.) Again, what is the language you hear around you? How dreadful are the profane oaths on the lips of those who bear the name of Christians! What words of violence and abuse are poured out in anger! And, alas! too often, what filthy, unclean words, the utterance of a vile, ungodly heart, are used in the presence of the young by those who ought to be their counsellors, and to lead them to the knowledge of God! Now what does the Bible say of such things? It tells us plainly, that for every idle word men must give an account. It bids us set a watch at the door of our lips. Read the third chapter of St. James's Epistle, and see what is there said about the tongue. That member was given us that we might glorify God. If we use it to dishonour Him by curses, or to corrupt ourselves and others by filthy talking, or lying, or slandering, what can we expect but

that God will enter into fearful judgment with us? Use then your Bible; take it with you into your chamber; read a few verses from some plain part, such as the Psalms, or Proverbs, or the Gospels, or some of the Epistles, and then pray God, for Christ's sake, to help you to remember and practise the holy lessons they teach you. Accustom yourself to think about your soul; ask yourself questions, What am I doing? How is it between God and my soul? Am I following the way of the flesh,—the way of my own heart,—the way of sin, or am I trying to please God? Can I hope that His Holy Spirit guides me, or do I not too often do what the wicked one whispers to me? Am I sorry when I offend God? Do I confess my sin to Him? Do I try to do better? Thus commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still; thus earnestly seek that peace of God which passeth all understanding; and what you pray and resolve before God in secret, endeavour to practise in your conduct day by day. If the grace of God is in the heart, it will appear in the life. Be diligent and faithful in your worldly calling; be honest and true; be kind and patient. Try to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.

My brethren, it may be that hitherto you have thought little about God; you have disliked in your heart His holy will and ways; you have kept at a distance from Him; you have chosen

another master and another guide. And what, then, are God's feelings towards you? Does He say to you, Depart from Me; be filled with the fruit of your own ways; reap that which you have sown? No: He earnestly desires your happiness; He longs for your return. He entreats you from this time forward to cry unto Him,—“My Father,” and to take Him for your guide. Will you resist His love? Will you not say to Him, “Thou art my Father; Thou shalt be the guide of my youth?”

## SERMON IV.\*

### THE TRUE RICHES.

EPII. iii. 8.

“The unsearchable riches of Christ.”

NOTHING can be more certain than that the love of money is a very strong feeling in the hearts of men. The greater part indeed of mankind have to labour for their daily food, and well is it if they can obtain it; yet true it is, that these, poor though they be, are not so tempted to the love of money as those who have more than enough to supply all their wants. It is as riches increase that men are inclined to set their hearts upon them. Such is the badness of our nature, that the more we have, the more we are disposed to wish for. Now, though this is the way of the world, and almost every body praises those who spend their lives in getting together as much money as they possibly can, does the word of God—that word which will judge us—speak in the same manner? No. In the Scriptures the

\* This Sermon was written in March, 1843, but never preached: the author was called to his rest on the morning of Rogation Sunday, May 21, in that year.

eager desire after riches is called covetousness, and is condemned in the strongest language both by our Lord and His Apostles. "Take heed," said our Lord, "and beware of covetousness." "No covetous persons," says St. Paul, "shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Covetousness," he says again, "is idolatry;" it is the worshipping of an idol, and that idol is money. And in another place he speaks in awful language:—"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Yet these solemn warnings, as we easily see, do not hold men back from going after their favourite lust, and from being buried in the pursuit of riches which they cannot long keep if they win them.

Now the Holy Spirit of God, seeking to raise our thoughts from things earthly to things spiritual, taught St. Paul to take his language in the text from that which men so eagerly covet. While he tells us, that earthly wealth is dangerous to the soul, and perishes in the using, he points out where and what are the true riches,—riches, which the poor may possess as well as the wealthy; which, though they make no show in the world, bring real happiness; which cause no heart-burnings, or envyings, or lawsuits, as you know money often does, rousing all the worst passions of men's hearts; but which, on the contrary, fill the mind with love towards

God and man, with a blessed and holy peace. These are what are called in the text "the unsearchable riches of Christ,"—riches, so great, so large, so full, that no searching into them can ever find their end.

I will try to explain to you more clearly what they are, and how those who have them are really the only rich persons in the world.

Those of you who read your Testament, and know something about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ when He was upon earth—you who are acquainted with His birth in the stable, His humble education at Nazareth, and how, when He was grown up to manhood, He had not where to lay His head; who see that Christ taught his followers, by His words and His example, not to seek after any of the great things of this world—you, brethren, can understand that the riches of Christ are not this world's riches; that you must look for them, not in outward things, not in the show and bustle of the world, not in great houses and rich dresses, but within yourselves. "The kingdom of God," said our blessed Lord, "is within you."

I. One of the gifts which Christ bestows upon us out of the unsearchable riches of His grace and love, is the forgiveness of our sins. Of course I mean that it is given only to those who are truly penitent. Are any of you inclined to smile at the thought, that to have our sins forgiven would make us rich? If so, brethren,

let me solemnly tell you, you know not what sin is. You have never felt its burden on your soul. You are not aware, that the offences you have committed against God from day to day are as a heavy weight ready to sink you to eternal ruin. Yet so it is. If for one moment we could lift the veil, and see the state of those whom sin has hurled into the fire that never can be quenched; if we could hear the cries and ravings and blasphemings of despair, sin might then appear to us as it is. Fools only make a mock at sin. To have it pardoned by God; to have the guilt of it taken away from the conscience through the precious blood of God's dear Son; to feel that the promise belongs to ourselves, "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy;"—this is a true happiness, an inward peace, which makes us rich in ourselves; how rich, let that man tell us, who, having store of silver and gold, is afraid to die, because he has never sought peace with God.

II. Another gift which Christ bestows, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Remember His words to His disciples before He left them:—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth." And to show that the promise belongs to all Christians, St. Paul says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." And again, "The love of God is shed abroad in

our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

My dear brethren, I entreat you always to listen to, always to treat this subject with the most serious reverence. Wicked and worldly men, whether they be rich or poor, have not the Spirit of Christ. They have driven Him away by sin; they have shut Him out of their hearts. This is a fearful state. But ask yourselves, Have not you done the same? He has often striven within you; He has come, unsought, unprayed for, and put good thoughts into your minds;—have you followed them? have you not thrust away those friendly visitors, because you liked them not? Then, surely, you have need of repentance, for you have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and hardened your own heart in sin. Humble yourself, then, before God, and pray, that He may again put His Holy Spirit within you. It is from the Spirit of God that all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed. He is the spring within us from which flows the clean and holy water of love, and peace, and joy. No power but His can tame our wicked hearts, and make them bend to the blessed law of Christ.

St. Paul has taught us in one verse the difference there is between one who has the Spirit of God and one who has Him not. It is in the eighth chapter to the Romans, and the sixth verse:—“To be carnally minded is death, but

to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Now weigh the meaning of those words.

A carnally minded man is one who thinks of, and lives for, this world only. "Carnally minded" means fleshly minded, and "flesh," as the word is used in Scripture, means all the bad, low, and wicked part of us. If we indulge this low and sinful part of our nature, then we have a carnal mind. Those who think much about what they shall eat and what they shall drink, making, as the Apostle says, "their belly their god;" those who give way to drunkenness; those who live in sin with bad women, and who fill their minds with wicked thoughts; those whose hearts are set on money; and, in a word, all who live without God and without prayer, have a carnal mind, and that, St. Paul tells us, is death. They are dead in God's sight while they live, for they do not live to Him; they neither love Him, nor care for Him, nor think of Him. And if they die unchanged, they must suffer the eternal death, the unquenchable fire. Though such men should be rich in this world's wealth, think you that they possess the true riches? When death comes, who can be more miserably poor?

Now take the other side. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." "To be spiritually minded" means, to have our thoughts and affections, our hearts and minds, changed by the Holy Spirit of God. A spiritually minded per-

son is one who thinks much and seriously about religion; who, while almost all about him are going after sin and vanity, is really anxious to obtain something better; who often has God in his thoughts, frequently meditates on what his Saviour has done and suffered for him, and places upon Him all his hope of salvation; who regularly and seriously, morning and evening, prays to God, and often in the day, in leisure or at work, lifts up his heart to Him; who examines himself continually whether he is in the right way; who, in a word, by God's grace, has chosen the better part, and, constantly seeking the help of God's Holy Spirit, labours to secure it. This person is spiritually minded, and his state is life and peace. It is life; for, as the carnal man is dead in trespasses and sins, so the renewed Christian is alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is peace; for the fear of God's anger is done away. Prayer keeps the soul in communion with God, and obtains strength, day by day, to overcome those bad passions and tempers which cause most of our unhappiness.

Rich then, is he with the truest riches, in whose heart God's Holy Spirit dwells and is not driven away. Dear brethren, and especially you who are young and not yet hardened in sin, think that the Spirit of God is promised to all who seek Him. Consider that an earnest prayer put up in your secret chamber, or at your work

among fields and flowers, may, for Christ's sake, draw down strength and blessing to your soul, such as thousands of silver and gold could not buy. Remember that your bodies and minds were meant to be temples of the Holy Ghost; and when next any wicked, envious, angry, unclean thought arises, or when any filthy or profane word is about to escape from your tongue, reflect with yourselves,—‘Can I dare to grieve God's Holy Spirit, and drive away by sin my best friend?’

III. I have named to you two gifts out of Christ's unsearchable riches—the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, whose help alone can make us fit for heaven. Are these all? No. He promises to His people enough to carry them through this world, where they are but strangers and travellers; He plainly tells us, that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, other things, as far as is good for us, shall be added.

IV. But Christ keeps His richest gifts to the last. It is after death that He bestows on them that love Him the full cup of salvation, the everlasting blessedness of heaven. What the saints of God will then be, we know not yet; “but we know,” says an Apostle, “that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” To be like Christ must at once be happiness, for then we shall have done with sin for ever; our bodies raised from the grave,

will be new-clad with glory and immortality; and so we shall ever be with the Lord.

These, my dear brethren, are the Christian's blessings; this, if we be faithful, is our promised and exceeding great reward. O think how far Christ's riches are better than all this world's good, and all the pleasures of sin. If you gain those, they will comfort you through life; and at death, when the worldly man loses all, you will be entering into the full possession of the unsearchable riches of your God and Saviour. Earnestly, then, and most affectionately let me entreat you to seek, each for himself, these true riches. Do your past sins weigh upon your mind? Confess them to God, and humbly and with all your heart pray that through the blood of Christ they may be forgiven you. Do you feel how weak you are, how unable to do good, or to keep from evil? Behold, God's Holy Spirit is promised to them that ask Him. Do you doubt whether there can be mercy and grace for you? Think that Christ's riches are unsearchable. Thousands on thousands of souls may be enriched by Him, and yet His store of heavenly blessings be no less. Would that but one of you, especially amongst the young, might be persuaded to try and be rich towards God! You do not know what comfort and joy there is in endeavouring to please Him. May He draw you by His grace, bless, preserve, and sanctify you! Amen.

## SERMON V.\*

TRUE REPENTANCE.

MATT. iii. 2.

“Repent ye.”

WE are about to enter upon the season of Lent, the season which was always in former times observed by Christians in humbling themselves before God with fasting, that they might be the better prepared at Easter to approach the table of the Lord and keep the festival with holy joy. And the Church now calls on us to turn to God in true repentance and confession of sin; not as though these were not always needful, but because we need from time to time to be specially reminded of them. We are at this season enjoined publicly and solemnly to unite together in acknowledging our offences, and in beseeching God to turn His anger away from us and from our country.

On Ash Wednesday, or at the beginning of Lent, Christians in old time who had notoriously sinned and had been put out of the Church, came to humble themselves in the pre-

\* Preached on Quinquagesima Sunday.

sence of the congregation, and to seek re-admission to the Church's privileges and ordinances.\* They came to church with dust and ashes on their heads, in sign of sorrow, and as a token that dust we are and unto dust we shall return. This most useful practice having been discontinued, a special service has been appointed in its stead for Ash Wednesday, whereby, God's threatenings against sin being publicly declared, we may be moved to earnest and true repentance, fleeing from such vices, for which we affirm with our own mouths the curse of God to be due.†

Would to God the sound might go forth to rouse and alarm a world sleeping at ease in its sins! At least let us not suffer the season to pass without endeavouring to profit by it. Let it call us to repentance, to self-examination; let it remind us of the shortness of life and the approach of eternity; that we are sinners, fallen, guilty, weak, without help in ourselves; that we have all need to look to Jesus Christ for pardon and cleansing, that He may "create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us." Be warned not to put off this one thing needful. "Seek the Lord while He may be found."

Repentance, then, being the feeling which

\* Wheatly on the Common Prayer, Ch. v. Sect. 11. Bingham's Antiquities, B. xviii. Ch. ii. Sect. 2.

† Commination Service.

should be most present to our minds during the season of Lent, it well behoves us to consider what repentance is.

Some perhaps will say, that repentance is being sorry for having done wrong. So indeed it is; but this is far from being all; St. Paul speaks of a godly sorrow "which worketh repentance," so that repentance is more than sorrow, even than godly sorrow;—it is the fruit of it. If there is anything that afflicts and grieves us, that weighs upon our spirits and makes life unhappy, do we not try every means in our power to be rid of it? If, then, our sins have become a burden to us; if we really grieve for them; if we now hate and loathe them; shall we not seriously and truly set about breaking them off? shall we not earnestly desire to turn back to God? Less than this can never be repentance. You remember, brethren, the case of Lot who dwelt in wicked Sodom; when the angels came to warn him, did they only bid him grieve over the sins of Sodom? Had he done no more, he would have perished in its destruction. No, they told him to arise at once and flee from the city; not even to tarry in the plain, nor look behind him, but escape to the mountain, lest he should be consumed. So, if we really repent of our sins, we shall not remain in the midst of them; we shall not look back to them with lingering fondness and regret; we shall fly from them, never resting till our feet

are set on the mountain of God's holiness. It is a common but most dangerous mistake to fancy, that to say we are sorry for sin, to speak against it and condemn it, must needs be repentance. The lips may renounce sin, but the heart may love it as well, and cling to it as closely as ever. We may be assured, brethren, that, if we are not leaving off what we have done amiss, if at least we are not watching, and praying against it, and daily striving to get the victory, there is not a spark of real repentance yet kindled in our heart. To repent, only that we may sin again; to humble ourselves one moment before God, the next to rush into iniquity; this cannot be a state of safety or of grace. No one can remain in it without peril to his soul; it can be but the very beginning of repentance, when the slave of sin is first making an effort to shake off his chains and be free. The man that has been a drunkard, but wishes to break off his vice; if he keeps himself sober one day, and the next yields to temptation again, is he yet at liberty? Surely not. The Bible, when it speaks of repentance, always lays most stress on the turning away from sin, and leading a new and better life. Thus Isaiah, in the name of God, exhorts men to repent:—  
“Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.” (Is. i. 16, 17.) Again, the prophet Ezekiel says, “Cast away all your

transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit." (Ezekiel xviii. 31.) When John the Baptist preached in the wilderness, he was not content that the Pharisees and Sadducees came and were baptized, confessing their sins, but he bade them bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Zaccheus, who had made money and become rich by unfair means, stood forth upon his conversion, and said unto the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold." (Luke xix. 8.) Here was not only sorrow; here was restitution, here was amendment. His hope was in his Saviour's mercy, but he did what he could to make up for the past.

Are we not, then, to sorrow for our sins? Yes, surely: for until the heart be softened and troubled with a sense of its guilt and wickedness and ingratitude, there is little chance of any resolution being formed to leave sin off. But let us not rest in sorrow. Sorrow is not repentance, but only the road that leads to it; precious in God's sight, so far as it is the beginning of better things. But since where there is sorrow for sin there is always hope of repentance, therefore it is that the Church invites us—and I earnestly invite all of you who can come—to the solemn service of Wednesday next. There is hope that, when we are led to make a serious confession before God, to

acknowledge in a special manner that we have gone astray, to implore pardon of Him whom we have offended, in words full of humility and self-abasement; there is hope that this very act may set our sins before us in a stronger light, may make us call to mind many that we had forgotten, and may work in us such holy resolutions as through divine grace may turn to good account. God grant that it may be so!

But, my brethren, if you are saying, 'There is no harm in doing this or that,' when God has plainly forbidden it; if any say, 'I know that this is wrong, but I cannot help it—temptation is too strong for me;' if you are saying, 'I am no worse than my neighbours;' or, 'Christ came to save sinners, I hope to be saved;'—then, surely, you are fearfully deceiving yourselves. You are taking the promises of Christ, when they do not belong to you; for it is to those who repent,—whose hearts and minds are changed, who hate sin instead of loving it—that His promises are made. He came to save us from our sins. Of all the snares and temptations of the devil, perhaps there is not one more dangerous, which more entangles men in sin and death, than this,—the habit of comparing ourselves with other people, instead of trying ourselves by the only sure and safe test—the word of God. We see sin committed around us; we hear it lightly spoken of; we perceive that others make nothing of

breaking God's commandments, and setting Him at defiance; and then comes the question, What need can there be for me to be stricter than they are? The need is this, brethren:—every one of us must bear his own burden; each must give account of himself to God; and He will judge us, not by what the world says, but by what He has said in His most holy word.

My brethren, we may have momentary pangs of sorrow for sin, (what sinner has them not?) we may feel the stings of remorse, we may dread the punishment to follow; and yet, unless remorse makes us hate our sin, unless fear makes us turn to God, unless sorrow settles down into an earnest desire to lead pure and holy lives for the time to come, we are not among the number of those who have obeyed the call to repentance.

And why is that call given? Why are we bidden in the text to repent? Not because it is a pleasing or an easy task. Alas! to our wilful and corrupt hearts it is much the contrary; for it is joined with pain and humiliation. The very name of Ash Wednesday implies this; to cover the head with ashes, was of old a sign of the deepest sorrow. When the wicked Haman had persuaded King Ahasuerus to send out a decree that all the Jews should be put to death, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes. When the king of Nineveh heard the prophet declare the judgments of God against

his city and country, he arose from his throne, and laid aside his robe, and put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Another illustration may be found in our Lord's words:—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." These instances show us, that humiliation has always been joined with repentance. And though the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of good tidings, though He Himself is full of love, He never tries to conceal from us, that, in coming back to God, we must go through what is hard to flesh and blood. He has plainly told us, that unless we deny ourselves and take up our cross, we cannot be His disciples; that we must cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye. And what does this mean? That we must part with the sin we have loved best, whatever it be, though it has grown with our growth and strengthened with our strength; that, like the king of Nineveh, we must pluck off what the flesh delights in, and cover ourselves, as it were, with the bitter ashes of our former pleasures.

Who can deny that it is a hard thing for a sinner to leave the way he has been used to walk in? to change almost his very nature? to put a bridle upon his desires, which he has been

accustomed to indulge without restraint? Is not this hard? And why then is it necessary? why trouble ourselves with repentance? Let me ask again, Why does the sick man trouble himself with medicines? why does he take what is so disagreeable to his taste? why does one whose leg is mortifying, submit to have it amputated? why endure such severe pain? The answer is, Because life is dear to all, and a man will bear much to save it. So ought the life of our soul to be dear to us. To recover that, to secure spiritual health, no sacrifice can be too great. "It is better," said our Lord, "to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." (Matt. xviii. 8.) For repentance is the soul's recovery. You know how long and hard a thing it often is, for a man to get well again after a dangerous illness; what care he must take that he does not relapse; how he must deny himself, and only take such meat and drink as are prescribed; and this he must sometimes do, not for a few days, but for many weeks, or months. So it is with the recovery of the soul, for that is yet harder. Where a sinful habit, such as drunkenness, or uncleanness, or dishonesty, or sabbath-breaking, or swearing, or the love of money, or a bad temper has been indulged in, it becomes, as it were, a part of ourselves; and though we may think we have

parted with it, it will rise up again, powerful in its temptations, and, if we be not on our guard, will overcome us.

But, my dear brethren, is not the sick man well repaid for all his pains and care, if he obtain his health again? Is there not exquisite delight in the feeling of returning strength? Does he, as he walks abroad, and feels the blood glow in his cheek, think that he put himself to too much self-denial? No; he would have borne much more to attain his present happiness. And, believe it, brethren, he who by repentance comes back to God, who has sought and found that grace which enables him to turn from sin, who gains the mastery over himself, who can resist a temptation now, which formerly he yielded to, that man tastes a happiness that outweighs all his pain. His conscience and himself are friends now. He does not dread God's anger; he has hope in his Saviour's mercy; he knows, while he resists sin, that he is sincere: and his heart feels a peace, a rest, and a joy, to which it was ever before a stranger.

Let us, then, hear, and not shrink from, the words of the text,—“Repent ye.” The Bible leaves us no alternative. Thus only can we press in at the narrow gate; thus only, enter the way that leads to life. Do any of you feel that you have indeed need of repentance? But do you dread it? do you hold back? does the

flesh cry out against it; do old sins say,—will you part with us indeed? Does the pain and the difficulty rise up before you? Then set against all this the plain word of God:—“Except ye repent, ye shall perish.” It must be done; and it must be done at once. A man bitten by a mad dog has sat down, and with his own knife, and his own hand, has cut out the part injured. He could do this to save himself from madness. Will not you, to save your soul, tear out the sin, that must else be death to you?

Think not you will be left to do it alone. It is written, “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.” Your Saviour invites you to repentance; and He it is who can alone enable you to repent. Look, then, unto Him, believe in Him, and call on Him in prayer. His strength is made perfect in weakness. He stands upon the rock, far above the waves of temptation and fear that dash around you; He stretches out his hands unto you, and says:—“Why will ye die?” “Look unto Me, and be ye saved.” He is able and willing to help you; only arise, and resolve at once, without delay, to give yourselves up unto Him.

## SERMON VI.

MAN'S BACKWARDNESS TO REPENT.

JEREMIAH viii. 4—7.

“Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back, by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.”

ALL Holy Scriptures, brethren, were written for our learning, and the words which we read in the books of the prophets, addressed of old to the people of Jerusalem, belong also to us. Man's heart is the same at all times, and under all dispensations. If the Jews rebelled against God, so do we; if they were called to repentance, invited by mercies, threatened with judgments, so are we. If God was then full of compassion and ready to forgive, so is He now also: “The same Lord over all, is rich in mercy to

all them that call upon Him." (See Rom. x. 12; Eph. ii. 4.)

There are two states, brethren, in which we may be with respect to God. One is, when we have heard His voice speaking to our souls, and when, through His grace given us in Christ, we are walking with Him, not perfectly, yet humbly, peacefully, and happily; this is a state of grace. There is another; and alas! through the frailty of our nature, it is much more common; a state in which we have departed from God by sin, have defiled our souls, have grieved His Spirit, have lost the light of His countenance, and the approving witness of our own consciences.

There are words of Scripture suited to both cases. To those who are in a state of grace, St. Paul says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.) Let him look to his feet, that they slip not; to his way, that he err not. The best thing is not to have wandered; but if we have, let us yet hear the voice;—'He that is out of the way, let him turn into it again.'

The manner in which the Almighty is represented as speaking in the text, is that of a sorrowful complaint—complaint over those that have fallen, because they will not rise, and return to Him; because they still delay, still put off their repentance.

On three grounds God gently, yet forcibly, reasons with us. 1. From our common practice

in other cases. 2. From His own anxious desire for our return. 3. From the example and instinct of His other creatures: the very birds of the air may teach us better.

1. God reasons with us from what we do in other cases. "Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?" God makes us judges in our own cause. If a man slips, and gets a fall, does he lie where he fell, without making any attempt to get up again? If a man loses his way, does he willingly go on in error, and not, as soon as he can, get into the right track again?

Now, sin is a fall; a fall deadly, dangerous, and polluting. What was Adam's sin, but a fall from Paradise, down to the dust of death, to the bar of judgment, to the pit of hell? Sin is a going astray, a wandering from the right road, from the ways of God. 'Why, then,' God saith, 'if none be found so foolish as, when they have fallen, to lie there; when they have gone astray, to continue so; why doth this people what no others do? Why do they fall, and rise not? stray, and return not?' Why is it, that in what relates to God and to our souls, we cannot be persuaded by any means, by any entreaties, to act like reasonable beings? Observe, my brethren, who they are, who, in the text, are entreated to return to God: not only those who have fallen through common infirmity, through the error of ignorance, but those who have wilfully added sin to

sin, who have slidden back by a perpetual back-sliding, who have refused to return. The obstinate, rebellious sinner is reasoned with, and invited; where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound. He, even He—that God from whom we have thus fallen, departed, revolted—reaches out His hand to them that fall, turns not away from them that turn from Him, is ready to receive to His grace even them that have rebelled against Him. He upbraids us not, as He justly might, with our past sin; what He presses upon us is, our holding out against Him: ‘If ye have fallen, yet lie not still; if ye have gone astray, yet go not on; if ye have sinned, yet continue not in sin; then neither fall, nor error, nor sin, shall be your destruction.’ For what is it that shuts us out at last from pardon, and from heaven? It is the continuance in sin; it is determined impenitency; and that which leads to this is, holding fast to deceit. The Scripture speaks of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; sin blinds the eyes, and perverts the judgment. Men will not see the consequences. They cry, ‘Peace, peace,’ to their souls, when there is no peace; or, perhaps, sinners tell themselves, ‘It is no use trying to return to God; if I were to pray to Him, He would not hear me; I cannot hope now for His forgiveness.’ Despair of pardon leads many to continue in sin. But is there cause for this despair? Is it God that is unwilling? No; “they

refused to return." The Lord, as it were, saith, How often would I have gathered them together, and they would not! My outward calling you by the word, My inward moving by the Spirit, My many benefits, My gentle chastisements, My patience and long-suffering—all show, that I was willing for your return.

2. Therefore God reasons with us, in the second place, from His own anxious desire. He represents Himself to us in the text, hearkening, listening with patient attentive ear, if He may catch from us the voice of confession, the words of repentance. And what does God expect to hear from us? Few and brief words—"What have I done?" These words, said, not with the lips only, but from the deep feelings of the heart, may lead to better things, to real repentance. "What have I done?" Brethren, if ever we are tempted to sin against God, it is well to say, What am I about to do? shall I commit this wickedness? shall I ruin my own soul? and so to fly from the temptation. But, if we have sinned, the next best thing is to reflect with ourselves, What have I done? How vile and hateful was the act of sin in itself! how full is it of shame and remorse! What have I done, as in the sight of God, so fearful in power, so glorious in majesty! What have I done, as for any profit derived, any passing empty pleasure? How have I injured my body and my soul!

Brethren, let us learn from the text, that the

first breath—the first voice of prayer from the penitent, comes up to the ear of God. Have you never yet thought what sin is? Are you living without prayer? And can you think that Almighty God is waiting, longing, listening to hear a prayer from your lips; to hear you confess how you have forgotten Him in time past, how your Saviour's love has been despised, how your own soul has been neglected? to hear you say, "What have I done?" how wicked and foolish have I been? "I will arise, and go to my Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Can you think, that God is waiting to hear these words, is thus desirous for your good, for your salvation, and will it not move you? will the hard heart still be unbroken? will your stubborn lips refuse to pray?

Brethren, is it not too often with us as it was with the Jews? God "hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle;"—as a war-horse furiously hurrieth to that which will be his destruction. When God was waiting and listening for their return, they madly flung away from Him. They said, There is no hope; we have loved idols, and after them we will go. How shall such conduct be represented in its true light? Where shall a comparison be found to shame us?

3. God sends us to the birds of the sky; to creatures without reason, that we, reasonable beings, may learn our duty from them. "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord." The stork, the turtle-dove, and the crane, are birds of other countries; the swallow is familiar to us. These birds have an appointed time for coming back; they know it, and observe it. Does the swallow ever miss her time? do we not see her as surely as the spring returns? But we, whom God is calling to come back to Him, are ever saying, like Felix, 'I will, when I have a convenient time.' We are ever intending but we do it not. Yet Esau's tears when the time was past; the five virgins who knocked too late; our Saviour's lament over Jerusalem,—“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes:”—all these show, that, as there is a time and a season for every purpose under the sun, so also is there for that greatest work of all, our turning to God,—the work of our salvation. There is an “accepted time,” if we would know it; if, like the birds, we would observe, and take it; and the Scripture tells us, that that time is “now.”

But how does God complain of us! “My

people know not the judgment of the Lord." And what is meant by His judgment? Sometimes it signifies that still small voice of conscience which He has put within the breast of every man; that knowledge of right and wrong; that secret witness, which either approves or condemns what we do, which even now gives a foretaste of judgment to come. If the birds obey their instinct, much more ought we to obey this inward monitor. But, alas! how often we heed it not.

The judgment of the Lord means, also, the visitations of His providence—the warnings He sends us by changes, trials, afflictions, sickness, death. And do we know His judgment here? Do we see God's hand? Does the death of a neighbour lead men to think of their own? How many does it cause to inquire seriously, 'If I were thus called away, what would become of my soul? have I repented? have I any good hope through Christ?' How seldom does the sick room, the dying bed, the funeral bell, the solemn service, the open grave, have any lasting effect on the living!

Be assured, my brethren, that whether it be by the inward convictions of your own hearts, or whether God sends you trouble and affliction—in either case, He warns, invites, entreats you to turn to Him. And why? Because the judgment of the Lord is not in this world only; there is an eternal judgment. Did we hear that

word, and regard it aright; did we know, as St. Paul knew, the terrors of the Lord; did we meditate on that Scripture,—“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:” (2 Thess. i. 7, 8.) did we truly believe these things, we should surely find a withdrawing time for our serious work,—we should arise, return, repent.

Yet God's grace must dispose us, and enable us. May that grace, for Jesus Christ's sake, be poured out upon us! He can make us willing in the day of His power. Let us, then, reflect each with himself:—‘Does God, indeed, thus complain? does He show Himself sorry for me? “He needeth not our repentance, and our unrighteousness hurteth Him not:” all the danger and the loss are mine. Shall I then continually fall, and never rise; shall I turn away, but never turn back again; shall my backsliding be perpetual? shall I refuse to return? Is God hearkening, and shall He never hear from me the words of confession and repentance?—the voice of prayer? Shall the very birds of heaven put me to shame; shall the swallow, as it flies by, remind me that there is an appointed time, and shall I not regard it? Let me arise, and return, and submit myself to God. I will acknowledge my transgression, and be sorry for my sin; I will ask forgiveness in the name of

Jesus Christ my Saviour; I will pray God, who is the merciful lifter up of them that have fallen, to pour out His Holy Spirit upon me, and, for His dear Son's sake, so to give me His gracious help, that I may no more turn away from Him, but be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation.

## SERMON VII.

### WATCHING WITH CHRIST.

MATTH. xxvi. 40, 41.

“And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

SCRIPTURE seldom presents to our thoughts so awful a subject—one so full at once of fear and of comfort, as the whole passage, of which the text forms a part. It is an account of the evening before the crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour. Every hour, every moment was marked by events of the deepest and most affecting interest; mysterious indeed, when we think who the agent and sufferer was—even God manifest in the flesh; but most nearly concerning ourselves, since for His Church, for sinners, for us, all was done and suffered. The Gospel tells us nothing about our Lord's proceedings the two days before, but on that evening, we learn from this same chapter, He sat down with His twelve disciples in a chamber at Jerusalem, to eat with them the feast of the passover. Then it was, as St. John tells us, that He gave to them and to us that lesson of

humility—washing with His own hands His disciples' feet; teaching us to love one another, and that no service of brotherly love can be too low for us to perform. Then also it was, that, taking into His hands bread and wine, He appointed that holy ordinance, the sacrament of His body and blood, which is to be continued in His Church even till He comes again. He had before marked out Judas as the one about to betray Him, and afterwards He foretold that Peter—the confident, zealous, and beloved disciple, should that very night, before the cock crew, thrice deny Him. The Paschal supper being ended, Jesus and the eleven sang an hymn of praise. How holy and how blessed was that service! How little did the world know, what was passing in that upper chamber! Then with His disciples Jesus went out from the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane,—places at a short distance. It was now night, and in the silence of the walk our blessed Lord held with His disciples those heavenly conversations, recorded for us, through God's goodness, in the fourteenth and two following chapters of St. John's Gospel. He had told His disciples that He was about to leave them; and, though they but half understood His meaning, sorrow had filled their hearts. Laying aside, therefore, the thought of His own approaching sufferings, He applied Himself to speak peace and comfort to them in their trou-

ble, and not to them only, but to all who believe in Him at all times. Being arrived at the retired garden of Gethsemane, He took apart from the others Peter, James, and John, and He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me." Withdrawing from them a little space, our Saviour knelt and prayed (for He was man as well as God) to His Father in heaven. St. Paul tells us, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that He prayed with strong crying and tears; and St. Luke, that He was in an agony, and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. What was the cause of our Saviour's agony? We know not, and cannot know the depth of that sorrow. It would seem to have been not merely the prospect of what He was about to suffer; there was conflict with the powers of darkness, there was the weight of our sins upon His soul, for God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And there was, it may be, anguish of spirit for the multitudes yet unborn who should hear of Him and yet reject His salvation. This we know, that He was sorrowful even unto death, and that there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

At this time it was, in the midst of this agony, this darkness of soul, that He came to His three disciples and found them sleeping, and said unto them, "What! could ye not watch

with Me one hour?" Was this complying with the direction He had given them, "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me?" They were asleep; sleeping indeed, we are told, from sorrow, for their eyes were heavy. But they did not escape that reproach, so tender, yet so full of upbraiding, "What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?" His words, though intended for all, were more particularly addressed to Peter, for he had been foremost to say, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death." He was about from fear soon after to deny his Master; had he not need to watch and to pray, that he might not enter into temptation? Was it a time to yield to drowsiness, to seek bodily ease? Was not their sleeping unreasonable and most ungrateful? "What! could not ye watch with Me? ye, My disciples whom I have chosen, whom I have called brethren and friends, who have shared My most familiar intercourse, My dearest love? could ye not watch with Me, your Lord, your Master, Friend, and Saviour? Was it a hard thing I asked of you to watch with Me during My sufferings?" They thought, that, if He had bidden them do some great thing, to take part in His agony, or to die with Him, they could have done it; and yet, when He only desired them to watch with Him—and for how short a time! for one hour—they could not do it. He could continue all night in prayer to God for them and for mankind, and not expect them to

watch with Him; and now, when He asked them in His bitterest agony to watch with Him one hour, they could not do it. If love and reverence for their Lord failed to induce them, concern for their own safety might well have aroused them from slumber, for He had told them that danger was at hand, that temptation was about to sift them. They had, then, special need to trim their lamps, to gird their loins, to pray for strength from above, that they might be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. But, alas! in the time of their utmost need they slumbered and slept.

Brethren, the Lord says to us also, "Can ye not watch with Me one hour?" In what sense does Christ bid us watch with Him?

1. Our whole life, as Christians, must be a watching. Our Lord tells us to be as servants waiting for their master who is gone from home, and is expected back suddenly at some unknown time. This life, as compared with eternity, is but an hour, less than an hour, a moment. Is it too much to watch through life's short hour, that we may avoid eternal misery, that we may win eternal happiness? We are to watch against temptation:—"Be sober, be vigilant," says the Apostle Peter (1 Ep. v. 8), "because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." We must watch our

own hearts, lest they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, lest the love of the world settle upon them like a deep and heavy sleep. "Let us not sleep," says St. Paul, "as do others, but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thess. v. 6.)

That this may not seem too hard, our Saviour says, "Can ye not watch with Me?" Christ is present to those who love Him, and look for Him; who seek Him by faith, and endeavour to obey Him. His own promises are: "Abide in Me and I in you." (John xv. 4.) "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) Surely where Christ is present in the heart, there watching, and labour, and pain, and affliction, are as nothing; for He giveth more grace; His strength is made perfect in weakness. What, then, do you know of this blessedness? Is Christ formed in you? does He dwell in your hearts by faith? Alas! brethren, is not this, rather, a strange doctrine to you? Yet the Scripture plainly teaches, that, unless Christ be in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are none of His.

And Scripture tells us also how to attain, and how to cherish in ourselves the grace of Christ: "Watch," it says, "unto prayer," (1 Pet. iv. 7.) "Watch and pray," said Jesus Christ Himself, "that ye enter not into temptation." "Pray always," says St. Paul (Ephes. vi. 18); "con-

tinuing instant in prayer." (Rom. xii. 12.) One chief part of our watching, then, is to see that we do not give up prayer. Have you, indeed, brethren, ever begun to pray? Till then you have not taken the first step towards heaven. Prayer is the breath of life in the soul. If you have learned to pray, see that you do so continually day by day; morning and evening at least let your requests be made known unto God; bend your knees unto your Father in heaven as habitually as you take your daily food. Less than this cannot keep us Christians. But is no more than this meant by praying always? Yes. Prayer is a state of the heart before God; it is a life of devotion. Fixed times for prayer are absolutely necessary,—none can do without them. But the spirit of prayer should be ever with us, and we must aim at that state of mind which is always ready, at home and abroad, in company and in solitude, to look up to God, and call on Him in humble supplication.

2. But, though our whole life as Christians must be a watching unto prayer, there are seasons which call upon us after a special and solemn manner to watch with Christ our Saviour. Such are those which the Church appoints; such is that through which we are now passing, the season of Lent; a time wherein, had we our hearts rightly disposed, we might make so profitable and holy a preparation for Good Friday and for Easter Sunday, that those days,

the one of mourning for sin, the other, of joy at our redemption completed, might prove seasons of special blessing to our souls. Let me, then, ask, (I speak not now to the careless and indifferent, but to those of you who do feel in some measure the value of religion, who have some desire for the grace and favour of God, some wish to do what is right before Him,) I ask you, why do you not, sometimes at least, attend Divine Service on Wednesdays and Fridays? When God's house is open, when the bell is summoning you to prayer, do you never think that your Saviour is saying to you, "What! can ye not watch with Me one hour?" Is it inconvenient? too great a demand upon your time? But are we then to bring God only that which costs us nothing? Are we never to make any sacrifice, never to put ourselves to any self-denial? Is that the spirit which God will bless? to which the comforts of religion are promised? You surely will not say, What is the use of going to the church to pray? for you know that Jesus Himself frequented the house of prayer, that His apostles went up to the temple at the appointed hours; you know that this is a place peculiarly holy and dedicated to God's service, and that our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.)

Observe, my brethren, I am not speaking to

those who from necessary occupation, from distance, or other cause, are really unable to come: though sure I am, that if they left work to come and pray, none would ever be the poorer: prayer and provender hinder no man. But I am supposing there are some among you who, without loss to your worldly interests, and with much gain to your souls, might come and join here in prayer to God. I will go further, and say, that, unless you are unavoidably hindered, it is your duty to do so, for the Church appoints it, and you are bound to comply with the Church's ordinances. Perhaps many of you do not know that the prayers were intended to be read in the church twice every day. If you look at the preface to the Prayer Book you will find there these words:—

“The curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, and not otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same [that is, daily, the Morning and Evening Prayer] in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's word, and to pray with him.”

The godly men who made that rule, could not suppose that, out of a whole town or village, there would not be some willing to answer the summons, and that every day. Would that I could hope that but two or three would join me here, how gladly would I every day call you to

prayer. Now when, during Lent, only twice a week, the summons is given, shall none, or at best but one or two, be found? Is religion indeed so low amongst us? Is there so little faith in the promises of God?

It is as a privilege—a precious privilege, that I would wish you to regard the services of the Church. Think of them as gifts from God, as opportunities opening out to you blessings connected with eternity. Thankfully use them, when you can; when you are unable, let the thought of the service remind you, that there is a God who heareth and answereth prayer.

The time will soon have come round again, when, in Passion Week, we shall commemorate the sufferings of Christ for us. Let us pray for grace that we may watch with Him. In deep and awful thought let us meditate on His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His precious death and burial. Let us not sleep on in the deadly slumber of sin or worldliness, as if all He did and bore were of no concern to us. He suffered for us, He died for our sins, He rose again for our justification. There is none other name whereby we can be saved but His; His grace alone can make us fit for heaven; and He will come again at the last day to judge us. Take we heed, then; let us watch and pray, for we know not when the time is.

But let me say a word, in conclusion, to those of you (for such I fear there are) who scarcely

consider that you have a Saviour, who, perhaps, are wilfully sinning against Him. Whilst you continue so, you cannot watch with Christ, you have no part in Him. His gospel of life and salvation is hid from you. O think—it is an awful thought—that if you go on in sin, without repentance, without turning to God, you are trampling under foot the blood of Christ, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Make haste and humble yourselves before God; seek Him and call upon Him, lest He leave you to your own way, and that come to pass in you which is written:—“God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.” (Rom. xi. 8.)

## SERMON VIII.

A CONTRITE SPIRIT, GOD'S DWELLING.

ISAIAH lvii. 15.

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

GOD, the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things therein—in whom we live, and move, and have our being—here speaks to us of Himself; and, while setting before us His awful majesty and perfect holiness, tells us also of His tender and compassionate mercy to the sons of men. My brethren, is not the language of the text very wonderful? Is it not surprising that God should speak of dwelling with men? of making man's heart His habitation? Yet this promise is often given in the Scriptures. And what greater blessing could we obtain than this, that God should be with us, and in us, by His Holy Spirit? Is it not from God that every good thing comes? And, if He Himself should come to us, must He not bring a calm and peaceful

happiness to our hearts? You all wish to be happy, you all desire peace; but you know too well that many, perhaps most of you, do not seek it from God. Listen, then, I earnestly entreat you, beloved brethren, to His voice in the text. He speaks to you, to me, to each one severally. It is as much His word, as if you heard it yourselves spoken from heaven;—"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

See how these words show you the greatness and majesty of God; and think how this great God is always near you, knowing the very secrets of your hearts, and always ready to bless and comfort those who are humble, and contrite, and penitent for their sins.

I. Think of God's greatness and majesty. He is the high and lofty One. If you look upward in a clear fine night, you see the moon and stars shining far above us, and on and beyond them again stretches without end the deep blue sky. Then think that above all, and over all, is God. He, indeed, is everywhere present; but He has been pleased to speak of Himself as dwelling in the highest heavens, in light that no man can approach unto. Yet this high God, my brethren, is ever near us, and the prayer of a humble heart

will never fail to find Him. Let this thought be with you, when you follow your daily labour; in the field, at the plough, wherever you may be, remember that the great God is by. How much better would it be to be lifting up from time to time a prayer to Him through Jesus Christ, than to utter, as so many do, senseless oaths and curses on the poor beasts that toil in your service.

For, brethren, God is a holy God;—His “name is Holy.” He is entirely good, and just, and righteous, and true in all His ways. Now, being holy, God must hate sin in us—every sin of every kind. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How is it, then, that He does not punish us at once, cut us off by death, and plunge us into misery—misery that has no end? Because, though God hates sin, He has shown the greatest possible love to the sinner—He has given His own Son to die for us. For Jesus Christ’s sake God is willing to forgive, and to save all who come to Him with humble and contrite hearts. So He spares even those of you, my brethren, who do not think of Him, nor try to love Him. He is angry with you in your present state. He will surely bring His awful judgment upon you, if you go on in sin. But still He waits, mercifully waits, to see if you will turn to Him, and offer Him that sacrifice in which He delights—“a broken and a contrite heart.”

Think how God has further declared in the

text His greatness and majesty; He "inhabith eternity;" eternity is God's home. He hath had no beginning; He can have no end. He hath been from everlasting, and He shall be for ever and ever. There never was a time when God was not. I believe that the most stout-hearted sinner, if for a moment he should think of God, and think of Him as without beginning and without end—I believe that even he would feel his heart quail within him before so awful a Being, whom yet he is every moment provoking to anger. "It is a fearful thing," says the Apostle (Heb. x. 31), "to fall into the hands of the living God"—to fall into them for punishment.

Compare God's life with ours, brethren, and what are we? Think how year after year, age after age, passes by; how men run out their allotted time, and then sink into the grave; how fast all things change: then lift up your thoughts to Him, who sitteth above all, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; think that He is the only trust that can never be shaken, the only friend that can never fail, the only being that can give you eternal life—because He alone dwelleth in eternity. "Thou, Lord," exclaims the Psalmist, "in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands: they shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed; but

Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." (Ps. cii. 25—27.)

II. Now, consider that this God, so great in power and majesty, so highly exalted, is yet always near you, and knows every secret of your hearts. His eye is ever watching what passes there; and He tells us in the text, that there is a state of heart which He loves to see, which He looks upon with tenderness and mercy, so that He even promises to come and dwell as a comforter and a friend with those in whom it is found. "I dwell," He says, "in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The same promise is many times repeated in Holy Scripture. In Isaiah lxvi. it is written:—"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." "The Lord," says the holy Psalmist, "is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." (Ps. xxxiv. 18.) See, then, the state of mind and heart which God regards. And, since in His favour is life; since we must have His Holy Spirit dwelling in us, or we are none of His;

since, if we have not Christ, we have not life; ask yourselves seriously, my brethren, (may the question come home to each conscience!) what state of heart yours is before God. If He loves the humble, He must hate the proud spirit; and a proud spirit is that which we all of us have, till our hearts are renewed and changed by grace from heaven. No one knows how proud his heart is by nature; but if you will look into yourselves, you may find abundant proofs of it. How proudly do many go on for years, and some, alas! through their whole lives, never humbling themselves before God! Any one who thinks for a moment must feel, that all he is, and has—his health, and strength, yea, life itself—every instant is in God's hand, dependent on His will; yet men will rise up in the morning, and go forth to their business, and eat and drink, and lie down again at night, without ever offering one prayer to God, to keep and guide them; without ever feeling a moment's thankfulness to Him who has spread their table with food. Men know that death is around them, and that they may be summoned at any instant to give account of themselves to God; they have a consciousness, too, that they are not fit to die. Yet, though they hear of a way of salvation, of mercy offered to them through Jesus Christ their Saviour, of the Holy Spirit promised to assist their endeavours to come back to God—it is all in vain; their heart is too proud to bend, too fast tied and

wedded to its worldliness. It has gone on so long in its own way; God has never been there, and they will not let Him come there now; they will not follow the motions of His gentle Spirit, nor listen to the Saviour's voice, knocking at the door of their heart, and entreating the sinner to open unto Him, that He may enter with mercy, forgiveness, peace.

My brethren, it is most true, that in early life the heart is often touched with religious feelings: there is humbleness of mind towards God; there is a contrite and a broken spirit, that is, a very tender conscience, which feels that it has often sinned against a kind and heavenly Father and Saviour, and is in great danger of sinning more. Many a young person in this humble and penitent but not unhappy frame of mind, has knelt down in secret, and lifted an earnest prayer to his Father in heaven. It may be an ignorant prayer—they may know little or nothing as yet of the Saviour in whose name they should pray; but it is the prayer of a broken and contrite heart, and He, the high and lofty One, who dwelleth in eternity, does not despise it. He is true to His promise, that He will revive the spirit of the humble, and revive the heart of the contrite ones; He will surely hear them, and, if they continue in prayer, will strengthen them in their souls, and comfort them, and lead them to the means of grace appointed for them.

Brethren, can any of you remember feelings like these in earlier years, blessed feelings which the world, alas! and it may be, habits of sin, have since deadened or destroyed? I believe that there are few, if any, on whose minds the truth of eternal things has not at some time or other pressed with power; who have not felt, at least for the moment, a desire to throw themselves with humility and contrition of heart before the feet of their offended God and Saviour.

But who can explain the workings of man's wilful heart? With too many this happy desire, this promise of good, this seed which might bear fruit to eternal life, is soon lost, choked and overwhelmed by the corruptions of the world.

Let me beg for a moment the attention of the younger part of my hearers. My dear young friends, remember that God loves an humble and a contrite spirit, a meek and quiet disposition, a heart that loves to think of Him and to pray to Him, and that turns away with hatred and disgust from the glaring shows of sin. Equally, on the other hand, does God hate the want of modesty, the bold and daring look, the light and wanton word, the extravagant putting on of apparel, and everything which is contrary to the soberness, chastity, and discretion becoming those who profess to be Christians, and to have Christ's Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

Before, then, you have fallen away from Him into sin and the snares of the devil (and remem-

ber, that road is easily trodden,) make your stand; pray earnestly that God may give you grace to resist the tempter, and to keep the way of humility, and goodness, and peace. As baptized children of God, Jesus Christ is in you, unless you have driven Him away by sin. O, tremble and fear, lest you provoke him to leave you to yourselves—to let you follow your own way to perdition.

Let us conclude with these words of Scripture:—"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James iv. 6, 7, 10.)

## SERMON IX.

FAINT, YET PURSUING.

JUDGES viii. 4.

“Faint, yet pursuing.”

THESE words describe the condition of Gideon and his little band of three hundred men when in pursuit of their enemies, the Midianites. Gideon was a man called and raised up by God to be the deliverer of his country in time of need. He knew that the Lord had sent him, for God had wrought a miracle to convince him; and, trusting in the Divine call, he had gathered together a vast army of thirty-two thousand men. But the Almighty thought not proper to work by these. The Lord said unto Gideon:—“The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now, therefore, go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.”

But it pleased the Lord to make a yet further trial of these. "The people," He said, "are yet too many; bring them down to the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." Gideon, therefore, having marched his soldiers down to the water-side, God directed him to watch which of them should rush forward with eager haste, and bend down on their knees to drink; and which, with more patience and self-control, should only take up a little water in their hand to relieve their thirst. The number of those who thus put their hand to their mouth, was only three hundred men. "And the Lord said to Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man to his place." That same night Gideon, encouraged by God in a dream, led his handful of men against the camp of the enemy, who lay in all their multitude before him. Each of the three hundred carried a trumpet, and each a lamp hidden in an empty pitcher. Suddenly in the darkness of the night their trumpets sounded, their lamps were displayed, and with their loud war-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," they rushed upon the enemy. The Midianites, stricken with fear, and cou-

founded by the hand of God Himself, fled in utter rout and dismay. Then Gideon, calling on his countrymen to rise on every side, pressed his advantage and drove the flying enemy through all the land of Israel; and even, when reaching the bank of the river Jordan, he paused not. He and his followers might, indeed, have pleaded weariness, hunger, and thirst, the length of the way, the exhaustion of the battle; or they might have argued, 'Surely our work is done; let our countrymen, who have not borne the burden and heat of the day, who shared not the danger,—let them now take the toil:' no such thoughts, however, came into their minds. God had given them a work to do, and it must not be done by halves; the victory was begun, but was not finished; the blow must be followed up; the deliverance of their country must be secured: no thought of rest is allowed. They pass the waters of the river, faint indeed, yet still pursuing; weary in body, but resolute in mind;—the willing spirit bore up the sinking limbs.

As the condition of Gideon and his brave men, when they were "faint, yet pursuing," bears a resemblance to what is often the state of a Christian in waging his spiritual warfare, and in making his way to heaven; so their conduct may well be an example to us. We may learn from them what qualities we must have, what disposition of heart and mind we must seek from God, to enable us to fight the

good fight, and lay hold on eternal life. These qualities are, faith, courage, endurance.

Remember, brethren, in the first place, that you have all been called to be soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. His mark was set upon you in your infancy; you were dedicated to Him in baptism, that you might fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil. Ask yourselves whether you have been true to that call? Have you been faithful in your allegiance? have you continued in the army of the living God? Thirty-two thousand of Israel answered to the call of Gideon; they came out and enlisted under his standard; they seemed ready and willing to fight the battles of God and of their country. But how was it when the proclamation was made, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return." Then twenty-two thousand retired from the camp of Israel. They liked not the hardship, they feared the dangers of war. Have not many, have not most of you been like them? Are you not conscious that you have loved sin better than your Saviour? When it came to the point, whether you would deny yourself, and crucify your lusts, and, forsaking the love of this present world, give yourself up truly to God's service, have you not drawn back; have you not feared the cross? have you not shrunk from a religious life? have you not left the hard and narrow way of holiness to the few who

choose it, while you have gone after what you loved better—the desires of your own heart? Have you had faith? have you believed the promise of God, that He would give you through Christ the victory over all your sins, as Gideon believed, when the Lord said, that He would deliver the host of Midian into his hand? Have you had courage? have none of you been kept back from true religion by the fear of man, or the dread of being laughed at? Have you practised endurance? or has it never been the case, that, having begun to do right, to try to pray, to read the Scriptures, to attend church, to lead a better life,—after a little while you have grown weary of the task; it has seemed so dull, so heavy, so tiresome, to lay such restraints upon yourself; to run so contrary to your own way and will, that you have given all up, and gone back to the smooth and easy course of the world, and been content to be as most of your neighbours are? If you had been with Gideon, would you not have joined the two-and-twenty thousand who thought more of the peace, and pleasure, and comfort of their home, than of duty, of victory and glory? But, brethren, think again. It is not so that you can win heaven. It is not thus we can be disciples of Him, who has told us, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matth. xvi. 24.) This is not the faith, the courage, and

the endurance of a Christian. It is not the spirit of those, who, though faint, yet were still pursuing.

I speak, then, now to such of you as are really desirous to be good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ; to fight the good fight of faith, to endure hardness, to struggle daily with your own heart and with sin, and to gain that blessed victory which God has promised you through Christ, the end of which is everlasting life. To you the words of the text may bring both comfort and instruction. The state of Gideon and his band is often yours. You are "faint," weary, distressed; like them, be you also "pursuing."

I. The Christian is apt to faint in the time of temptation, when sin assails and troubles him. Though by baptism we have been buried with Christ in His death, and risen again with Him; though, doubtless, had we been faithful to grace given, we might in His strength have gone on gaining the mastery over sin more and more; which of us has been faithful as we ought? which of us has watched and prayed always? Who is there that does not often feel the presence and power of sin? It was to Christians that St. Paul said, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. v. 17.) Even in those who believe in Christ, and try to do God's will, and are renewed by His Spirit,

there is a struggle within between grace and nature, between good and evil, between the old man and the new; often it is a great and fearful struggle.

O Christian! if at any moment the spirit of evil tempts you; if sin rises up within you; if your own heart wavers, and begins to betray you; if some ungodly temper is getting the mastery; if some forbidden thing allures you;—when nature and grace, reason and passion, are at terrible war, shaking your whole frame, when now one and now the other is about to prevail, and wearied and exhausted you are ready to give way—then think of Gideon and his company; let those words, “Faint, yet pursuing,” come to your mind, and be as the Lord’s battle-cry in your ears. Let them rouse you to faith, to courage and endurance. To yield is death; to hold on, is certain victory. Think of God’s promise; for He “is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Remember that it is written, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation;” “To him that overcometh, will I give the crown of life.” Though you be faint, still pursue. Fly at once to prayer; cry to God earnestly. Cast yourself at the feet of Jesus—Lord save me, or I perish. Yes, cling to prayer, as the drowning man clings to the plank thrown to him amidst the waters.

II. The Christian is apt to faint in time of affliction. How easy it is to flatter ourselves that we love God, and are submissive to His will, when all goes well and smoothly with us! But when God troubles us, when sudden sorrow comes upon us, when our earthly happiness is shaken, when bitterness is poured into our cup, when long and wearing and painful sickness is laid upon us, or when, by the death of some one most near and dear, the delight of our eyes is taken from us, and the world looks dark, empty, and desolate, then is the time to try us whether we can “put our trust in the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God.” Then how much do we need the Apostle’s exhortation, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.” My brethren, are there any among you on whom sorrow and trial are laid, making a portion of your daily cup? are there hearts which know their own bitterness? are you tried, cast down, distressed?—Think, then, of Gideon, “faint, yet pursuing.” Be this your watch-word, and let it lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. Call faith to your help; trust God’s goodness, power, and love; remember what need you have of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise; consider that your light affliction, which is but for a moment, will, if it be borne patiently for Christ’s sake,

work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Fix there your thoughts, and though you be faint, yet still pursue.

III. The Christian is apt to faint in his endeavour to do good. Are you earnestly desiring and seeking the conversion and salvation of another? of a wife or a husband? of a parent or a child? a brother or a sister? a friend or servant? and do all your efforts seem in vain? Are your words, your advice, your warnings, your entreaties apparently thrown away? are you ready to give up the attempt utterly, and to say of such and such persons, 'They are past recovery, I can do no more?' Or have you shown kindness and conferred favours, only to receive ingratitude and evil in return, and are you tempted to say, 'Such are people's wickedness and baseness, I will shut up my heart from all?' Now then is the time to consider that Christ bids you do good to the evil and the unthankful; though you may be faint in heart, yet still pursue your work and labour of love. Try again what kindness may do. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. xii. 21.)

IV. The Christian is apt to faint in prayer, whether praying for himself or for others. Here is our great danger. Prayer keeps us safe. If we neglect prayer, we are like a soldier without his arms, unable to defend himself from the enemy. And, therefore, our Lord Himself has

given a parable to teach us, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

Christian, do you feel unwilling or unable to pray? Do you feel too sinful to pray? Does Satan try to persuade you that your prayers are not heard? Have you besought God often for the conversion of another, and does that other still go on in his wickedness? O, faint though you be, yet still pursue. Pray, though your heart seem dull and hard as the nether mill-stone; though your thoughts cleave to the dust; yea, though you have been vile, and a sinner exceedingly,—yet pray. It may be that God, for His dear Son's sake, will look upon you, and give you the comfort of His help again, and stablish you with His free Spirit. It may be that, though you sow in tears, you shall reap in joy. Then you will bless God that, though sinking, weary, faint, you were yet by His grace and mercy upheld, and led on to pursue the way of eternal life. You will praise His goodness and love, who enabled you, though amidst conflicts, doubts, and fears, to persevere unto the end, to gain the victory.

V. Lastly, let the Christian soldier, let the Christian traveller, reflect, that as we are so apt to sink and faint on our way to heaven, it is our duty and wisdom to provide ourselves from day to day with food convenient for us. Was Saul wise when, in pursuit of the Philistines, he adjured the people, saying, "Cursed be the man

that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies?" (1 Sam. xiv. 24.) The wild honey dropped around them in the wood, "but no man put his hand to his mouth; for the people feared the oath." "And the people were faint." Had they been refreshed with food, the victory had been more sure. Are not you like Saul, when you will not take the spiritual food which God has provided? when you neglect prayer? when you read not daily the word of God? when, above all, you turn away from the communion of the body and blood of Christ, your Saviour?

Brethren, the last dread trial yet awaits us—the hour of death. Without the grace of God, the strength of Christ, the presence of His Spirit, how can you endure it?

You must turn to Him by repentance for your sins, by serious prayer, by earnest attendance on the means of grace, by putting your whole trust in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, by sincerely endeavouring to lead a religious life, by fixing your hope on the blessedness of heaven; that so, when death comes, and heart and flesh fail, though dying, you may live for ever,—though faint, you may be still pursuing.

## SERMON X.

### THE NEW CREATURE.

2 COR. v. 17.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

ST. PAUL, who wrote these words, gives us in his own example—in the history of his own conversion, the best comment upon them. Read what he was while yet in his sins, while yet alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in him; and then reflect on what he became, after that the grace of God had arrested him, and laid him low before the feet of Jesus; you will see that he truly described his own case when he said, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” In St. Paul’s case this was a sudden, an almost instantaneous change. One moment he is on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, persecuting unto death all those who called upon the name of Jesus; the next

moment, a great light from heaven shines around him; he is struck to the ground; the voice of his injured Saviour sounds in his ears; and trembling and astonished he asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Blinded by that unearthly light, he remained three days in darkness; days doubtless of inward agony of mind, of deep sorrow for sin, of searching self-inquiry, of earnest prayer. So wrapt up in fear and awe had the voice from heaven left him, that for these three days and nights he neither ate nor drank. One burning thought was upon his mind—that he had been a persecutor and blasphemer of Him who was his Lord and God; one hope for the future—that He, whom he was learning thus late to own as his Lord, had yet something in store for him to do. Then came the voice of comfort; "Brother Saul," said Ananias unto him, "the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." (Acts ix. 17, 18.) Thus were his sins washed away, and the blessed hope of eternal life was given him through faith in Christ Jesus. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." St. Paul was now in Christ, united to Him by faith in baptism, grafted into His body, made a par-

taker of His death and of His resurrection, sealed and sanctified by His Spirit, filled and animated by His love. From that time forth he was a new creature, new-born, new-created by the wonder-working grace of God. Old things had passed away; former sins were blotted out and forgiven; old thoughts, old habits, old desires were gone, like the phantoms of a dark and guilty dream. The world, with its ambitious hopes of a name and a glory upon earth, was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. He had died unto sin, and he had risen again with Christ. All was become new; a new heart was given him; he lived a new life of faith and holiness; he laboured from a new principle, the love of God in Christ Jesus; he hoped for heaven on new grounds,—not from his own self-wrought, fancied righteousness, but because “there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

The conversion, the change which took place in St. Paul, is necessary, though not in exactly the same manner, yet in its general features for all of us. For he says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” But unless we are indeed in Christ; not only called by His name, but quickened by His Spirit: not only once grafted into His Church, but abiding in Him as living branches; not only once made members of Him in baptism, but having ourselves a personal,

living faith in Him; if we are not thus in Christ, assuredly we are not in a state of salvation. In order to know, then, whether we are indeed in Christ, it is necessary to inquire, Have we any consciousness in ourselves, that we have become new creatures? Is it in any measure true with us, that old things have passed away, that all things have become new? I would endeavour, with God's gracious help, to assist you, my brethren, in asking, and answering to yourselves this question. We must each be turned to God in the spirit of our minds, and in the desire of our hearts; we must be renewed by the Holy Ghost: else we cannot enter into heaven. Some there are in whom this work of grace goes on from their very childhood. They do not lose by wilful sin the grace of their baptism. Taught to know the love of God; supported by prayer; strengthened by confirmation; admitted into close communion in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood:—they grow up insensibly into the likeness of Christ. The change we all need is ever going on, unmarked within them. These are blessed cases; and many more, doubtless, might there be, if parents thought more of the blessing pledged in baptism to their children, if they strove more in faith and prayer to keep alive and to expand the seed of heavenly grace. But with most it is not so; most of us have turned aside from the path, and have need to be turned into it again; have

turned away from God, and have need to be converted to God again. We must have the consciousness that we have been brought back into the right way, or else we have great cause to fear that we are not yet in it, but are still wanderers from God, and strayers from the fold of Christ our Saviour.

I. Ask yourselves, then, each of you, my brethren, whether there has ever been in you anything of that which the text speaks of? Have old things passed away? Have you parted with any sins that you once loved? Have you broken off any bad habits? Has the tongue that once cursed and swore, or reviled, or told lies, ceased to offend? Do the hands that once stole, steal no more? Has bad company been given up? Have unclean thoughts or deeds been renounced? Have the haunts of the drunkard been forsaken? Has any bad temper, any secret iniquity of the heart, been overcome? Have you taken that first step in religion—ceasing to do evil? Do you look back with sorrow, shame, and self-accusation before God, to sins which you once committed? Have you so much as begun to feel, that it is an evil and bitter thing to have departed from the Lord, and to have done that which is hateful before Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?

II. Can you hope there is any change in you to a new and better state; a change like that which the earth undergoes in spring, when

awaking from the sleep and death of winter, it puts forth new life, new vegetation, exhibits new colours, and gives promise of new fruits? Have you awakened from that forgetfulness of God,—that deadness and indifference to all spiritual things, in which many who are called Christians dare to continue? Have you begun to be sensible, that God—God alone—can be the life and peace and joy of the soul? Has any ray of light sent down from Christ the Sun of Righteousness, shone in upon you, teaching you to look to Him, to wait for Him, to desire to be turned wholly to Him so as never to part from Him, to follow Him wherever His pathway is,—in the morning, noon, or evening of life,—in His bright shining, or when He hides His face? And have you opened you heart to Him, that you may derive warmth, health, and life from Him?

III. The first sign, my brethren, of a new creature is prayer. When God sent Ananias to speak comfort to the heart of Saul, the Almighty gave as a reason, “Behold, he prayeth!” What a moment is that, when some one who has long been a wanderer from God, living without Him in the world, first tries to pray;—when, convinced of sin, trembling, astonished, afraid, he tries to speak to God, to Him who is a spirit, to Him whom he has offended, but without whom he must perish for ever! Often before—as too many even here mock the holy

One—may the knees have been bent, but prayer, real prayer, the utterance of the heart, was never before offered. What makes the difference? Why is there now such an intense feeling, such a mingling of hope and fear, of pain and pleasure? What is this thrilling emotion which shakes the whole man? It is the feeling of reality, of life returning to the soul, as in one recovered from drowning, who feels the restored circulation of the blood throb in every limb. Have you this mark that you are new creatures? this mark of true repentance, of conversion?—do you pray? Does your Heavenly Father's eye see you in your secret chamber calling upon His name? asking pardon through the precious blood which your Redeemer shed on Calvary? Does God hear from you the voice which man cannot hear, the voice of your heart, imploring grace, strength, assistance, comfort?

IV. Has a new fear taken hold upon you? the fear of sinning against God? the fear of breaking His commandments? It is, remember, the character of the ungodly, "that there is no fear of God before their eyes;" no dread of His anger; no sense of the powers of the world to come; no dread of that which cometh after death. Do you not hear the wicked sport with hell and damnation? Do they not treat the word of God as an idle tale? Do they not contemptuously turn away from His ordinances?

But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. "Fear Him," saith the Saviour, "who hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

V. Has a new hope entered your heart? the hope of a part in the promises of God, of peace on earth, of glory in heaven? I speak not of the worldly man's hope of heaven; he deceives his own heart. I mean not their hope who cry peace to their souls, when God has said, "there is no peace." I mean a hope arising from humble repentance, resting on the merits of Jesus Christ, based upon the promises of God, looking forward to heaven as the end, by a life of holy obedience as the way. This is that lively hope to which the believer is begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Examine yourselves, brethren, whether any of these things be in you. Prove your own selves. Is conversion to God begun in you? Are there any signs of the life of the Spirit? Have you any fear that you are not what you ought to be? that, it may be, your soul is not safe? that you need the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the renewing of the grace of Christ? If such thoughts arise, put them not away; they are a call from God. Shrink not back because the change you need is great, for God is able to perform it. "Behold," saith Jesus Christ, "I make all things new." Turn not

away from repentance because it is a bitter and painful remedy, but judge yourself that you may not be judged of the Lord. Humble yourself, and He will lift you up. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Pray for pardon; pray for His new-creating Spirit, to make the darkness pass away and the true light shine in upon you. Pray that you may soon be able to say, in the consciousness of a change within you, "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new;" and that you may add, in adoring thankfulness, 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled me to Himself by Jesus Christ; who hath called me out of darkness into His marvellous light; who hath begun that good work in me which I trust His grace will make perfect unto life eternal.'

But there are some among you, brethren, I doubt not, in whose hearts the day-star hath arisen; who no longer need a first conversion to God, as being no longer estranged from Him through sin. You fear to offend Him; you desire His favour; you pray to Him habitually; you wait on Him in His ordinances; your need is, rather, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Think, then, how high and holy is the calling which the Apostle sets before you. Are all things indeed become new? Are your mind, your will, and affections, renewed to God? Are you seeking to make His will yours? His word,

your rule? His Holy Spirit, your guide? Is your body new in all its actions, so that every member is become an instrument of righteousness? Are you rendering a new service, worshipping God in the spirit, with the heart, not with the lips only? Are you aiming to have your whole life new? living by faith in the Son of God? living above the world while in the world? having your conversation in heaven? setting your affection on things above, not on things on the earth? Remember that the power to do all this is given unto you; for does not the Apostle say, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." "Likewise," he continues, "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." See what grace is bestowed upon you, brethren, through Christ. Stir up, then, the gift of God that is in you. Use the divine strength imparted to you. Think of sin as a conquered enemy, and that you are dead to it. Let it not arise again. Watch and pray against it. Seek

to have it crucified more and more within you. Think that you have put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness; but that you have need to be renewed more and more by the continual grace of the Holy Ghost. Thus, following after holiness, look forward to that time when you shall put off, with this body, the last remains of sin, and, awakening from death, you shall say in the fullest meaning of the words, "Old things are passed away, all things are become new," in the never-ending glories of heaven. Amen.

## SERMON XI.

### HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

PHIL. iii. 20, 21.

“Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

THE Apostle, just before the text, speaks of some of whom he could not think without tears of grief; who professed the name of Christ, but were really enemies to His cross and to holiness; whose end was destruction; who made their belly their God; whose glory was in that which ought to have been their shame; who minded earthly things. “But be ye followers,” he says, “of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. . . For our conversation is in heaven.” Our home, our treasure, and our affections are there—in heaven, not on earth; and we strive to live now as those who hope to be soon there ourselves. And this is our confidence, this is the ground of our hope:—we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now gone to heaven, will come

again; and that when He comes, they that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth. Then He will change this vile body which we now have; this body so full of pain and weakness, and which must soon moulder into dust:—He will change it by His own almighty power, which is able to do all things, and He will make it like His own glorious body, which now He has in heaven; and so both our body and soul, joined together again and made perfectly holy, perfectly beautiful, shall go to dwell with Christ in happiness and glory everlasting.

We have here set before us both the happy state and the glorious hope of the true believer. By considering these we may, through the grace of God's Holy Spirit, be led to ask, Is my conversation so in heaven now, that I have a good hope of being in heaven hereafter?

What think you, brethren? If that holy Apostle, that faithful servant of Jesus Christ, who wrote the words of the text, could now see us—us who are here to-day, would he have cause to weep or to rejoice over us? If he witnessed our daily life, if he knew our secret ways, would he perceive us walking as children of light, whose conversation is in heaven? or would he behold us living for this world only? living without prayer, without thought of Christ; earthly-minded, covetous, envious, proud, discontented, hating one another?

or it may be, following the grosser lusts of the flesh—drunkenness, fornication, and adultery?

The Apostle is no more on earth. He has received his crown. He is among the redeemed, the spirits of the just; but his words are amongst us still. They speak to us; and O that we may receive them as the Thessalonians did, not as the word of man, but as they are in truth, the word of God, given by inspiration of His Spirit! Then they will not be forgotten as soon as heard, but will work effectually in our hearts unto salvation.

I. Observe the true believer's happy state:—"his conversation is in heaven." These words properly mean that he is even now a citizen of heaven. He belongs even now to the new Jerusalem which is above. He has entered into the communion of saints. He is one of that family, that company of faithful people; of whom God is the Father, Jesus is the Saviour and elder brother; for the true Christian, brethren, is one born again of God's Holy Spirit; though by nature a child of wrath, he is now made a child of grace. He is one who has unfeignedly repented, and turned to God through Jesus Christ. He has been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and being justified through grace, he is made an heir according to the hope of everlasting life.

Brethren, see here what a Christian is; he has his conversation in heaven. The world knows him not, but God knows him. God has taught him that this world cannot make him happy, and has drawn his mind upward to better things, and has enabled him to believe assuredly, that there is an inheritance bought for him with the blood of Christ, an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him, and for all the people of God.

Consider the blessed privileges of a believer, of one whose conversation is in heaven.

1. God is his Father. And is not God then the Father of all? are not all men His children? does He not feed them all? He does. His tender mercies are over all His works. But there are some who look up to God as their Father in a more peculiar manner; even those who are His children by faith in Christ Jesus, who know His covenanted mercies, and hope in His word. The prodigal son had a father, even while he was abusing his goodness and wasting his substance far away; but his father was forgotten then. God is the Father of the ungodly and the unthankful, but they think not of Him. How different is it with the believing Christian! He has gone back to his Father's bosom, and rests upon His love. He looks up to God to guide him in all his ways, and casts upon the Lord his every care. Being

reconciled and brought near through the blood of Christ, he has peace with God.

2. Again, the believer has access to a throne of grace. There is a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, to which he may come, even boldly, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. He knows Christ as the way,—the true and living way. The Christian, then, is constant, is instant in prayer. By prayer he converses with the spiritual world. By prayer he keeps up intercourse with God and heaven. Through prayer he sets his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. O brethren, how blessed a privilege is prayer! The Christian may be tried, distressed, cast down, in sickness, in poverty, in reproach, in disappointment; but he cannot be utterly miserable, while he does not give up prayer.

3. Further, the true believer has the comforting assurance of the forgiveness of his past sins, and of his daily infirmities. And from what comes this assurance? Even from this,—that Christ has died for him, and that in Him he has redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. He has gone to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and though his sins have been as scarlet, and red like crimson, he trusts that the pardoning mercy of his God through Jesus Christ has made them white as snow. To that same mercy he looks day by

day, while he prays, "Forgive me my trespasses."

4. And the true believer has the gift of God's Holy Spirit, the Comforter and the Sanctifier. By that Spirit he is sealed unto the day of redemption. In proportion as the Spirit renews him unto holiness, he has the pledge and earnest of an everlasting inheritance.

These are some of the privileges, brethren, which make the state of a true believer a happy one. Thus has he his conversation in heaven. But though he belongs to the society above, he has still to live on earth; and what is his duty here? To walk worthy of his high calling. If he be indeed a citizen of heaven, let him show it by a heavenly life on earth. If we do indeed value salvation, let us live answerably to our hope of it. They that expect to live hereafter like angels in glory, let them now live like angels in holiness.

"Our conversation," says the Apostle, "is in heaven." My brethren, where is yours? Is it heavenward you are tending? Can you hope that you have turned from the broad road, in which are the enemies of the cross of Christ? Have you good reason to think, that you have been led by divine grace to join the company of Christ's faithful people? What part of your conversation is in heaven?

What are your thoughts? If our affections are set on heaven, our thoughts will turn

that way; if our treasure is there, there will our heart be also. Here, then, is one test. Let us each ask ourselves, How often in the day do I think of heaven? of God? of Christ? of my soul? Do I ever think of these things? If not, how can my conversation be said to be in heaven?

What are your words? O what is the language of most who bear the name of Christians? Instead of their conversation here being in heaven, how many delight to make it in hell? Hear the profane swearer! or the filthy talker! hear the sounds of wrath, anger, hatred, malice, reviling, from many a tongue! And are these professed followers of Jesus Christ? O how would the Apostle warn such, even weeping! Are there any here who thus use their speech? I beseech you, remember that for every such word you must give account. And have not those who are free from such guilt, have not all of us cause for shame and repentance, that our words breathe so seldom anything of heaven?

What are your prayers? It may be there are some who never pray at all, or at least hurry over at night some form without meaning or devotion. Is this to have our conversation in heaven? A man can have but a cold friendship for another, if, being with him, he only speaks to him once a day. And those can have no love to God who treat Him so. No, brethren; the

true Christian will pour out his heart in prayer, and that frequently.

What, in a word, is the main bent and purpose of our life? What do we find ourselves turning to for comfort? What, on the whole, is the ruling desire of our hearts? Are any of us slaves to drunkenness, gluttony, or lust? They, surely, have no inheritance in God's kingdom. Are any slaves to the love of money? They cannot serve God and Mammon. Then only have we our conversation truly in heaven, when the main business of our life is to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. May God grant us grace to know whether we are doing this or not; and, if we are not, let us not delay to seek the heavenly treasure. If as yet we are of those who mind earthly things, and them only, let us think what we shall do when we must leave them all. What can all we have here avail us, if our names are not written in the book of life; if we are not registered as citizens of heaven, in that city whose builder and maker is God?

II. For consider, brethren, in conclusion, the true believer's glorious hope. He looks "for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

He waits for the Lord from heaven. He

expects His appearing; for "Christ was once offered, to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." The heavens have now received Jesus Christ. There, in our form and nature, He awaits the time appointed in the counsels of His Father, when He shall come again in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him. And "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality."

To this it was, that the Apostle St. Paul looked forward with holy and triumphant joy:—"We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." As if he would say, Shall we be like those who pamper their bodies with excess, or defile them with uncleanness? No: vile as this poor body is now—liable to sickness and pain, and soon to die—it shall rise again. The Lord shall change it, and it make it glorious like His own, fit for the immortal and purified spirit to dwell in.

Are any inclined to ask, How can these things be? Behold, Jesus has risen from the dead, and hath taken His body again, His now glorious body. See in this the assurance

of His almighty power. So will He raise up ours also. He will do it according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself. He is God; and is anything too hard for the Lord? Cannot He, who makes the green blade spring from the grain buried in the ground, as easily cause that our body, sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory?

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, ye who look for the Lord's coming, "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." "Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ." "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Pray without ceasing." "Rejoice evermore"—even in afflictions and tribulations. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and toward all men; to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all His saints." Amen.

## SERMON XII.\*

ORDER OF MORNING PRAYER.—PART I.

1 COR. xiv. 15.

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.”

IF you were asked, my beloved brethren, for what purpose you assemble here to-day, most of you, perhaps all, would be able to answer, ‘I came to pray to God.’ And have you indeed done so? Have you been worshippers of God in spirit and in truth? It is a solemn question, and one which it may do us all good to press home to ourselves. How have you been occupied while here? Have you rendered unto God a spiritual service? have you indeed been praying? If conscience were, in each of us, allowed to speak, what would be the reply? There are some, I would fain hope many, who could say, ‘Though conscious of great infirmity and sin, I have yet striven to pray with the spirit and with the understanding; though my

\* This and the two following Sermons on the Order of Morning Prayer, were originally preached at Crickhowel in 1835.

mind has too often wandered, I have laboured to recall it, to fix it in devotion; and at times I have been able to hold communion with my God; and my soul has risen on the wings of prayer and praise.' What would be the confession of others? Might it not be this?—'The form of devotion has been mine; I have bent in the posture of prayer, and my lips have given utterance to its sound; but this has been all. I have confessed sin, but never felt its burden. I have pretended to join in prayer, but desired not what I asked. I have offered praise, but my heart has known no thankfulness to God.' And are there none who, if they spoke truly, might say, 'What a weariness has it been to me! What mean these long and tedious prayers? When, when will they be over? When shall I be at liberty to hurry back to the world I love, from a restraint my soul dislikes?' Is this language strong? Not too strong for those who know not God; who love Him not; who have never tasted that He is gracious; and who, therefore, count His service a burden, heavy and grievous to be borne. Unhappy, most unhappy is your state, my brethren! May you learn speedily to prize the high privilege which now you trample under foot.

To lead his people to pray, must be the desire nearest to the heart of a minister of Christ. His entreaty is, that the spirit of prayer may be poured out upon them; for when that is

given, he knows that all else will follow. And as he ardently wishes that they may be a praying people at home in the secret closet, and at the family altar, so does he long to see the fire of pure devotion burning among them brightly and fervently on this holy day, in this sacred place. How glad, how blessed would be the thought, could we believe that not one heart was here unwarmed with the heavenly flame; not a knee that was not bent low in token of a soul truly contrite, earnestly panting after spiritual blessings; not a voice that did not breathe from the ground of the heart thanksgiving and praise to the Giver of every mercy,—the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being! What, if heaven and heavenly joys could have their beginning here—what could be a nearer resemblance of them than this—a congregation of faithful worshippers, with one heart and one voice, glorifying Him who has redeemed them, called them, and sanctified them by His grace?

The chief cause of deadness, coldness, and formality in any congregation is, no doubt, the absence of that spiritual mind which is the life of devotion; the want of that deep conviction of sin which alone humbles the soul before God, and of that just value of eternal things which fills the heart with intense desire for the grace of God. Where these are not, real prayer cannot be. These ought to be in all

who meet together in the name of Jesus Christ, and they are the gift of God, and must be sought from Him. But another secondary cause of the languor, and, too often, evident listlessness and indifference, which are seen in our public worship, consists, I believe, in this:—that the prayers of the Church are by many very little understood, and still less followed and used in their spirit and power. If this be so, some even of those who strive to pray with the spirit, may fail to pray with the understanding also. It is my purpose, therefore, with the help of divine grace, to direct your attention, in as plain a manner as I can, to the Order of Morning and Evening Prayer; to point out briefly, in two or three discourses, the meaning of its several parts, showing that it contains the doctrines, and breathes the spirit of Scripture, and that it comprises all the different parts of prayer, embodying every petition which assembled Christians can desire to present before the throne of grace.

My brethren, I am persuaded that the more we study the Book of Common Prayer, the more we shall discover its excellence, the more we shall find reason to love that Church which puts into her children's lips a form so simple, yet so sublime, and not the hasty effusions of individual piety, which must ever be subject to error and defect. The prayers we use are drawn from the treasury of ages. Fourteen hundred years, or

more, have stamped on many of them the sanction of almost apostolic authority. The assembled Church worshipped long since her God and Saviour in the very words which we now breathe. They are like flowers which have been culled from the garden of many a holy saint of God; like precious jewels, that have been snatched from the darkness of ages past, and now made to shine in collected lustre and beauty. Martyrs and confessors compiled them. They have been, next to the Scriptures, the grand depository of truth, and have handed it down unsullied and unimpaired from generation to generation. Well may we believe that the Holy Spirit assisted compositions, second only to His own inspired word.

Yet, excellent, beautiful, and pious as the service is, it becomes a dead unprofitable form, if we come to it with hearts unprepared by divine grace; if we give not to it our most earnest and serious attention. There is danger lest words so often used should fall vainly on the ear, and the lips mechanically utter what the heart never feels. Let us, then, consider it a little more closely; and may the Lord deign to bless the attempt, and make it a means of producing what we so greatly need—a more spiritual performance of the public worship of God.

Our service, then, is appointed to begin with the reading of one or more short sentences of Scripture. Well is it, that, before the words of

man are uttered, we should listen to the word of Almighty God—of Him who is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and had in reverence of all them that are round about Him. The texts chosen are such as, while they warn the sinner and the careless, encourage the humble and penitent to confess their sins, and to hope for pardon from Him who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. Thus they are excellently suited to prepare the heart, before we enter on our solemn work. And it is intended that, before these sentences are read, the whole congregation should be assembled together, listening with fixed attention and serious reverence to the words of the Holy Ghost.

Further, to prepare your minds for the worship of God, your minister addresses you (and observe, that it is to be said by him only) in a most impressive and scriptural exhortation, which each one of you should apply personally to himself. He begins with the same endearing title which St. Paul loved to give to the churches to which he wrote his epistles—“Dearly beloved brethren.” If ministers cannot indulge the delightful hope that all in their congregations are, indeed and truly, brethren in Christ, yet may they regard them all as children of one God and Father, and should feel for the souls of all, the tenderest love, the most affec-

tionate and anxious care. The exhortation then reminds you, how in many places Holy Scripture bids us to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, without attempting to cloak over and hide them from the all-seeing eye of God. For if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But He hath said, "Acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." (Jer. iii. 13.) Our secret sins of thought, as well as our more open offences, must be laid before Him. The inward disposition with which we should make our confession is next described; namely, with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart: for God forgetteth not the cry of the humble; He hath respect unto the lowly; our penitence should be that godly sorrow which works repentance unto salvation; and we should sincerely purpose to be henceforth obedient to the word and will of Christ our Saviour. The precious benefit to be derived from this meek confession is then set forth, the end being that we may obtain forgiveness of our sins; for God has given His gracious promise, that if we thus confess our sins, He will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Your thoughts are then led upwards to the source of all grace and pardon, "to God's infinite goodness and mercy;" that unbounded goodness which loved a guilty, fallen world; that free mercy which found a

ransom for dying sinners in the blood of His only-begotten Son—a cleansing fountain, in which whosoever will may wash and be clean. It is true, that confession of our sins to God is our daily duty and privilege. At all times should we humbly acknowledge them to Him. Yet are we exhorted most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together in this house of God; in the solemn assembly, and before the congregation: here should we with one heart and voice draw near to Him who is good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon Him. The exhortation then reminds us, for what ends we come together here; of what parts God's worship consists. And these are four; thanksgiving, praise, prayer, and hearing His holy word. And it concludes with a solemn call and entreaty from the minister to his people, to accompany him one and all to the throne of heavenly grace in heart and voice; the heart pure, no wilful sin harboured, no secret iniquity cherished therein; the voice humble, no other befitting miserable sinners in drawing near to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and whom we have each offended. And to the penitent heart and humble tone it well, my brethren, becomes all who are not hindered by infirmity to add the bended knee. Thus Solomon knelt down, when he offered his solemn prayer before assembled Israel. Thus Daniel

bent his knee, when three times a day he poured forth prayer and praise to the God of his fathers. So knelt the Saviour of the world, in secret communion with His Father in heaven. How can we approach in too lowly a manner the majesty of Him who inhabiteth eternity?

No sooner have all been thus exhorted and prepared, than the minister leads his people in the confession. Deep is the humiliation there expressed, but not deeper than sinners need. To this confession we should come, each bringing the load of his peculiar guilt; each calling to mind his own offences and short-comings; and striving, while his lips utter the form of general words, to lay his own sin before God in unfeigned repentance. And let me remind you, brethren, that here the minister is no longer to speak alone. All are called upon to repeat aloud the confession of their sin. We here address ourselves to the God of power and love; to our almighty, yet most merciful Father. Like the prodigal, we trust that, though we be unworthy of the name of children, He cannot forget the love of a Father. We tell Him, that we have wandered far away from Him who is the Good Shepherd. We trace the evil up to its fountain—the devices and desires of our own evil hearts; and we follow it out into its streams—transgressions of His holy law, omission of duty, commission of sin. And we acknowledge that there is no health in us—no saving

strength, no part that is not naturally corrupt and sinful. It is plain, that no one can truly join in this confession who has not been taught of God to know the plague of his own heart, and its desperate wickedness; but those who have been so taught, will own that no terms are too strong to express their self-abasement. From confession of sin we are led on to earnest fervent prayers for mercy. Out of the depths we are taught to raise the cry of faith and hope to the God of our salvation:—"But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders." We beseech Him to spare from destruction and restore to His favour the penitent sinner. And why? For any worthiness in us? No: but for His precious promises made to us through and for the sake of Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And when we have confessed, is our duty done? What said the blessed Jesus? "Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." A real penitent will pray not only for pardon, but for grace—grace that he may die henceforth to sin, and live to righteousness. And we, if we be penitent, shall truly join in the remaining petition, "Grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,"—in piety to God, in love to man, denying all sinful lusts, "to the glory of Thy holy name," that God in all things may be

glorified, through Jesus Christ. How solemn the Amen, uttered from a contrite heart, after pouring forth such a confession!

The confession thus ended, the absolution follows—the declaration of a full and free pardon to the truly penitent. The minister speaks in his Master's name, not as though he could search the heart; as the ambassador of God he proclaims his Master's message,—he states the terms of God's forgiveness, repentance and faith unfeigned; terms, of which God alone can discern, as He alone can enable, the fulfilment. Each person in the congregation is left to judge for himself, as in the sight of God, whether the reality of his penitence and faith gives him hope, that that pardon which can alone avail, extends to him. How sweetly does the message of pardoning love touch the contrite heart, coming from the lips of God's ordained messenger, announcing the sinner's fearful debt discharged, God's anger turned away, past iniquities remembered no more; and this, though His mercy has been despised, His Son rejected, His Spirit grieved! O the unsearchable riches of Christ! O the depth of the grace, mercy, and love of our heavenly Father! Blessed is the soul which, humbled and penitent for sin, yet grasps His precious promises, and rests upon Christ's free salvation.

Thus, then, we have seen that our Church prepares our minds by the exhortation, to make

a solemn confession of our sin and need and helplessness, in order to obtain God's pardoning mercy; then, in the absolution, declares that that mercy is given and God's favour restored to every believing and penitent soul, who earnestly desires them. And we, having thrown at the foot of the cross of Christ our burden of guilt and misery, are then supposed fit to join in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, and to hear the word of Almighty God in the remaining service, which, if God permit, we will proceed to consider on a future occasion.

And now, dear brethren, what is divine service to you? Do you enter into it with the spirit and the understanding? Or do you only sit through it as a cold, dead, unprofitable thing, and wait for the sermon in hope of something more new and interesting there? Remember, I beseech you, that you hear the word of God in vain, unless it leads you to pray. Are there any among you who have never begun to pray? Are there those who do not evening and morning bow the heart and knee in secret to the God that made you? If so, you must be living in sin. You are without hope, without God in the world. Are any of you about to leave this place without having offered one sincere petition to the Father of all mercies, the Searcher of all hearts? Then, by attending here you have but added to the load of your guilt and sin. The proffers of a full, free, and gracious pardon have

sounded in vain for you: for you have not deigned to ask it. A Saviour's love has been proclaimed to you in vain. You have despised Him and turned away. And wilt thou, daring, unhappy sinner, go forth with a life's unrepented, unpardoned sin upon thy soul? Nay, rather now, even now, seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Even now approach Him in penitent confession. Acknowledge that this day you have provoked His anger. Beseech Him to spare you, to wash you in the blood of Jesus Christ, to give you a new heart and right spirit, and to enable you to walk in newness of life.

## SERMON XIII.

ORDER OF MORNING PRAYER.—PART II.

PSALM cxlv. 18.

“The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.”

PRAYER is the utterance of the heart to God. It is the feeling of want, and helplessness, and sin; leading us to seek help from One able to give it. True prayer is a sign of the regenerate heart. When St. Paul was converted to God, it was said of him, “Behold, he prayeth!” While any one remains without religion, in darkness, deadness, and worldly-mindedness, he lives without prayer. He may come to church, and seem to join with the congregation, but there is no prayer;—and why? Because he does not know, he does not feel his need of the grace of God. Prayer, while it is a most difficult thing to perform aright, is yet the simplest and plainest thing in the world to understand. The child that is hungry and in want of bread, finds no difficulty in asking its father or mother for food. When we pray, we are only asking God

for the things we are in need of, and when our desire is really towards Him, our prayer will find utterance in words. But the difficulty of prayer lies in ourselves. One cause is, the deceitfulness and unsteadiness of our own heart: we cannot hold it to the mark we wish; it is ever starting aside from spiritual things, like a broken bow; idle, foolish, wandering thoughts crowd in and distract us. Another cause is in our wrong notions of God: we do not think of Him as He is in His perfect holiness, almighty power, and boundless love; and so we draw near to Him, without that awful reverence, that deep humility, and yet that child-like confidence, which become us. A third cause is this, that we are ignorant of our own spiritual necessities; we do not see ourselves so corrupt, so sinful, so helpless as we really are, and therefore we do not cast ourselves freely and wholly upon God in Jesus Christ. Our blessed Saviour, who knew what was in man, has not left us without assistance. His Holy Spirit is promised to help, enlighten, and guide us, when we try to pray: and He has given us, for our better instruction a form of prayer, showing us after what manner we should offer our petitions to the throne of heavenly grace.

In pursuance, then, of the last discourse, we begin with the brief consideration of this our Lord and Saviour's prayer. I have endeavoured to point out to you the meaning of the intro-

ductory part of our Church Service, namely, the Sentences, the Exhortation, the Confession, and the Absolution. When these are ended, we are led on to join in prayer, and praise, and hearing the word of God. And our Church has well placed before all other prayers that which our blessed Lord Himself has taught us. How are we, my brethren, accustomed to repeat it? Do we think what is its meaning? Do we really desire what we therein ask? It has been said, that whoever is enabled to give the full attention of his mind to every petition in the Lord's Prayer, has made no small progress in religion.

The prayer has three parts:—the address, the petitions offered, and the conclusion. The address is in these words, “Our Father which art in heaven.” Thus has Jesus Christ taught us to speak to God,—to call Him Father; that, while that name awakens every tender and endearing recollection, we may draw near to Him in confidence and love. For, as our Maker and Preserver, He is indeed the Father of all mankind; all creatures are supported by His power, and fed by His bounty. But the true Christian is the child of God, and calls God Father in a peculiar manner: for the Spirit of adoption is given him, and he looks up to God as reconciled to him by the blood of Jesus Christ. Yet are we taught to address Him as our Father who is in heaven, exalted on high in majesty and glory; and so we should approach

Him with reverence and godly fear. We then offer several petitions; the first three relating to God's honour, the others to our own welfare. When we say, "Hallowed be Thy name," we pray that we ourselves and all others may have grace to render unto God, and to all that belongs to Him, that reverence which is His due; that none may take His name in vain, or profane His sabbath-day, but that we all may adore and worship and serve Him as perfect in holiness. When we say, "Thy kingdom come," we pray that His Church, which is His visible kingdom, may be enlarged upon the earth; that He will add to it daily such as shall be saved, by converting sinners to Himself through Jesus Christ; and that He will hasten the coming of His future kingdom in heavenly glory. We next most appropriately pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Here we ask that ourselves and others may be obedient to the will of God in everything even on earth; taking for our example the holy angels, who serve God universally, cheerfully, and harmoniously, without weariness or interruption. So should we strive to glorify God by a heavenly life on earth. We then proceed to make request for ourselves; and, while the interests of the soul are most regarded, the wants of the body are not forgotten. "Give us this day our daily bread." We are here taught, whether we be rich or poor, to look up to God as the Giver of all good.

He that has abundance prays, that he may receive it as at God's hand, and may use it aright; he that has little prays, that the Lord will provide day by day that which is sufficient for him, by blessing his honest endeavours to procure it. The next petition refers directly to spiritual blessings; and of these it asks the first and most precious that a sinner can receive from God, namely, a full and free forgiveness of his sins, his many trespasses. Till the burden of our guilt is removed, we can have no peace with God, no real happiness in ourselves. But "blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." This prayer, then, "Forgive us our trespasses," must be offered up under a deep conviction of our own guiltiness, and with earnest desire for pardon. But there are added the words, "as we forgive them that trespass against us." How forcibly has Jesus Christ here taught us the duty of forgiving others; for if we forgive not others, we condemn ourselves as often as we utter this prayer. An unforgiving spirit shuts God's ear against us, and forfeits our hope of mercy. We then, as truly penitent for our sins, earnestly desire to be delivered from their power, and accordingly, the next petition is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Not as though God could tempt any man to sin; but it is as if we said, Lord, we know that we

are weak, and ready to fall; suffer us not to come into any trial which will be too much for us; but keep us watching and praying, and ever deliver us from all evil, from the power of the devil, from the corruptions of our own hearts, from the world and its snares, from Thy awful judgments upon sin, from Thy eternal anger, and so bring us now to Thy grace and favour, and finally to Thy heavenly glory. Such are the petitions of the prayer. The conclusion expresses both our confidence and our praise:—“For Thyne is the kingdom,” Thou art the Lord of heaven and earth, and all things are at Thy disposal; “Thine is the power,” Thou art the Almighty, and none can resist Thy will, and Thou art able to do for us more than we can ask; and “Thine is the glory,” all Thy works praise Thee, by Thee and for Thee are all things. And this Thy kingdom, Thy power, and Thy glory, are not like the things of this world, perishing and vain; but from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. To all we add, Amen, so be it,—so may all we ask be done for us, and we believe it will, for Thou art faithful: Thou art nigh to all that call upon Thee in truth.

May we, my brethren, as often as we repeat this divine and comprehensive prayer, use it with the spirit and with the understanding! May God grant us a real desire for the things for which we pray!

When the minister and the congregation have

joined in this, which is the pattern and model for all other prayers, a few short but fervent supplications are offered to Him who alone can help us. "O Lord, open Thou our lips"—lips which are closed until Thy grace unseal them; to this with one voice the whole congregation should reply, (and how, brethren, can you keep a cold, dead silence?) "And our mouth shall show forth Thy praise." Another prayer follows for help and salvation:—"O God, make speed to save us." "O Lord, make haste to help us." And then the priest lifts up the lofty strain, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;" and the whole people should again unitedly reply, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." Oh, if all would thus bear their part, how would one quicken another! how heart-inspiring would be our worship!

Thus are we now led on to offer praise, praise to Him who alone is worthy. And here the words of man would fail and sink. Inspiration alone is equal to the subject; and sublimely do we begin in that inspired and lofty song, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation." Then we pass on to the other appointed portion of the book of Psalms—those divine songs which David and other holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In them the praises of God are exalted; in them the spirit of pro-

phesy testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow:—for instance, in the twenty-second Psalm, we read of the piercing of His hands and feet; the very words which Jesus uttered on the cross; and of the soldiers parting His garments among them and casting lots upon His vesture: and in the forty-fifth Psalm, the prophet foretells the glory and success of Christ's throne and kingdom. Some parts of the Psalms are indeed hard to be understood; but the greater part are sufficiently plain. The experience of a Christian is there described in all its changes of joy and sorrow, hope and fear. The mourning sinner may there find (as in the fifty-first Psalm) the prayer of penitential sorrow, and the rejoicing soul may rise in fervent thanksgivings and sublimest offerings of praise. The Psalms were sung by the Levites in the temple service at Jerusalem; and the use of them has always been continued in the Christian Church. While saying them we stand, thus expressing the lifting up of our hearts to God.

Thus prepared, we are called to hear, in the Lessons of the day, the word of God; that word which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. One Lesson is taken from the Old Testament, and one from the New, to show their agreement to-

gether; for what are the law and the prophets, but the gospel foreshown? what is the gospel, but the law and the prophets fulfilled? How, brethren, do we listen to God's word? Is it with earnest, secret prayer, that it may be applied to our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost? do we say, ere it begins, "Open Thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see wondrous things out of Thy law?"

After each hearing of the word of God, we rise up to praise Him; and nowhere among the words of man can be found a sublimer strain, than in that hymn which begins, "We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting." Then we join with the angels before His throne, who, as they adore Him, ever cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts." We unite with all the company of the saints, with apostles, prophets, and martyrs, in ascribing glory to the ever-blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We praise Him, who, that He might save us, stooped from heavenly glory to be conceived in the Virgin's womb; who, by His death and resurrection, has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; who, now exalted at the right hand of God, will come again to judgment. And we pray, that He may keep and govern us, bless and save us, even for ever and ever. If, my brethren, we would be numbered among those who shall praise God throughout eternity, we must

begin now to learn the strain; we must now seek to know Christ as our salvation: and so will our lips and hearts be prepared and tuned to sing the song of the redeemed.

The next part of the service, and the last to which I shall call your attention to-day, is the repeating of the Creed, in which all, both minister and people, are taught to make public profession of their faith. How solemnly, how thoughtfully ought we each to pronounce those words, "I believe!" How carelessly they are generally uttered! Do you, brethren, think of the meaning of what you then say? You are declaring, that you believe there is one living and true God, the Almighty, the Maker of all things, and that in the Godhead there are three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. You say, that you believe also that wonderful truth, that the Son of God came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, and, as man, died upon the cross, and that He, having risen from the dead, and gone back to heaven in our nature, will come again at the last great day, to judge the living and the dead. You further profess your belief, that Christ has on earth a holy and catholic, that is, universal Church, in which all true believers have communion with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and also with each other. You acknowledge, that in Christ there is forgiveness of sins bestowed on all who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His

holy gospel. You profess to look for that time, when this poor body, which soon must moulder in the grave, will rise again, and be clothed with immortality; and you assert your faith in that life everlasting, into which the bodies and the souls of those that are saved shall finally enter, and be present with the Lord in eternal blessedness.

My brethren, what glorious, what awakening truths are here? Do we indeed believe these things? Belief in them was once able to make men brave persecution, mockery, shame, imprisonment, torture, death. These truths the Apostles of the Lord went forth to preach to every creature. Where they are received into the heart in their spirit and power, they give a peace which this world cannot give, a hope that will last beyond the grave. Let me, then, in conclusion, earnestly ask you, my brethren, Are you living as those should live who profess to believe these things?

You profess that Christ has redeemed you; that God so loved "the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" what effect has the knowledge of this had upon you? Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of God's own Son. And are you still living to yourselves? Are you serving God no better than if Christ had never died for

you? Are you loving and committing sin? Are you going on with the multitude, careless, unconcerned about your soul, taken up with the things of this world? Has Christ no place in your thoughts and affections? Have you never carried to Him the burden of your guilt and misery? never bowed your heart before Him in prayer? never felt that he must be your portion, or you must be undone for ever? O what will a cold, barren profession of your faith avail you? It will avail nothing with Him who looks for fruit—the fruit of repentance, of true conversion of heart, of love unfeigned to the Saviour who died for you. Thus, thus believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Again; do you indeed believe in the Holy Ghost? Do you know Him as your Sanctifier? Him who is the author of all holiness in man's corrupt heart? Have you ever considered, that you must be born again, not only of water, but of the Spirit, before you can enter into the kingdom of God? that, being by nature sinful, you must be renewed in your mind by the Holy Ghost given unto you? and that, without Him, you cannot get the better of sin, or do anything really good? All this you profess when you say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." But has any such inward change really taken place in you? Have you been turned from darkness to light, from the love of sin to the love of holiness?

You believe that there is a life everlasting, a glorious inheritance, a rest remaining for the people of God? Are you labouring to enter into it? Or does your life belie your profession? Do you show that heaven is only a word upon your lips? that this world is the object of all your thoughts, and care, and affections, and enjoyments?

My brethren, God is nigh to all them, and to them only, who call upon Him in truth. Give up your heart to Him, through Jesus Christ: take Him for your portion and your treasure: then will His worship be your delight; then will you bring Him a spiritual sacrifice; and, with David, you will be able to say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee. . . . For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand." Amen.

## SERMON XIV.

ORDER OF MORNING PRAYER.—PART III.

EPH. vi. 18.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

SUCH was the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the Church at Ephesus. He had been describing that armour of God, in which the believer must be clad, that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil in the hour of temptation. And in the words of the text he shows how only that armour can be girded on; how only it can be kept bright and ready for instant use; how only the Christian can be defended from evil, or draw down on himself and on the Church of Christ blessings in time and for eternity. In these words, the Apostle exhorts them to prayer; to continual, spiritual, watchful, persevering prayer; to prayer comprising all needful subjects, and not confined to themselves alone, but embracing, in its range of charity, all the saints of the living God. Such

is the direction given us for drawing near in supplication to the Father of all mercies, and Giver of all good; and by this and other precepts of Holy Scripture the prayers of our liturgy have been modelled. Confession of sin; thanksgiving for mercies received; fervent petitions for temporal and eternal blessings to ourselves; earnest intercessions for the whole race of mankind—as well for the Church of Christ, as for those who are yet strangers to His fold; for all ranks and conditions, for the ruler and the subject, the high and low, the sick, the sorrowing and distressed: through all these subjects, following the guidance of God's holy word, have we to-day been led in united supplication. Nor does the liturgy teach us only for what, but how, we ought to pray. It ever reminds us that, in ourselves, we are utterly unworthy to draw near to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; it bids us not come in our own name, but in the name, and through the mediation, of Him who, as God, reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in equal and co-eternal Majesty; but as man, clad in our form and nature, is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; who, as man, suffered, as God, redeemed us; whose blood alone cleanseth from sin; through whom alone we have access to the Father. Sprinkled with that precious blood, the prayer of the penitent and believing, the praise of the thankful heart ascends to heaven,

more welcome than the incense from Aaron's censer. And as each prayer closes its petition with the only name given under heaven whereby we can be saved, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; so are we taught, early in the service, to pray for the Spirit, in the words of David, "O God, make clean our hearts within us," "And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us." For except that Spirit help our infirmities, except we seek His holy inspiration, we neither know what to pray for as we ought, nor shall we ever offer that fervent effectual prayer which availeth much. Whence comes the coldness and deadness of our prayers? Whence comes the distracted and wandering mind? Whence the vain repetition of words without power? It is from this, that we have not earnestly sought, do not continually depend on the secret assistance of the Holy Ghost. From Him alone is the spirit of prayer; from Him the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the ardent longing for spiritual grace which prompts the inward, fervent wrestling of the soul with God, the holy resolution that we will not leave Him except He bless us. Are we ever, my brethren, disposed to esteem our forms of public prayer dead and unprofitable? Do we think that we find no spiritual good resulting? If so, may not the fault be surely found in this, that we look not to the Spirit of God to enable us,—to go before and follow us; in all things to direct and

rule our hearts, that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Him, may by Him be enabled to worship God in spirit and in truth? Such is a general view of the prayers in which we are privileged to join; let us observe them more closely in their appointed order.

When the conscience has been absolved from sin, the affections warmed by praise, the understanding enlightened by the word of God, and a public profession of faith made in the Creed, we proceed to the remaining part of Divine worship, supplication and prayer; “to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul.” But, ere the knees are bowed in prayer, the priest, like Aaron of old, pronounces his blessing: “The Lord be with you;” and the people reply to him as to one who is to speak unto God for them, “And with thy Spirit.” O that when you utter those words, my brethren, you would truly think of and pray for your minister, that with devotion and with power he may lead your prayers! And now, when we approach in supplication the Majesty of heaven, we begin with a cry like that of the contrite publican, and repeat in humble earnestness, addressing each person of the blessed Trinity,—“Lord, have mercy upon us.” “Christ, have mercy upon us.” “Lord, have mercy upon us.” Then, the prayer of our Lord Himself is again offered. A few brief petitions, chiefly the inspired words of the Psalmist, fol-

low; and so we proceed to general supplication for ourselves and others.

The Collects for Sundays and Holy-days (from which each of those days claims its own) are a treasury of prayer for every Christian. Breathing the Spirit of calm and holy piety, they seek to build on the foundation of sound doctrine all the graces of the Christian life. How many an awakened soul, scarcely able to frame a prayer to a yet unknown God, has in them found apt words to pour out its feelings, to give utterance to its intense desires! The most advanced believers could not present at the throne of grace prayers more exalted, more comprehensive. After the proper Collect, we next ask, in the second and third Collects, for peace, protection, and grace sufficient for the day.

Then, in the general Litany, in language simple, expressive, beautiful, in the spirit of wrestling, importunate supplication, we implore all blessings on body and soul, for ourselves and others. We approach the everlasting Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; we cast ourselves low before the great, the unsearchable God; we confess ourselves miserable sinners. Do we, my brethren, indeed feel what we confess? Do none utter those words, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," whose eyes have never been opened to see that they are such? In the former part of the Litany we pray for ourselves; in the latter we intercede

for others. We ask God, first, for pardon; we beseech Him by His redeeming love—that most constraining plea—to spare us; we entreat Him to deliver us from the worst of enemies, the most fearful of all evils—from sin, from Satan, and from eternal damnation. We pray, too, that He will not visit us with temporal judgments; that the lightning and the storm may not harm us; that His awful scourges, the plague, the pestilence and famine, murder and desolating war, sedition and rebellion, may not execute His righteous vengeance upon a guilty land, whose ten thousand abominations daily provoke His anger. We ask, too, for deliverance from sudden death. The Litany, as we proceed, increases in earnestness. We approach with holy boldness the Son of God. We plead His unsearchable mercy, as though we said: O Jesus, Thou wast incarnate, and made man for us; for us Thou wast born, circumcised, baptized; for us Thou didst bear fasting and temptation; for us was Thine agony and bloody sweat, Thy cross and suffering, Thy death and burial; for us Thy rising again, and Thine exaltation in heaven; for us Thou hast poured out the Spirit from on high. Hear us, then, O Lord, by these Thy mercies, Thy wondrous love, and deliver us: deliver and help us, in all time of tribulation, when afflictions grieve us; in all time of our wealth, when the world ensnares us; in the last earthly trial of death; in the great and

awful day, when Thou shalt come to judgment. O Jesus, Redeemer, Saviour, then be mighty to save us, we beseech Thee!—From such petitions we pass on to pray for others; and, as the Apostle has exhorted that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority;” the Litany, according to his exhortation, teaches us to spread wide the arms of charity, and embrace all mankind. And, first, we pray for the Holy Catholic Church, God’s witness upon earth, purchased with the blood of His dear Son, that He would vouchsafe to sanctify and govern it. We pray for our sovereign as the earthly head of that branch of the Church to which we belong; and for all the appointed pastors of the flock. We ask wisdom for our counsellors; grace for our magistrates; for God’s people, blessing; for all nations unity, harmony, and peace. We seek happiness for ourselves and others, in a heart obedient to God’s holy word and will. For the erring wanderer from God’s fold; for the weak, the faint, the fallen; for the troubled, the sick, the desolate, the prisoner, the orphan, and the widow; for all, the prayer of charity is poured forth to Him, who hears and answers prayer—the Friend of the friendless and the sorrowful, the Father of the fatherless, the God of the widow. Another request must yet be added, or where were the love which Christ has taught us?—our enemies,

persecutors, and slanderers must share our forgiving intercession. Then, after asking for the fruits of the earth, and for their preservation to our use, we sum up all in earnest prayer for the gift of true repentance; for pardon of our sins, negligences, and ignorances; for God's Holy Spirit, for amendment of life; and we fly again for succour to Him who is mighty to save, to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. To Him we cry with repeated importunity, and, as though conscious of the imperfection of our own prayers, again approach the Father in His Son's most perfect words. A few more supplications for help and protection in time of trouble are added.

A most important subject then claims our prayers. O how earnestly, my brethren, should that prayer be offered! How should we entreat the spirit of grace and wisdom on the assembled parliament of our realm! and that He who sits above all, and turns the hearts of men, even as the streams of water, whither He will, may indeed direct and prosper all their consultations. This, beloved brethren, is the Christian's politics; this his patriotism; this his hope of refuge. The God of nations, the King of kings, hears the prayer of the humble. The strength of kingdoms is not in the wisdom of man's policy, nor in the force of armies, but in the secret prevailing prayer of God's saints. O you who know and love God, remember, we beseech you, the

power of prayer. Let your intercessions with God be fervent; pray and cease not.

When our requests have thus been fully made known to Him, who careth for us, well may we bring the closing tribute of thanksgiving; well may we join in blessing the Father of all mercies for all His providential, for all His spiritual blessings. The grateful thought should arise, that He has cast our lot in a Christian land, and caused His Gospel's glorious light to shine upon our way; that He preserved us when we hanged yet upon our mother's breast in helpless infancy; guided us in childhood; and when, it may be, we knew Him not, and wandered far from His paths, He still watched over us with a father's eye, and led our steps in safety. And if for these blessings we owe thanksgiving to our God, what do we owe to Him if we have been taught to know the riches of redeeming love? what, if His grace in Christ Jesus has visited our hearts? has given us to see somewhat of the evil of sin? of the beauty of holiness? of the excellence of that inheritance which shall be revealed? If this be so with any of you, who has thus made you to differ? who has called you from a world that lieth in wickedness? You will say, To God be all the glory, all the praise. To Him will you joyfully offer the fruit of the lips, giving thanks to His name; and you will pray, that not only with your lips, but in your lives, you may show forth His praise; that you may present your-

selves to Him a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and that, walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all your days, you may at length attain His everlasting kingdom. O that we may this day have joined in the worship of God with the spirit and with the understanding! May we have listened with holy fear to His righteous and perfect law! May we have truly prayed that He would write all His laws upon our hearts! May we have rejoiced in the sound of His Gospel, whispering peace to the contrite and believing soul! So shall we not have offered the sacrifice of fools, but retire rich in blessings from this sanctuary, where God's honour dwelleth.

Excellent and beautiful, my beloved brethren, are the services of our Church, whether she gathers us, as to-day, to worship the Lord in the congregation; or whether she brings to the holy font the tender infant, and there commits it in faith and prayer to Him who feeds His flock like a shepherd, and carries the lambs in His bosom; or whether she leads the youthful soldier of the cross to receive in confirmation the seal of vows once made for him and now become his own; or whether she invites every believer to draw near, and taste the sacred pledges of Christ's dying, redeeming love; or hallows, with her holy sanction, that wedlock which God has blessed; or in her last sad office

commits to the kindred earth all which is corruptible of man, in hope of a better and glorious resurrection to them that die in the Lord. How sweet, how exalting, how consoling in all, is our mother Church's prayer! O that the Spirit of the Lord may be more abundantly poured out upon her; that her spots may be wiped away; that the arm of the Lord may uphold and defend her; and make her yet more and more a bulwark of His truth, a glory and praise to His name in the earth.

## SERMON XV.

HEARING WITHOUT DOING.

JAMES i. 22.

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

THERE are very many ways, brethren, in which we deceive ourselves respecting our spiritual state before God; and in the text the Apostle James warns us against one in particular, namely, that of being hearers only of the word of God, and not doers. Is this an unnecessary caution? They will not think so who know anything of their own hearts. One of the great works which a minister of Christ must attend to is, to persuade his people to become readers and hearers of God's word. When he knows that they study the Scriptures, and sees them attending in God's house, and listening to His word read and preached, he feels that they are then at least in the way of getting good, of becoming wise unto salvation. Another, and a highly important work is, to press upon himself and them the necessity of not being hearers only,

but doers of what they hear, lest they deceive themselves to their eternal ruin. It is a sad but certain truth, that the unconverted heart of man not only dislikes but hates real religion; and this dislike and hatred work in different ways. Some are thereby led to neglect their bibles, and to keep away altogether from public worship, because they have no use for it, and what they hear at church does not always leave them quite so easy in their sins. But if they do come to church and hear God's word, then they are tempted to be satisfied with having heard it, and think no more is necessary; or if conscience prick,—if our own heart condemn us, we then find out ways of hushing conscience and stifling conviction, and are glad to let any serious impressions that may have arisen pass away. My brethren, is it not so? Does God's word abide with you? Do you not only hear, but understand? Do you not only understand, but follow and obey? The word of God is like a looking-glass, to show us to ourselves,—to bring us and our sins, as it were, face to face. Do we, after we have seen ourselves faithfully represented there, either say, 'This cannot be like me?' or go away and forget what manner of men we were?

I. The Apostle speaks in the text of "hearers only." When are we so? It is when all the good we get ends with the hearing, and goes no further. Why are portions of Holy Scripture

read every Sunday in church? Surely, that we may carry away some lesson to make us better and wiser; surely, that we may think of what we have heard, and try our own heart and life by it, and endeavour to practise it. But how many, I fear, if they listen to the Lessons at all, do no more! They never think of asking themselves, What is there in this Scripture to do me good? what sin does it convict me of? what new truth does it teach me? what promise is there in it of God's grace? They do not lift up their heart to God in prayer, that He would bless His word to their souls' good.

So, too, with the Sermon:—how many are hearers only! how few, in any congregation, are really endeavouring to follow the light they have, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, by a holy and humble life! Many motives may bring “hearers only” to the house of God. Some may come from custom; some from curiosity; some, because they would not be thought by their fellow-men to be wholly without religion. Brethren, if the eye of man could distinguish the chaff from the wheat—the “hearer only” from the humble and faithful servant of Christ; would there be many found among us, who hear with pleasure and profit the words of eternal life, who do the will of God from the heart, and let their light so shine that men may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven? “Hearing only”

is easy work. It requires no self-denial, no labour, no sacrifice, no dying to the world and to sin, no newness of heart and life. In it there is no proof of true repentance, of a saving faith, of conversion to God, of preparation for heaven and glory. Brethren, are we among the "hearers only," deceiving ourselves.

1. We are surely so, if the word of God which we hear, does not separate us from our sin. Herod, the king of Galilee, of whom we read in the Gospels, was a hearer only. The word of the Lord was preached to him by a faithful minister, by John the Baptist, who, our Lord Himself said, was a burning and a shining light. And Herod feared John, because he was a holy man; and we are told, moreover, that he "heard him gladly," and did many things that John exhorted him to do. But one thing he did not. He did not part with the sin he loved—the sin of adultery; and when the holy Baptist faithfully reproved him for this, he could not bear the admonition; he threw his adviser into prison, and at last put him to death. Judas Iscariot was a "hearer only." He listened to Eternal Truth itself; he heard Him who spake as never man spake, and yet his heart clung to its vile love of money, and for a few pieces of silver he betrayed his Master and his Saviour.

2. We are "hearers only," when the word of God makes no more than a passing impression. It may be listened to with interest and pleasure;

some feelings may be excited; some wish to be a Christian indeed, may arise; the heart may be touched for the moment. Many persons will take delight to hear of the love which God has shown to sinful man, in giving His own Son to die for our redemption. But how often this is all! They go forth, and every impression of what they have heard passes away, like the circles made by a stone on the smooth surface of the water: for a few moments there is motion, and then all is still again. The heart sinks back into its former state of deep worldliness and quiet indifference. God spoke of such long since to the prophet Ezekiel, when He said, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." (Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.)

3. Another reason why so few of those who are hearers of the word, are doers of it also, is, because faith is wanting—faith to receive it as the word of God. "The word preached," says St. Paul concerning the Jews, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Heb. iv. 2.) But he speaks very differently of the Christians at Thessalonica:—

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thess. ii. 13.) But some may say, How can we have faith? I answer, you must seek it in prayer: it is God’s gift. Ask Him truly in the name of Christ, and ye shall receive.

4. To faith must be added self-application. How easy is it, brethren, to let the word of God pass by ourselves, while we fix it upon others! How easy to turn off its light upon some dark spot in a neighbour, while we will not let it enter our own bosoms, to show us the sin and the folly that are lurking there! Yet this is one great use of God’s word, as given us in the Bible. It is meant to bring us to a knowledge of ourselves. It lays bare to view every evil inclination, every weakness, every wandering, to which our frail hearts are liable. It comes home to our business and to our bosoms. As it has been truly said, it puts its finger, as it were, on the black spot within us, and utters in the ears of every one of us those awful words, “Thou art the man!” Yet, for want of applying it to ourselves, its voice may sound, and its eye be fixed upon us in vain. David, after he had committed the fearful sin of adultery, sat and listened to the words of

Nathan the prophet; and, though they were framed to convince him of his sin, though his own case was exactly described in the parable of the rich man who took away the poor man's lamb, he never dreamt that he himself was intended. Nay, so little thought he of his sin, that he passed sentence of death on the supposed offender; Nathan's voice, "Thou art the man," was necessary to bring the charge home to his own bosom. Brethren, we have each of us a Nathan at hand, if we will hear and heed the voice. Our own heart, our own conscience—these, if we pray for God's Spirit to enlighten them, will tell us when His word touches ourselves. And O, if you prize your salvation, shrink not from that touch, however painful it may be. Place yourselves honestly in the light of Scripture. Let it bring to your own view the very secrets of your heart. Let your most besetting sin be judged by it. As you would take a candle to search for something in a dark room, so take God's word, to examine the chambers of your own bosom.

But, perhaps, the light will fall on what you had rather keep concealed and hidden, even from your own remembrance. Yet, is it not better to know the worst, while there is hope of a remedy? If a man's limb is mortifying, and he must have it taken off, or die; will he not submit himself to the surgeon's hand, and bear the pain to save his life? And shall we shrink

from the pain of seeing ourselves as we are, if we may thereby be led to seek and find pardon and a cure? Let us be only brought to feel, that we are labouring under a sickness which none but God can heal; that we are threatened by dangers which only He can ward off; that He and none else can deliver us from the burden of our sorrow: let us be fully persuaded of this, and then the Scriptures will be no longer a source of pain, but a well-spring of comfort and delight to us. For if they wound, they also have power to cure. Whatever sore we are suffering from, the Bible has a balm and a medicine for healing. As the good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the fainting and bleeding traveller, so do the Scriptures bring a remedy to the wounded conscience; for they hold out the blood of Jesus Christ, and the sweet and precious influence of His Holy Spirit. In a word, they set before us Immanuel, God with us—that good Physician, who came to seek and to save the lost, and who in the Scriptures still cries to every one of us, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.”

II. When the word of God is thus applied to us in spirit and in power; when we thus take it home to ourselves; then we become “doers of it, and not hearers only.” When our Lord is comparing God’s word to seed, and the hear-

ers of it to different sorts of ground, He likens the good soil, where the seed grows and bears fruit, to those who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience. Mark these last words. They teach us how to become doers of the word, and that we cannot be so without effort and labour. We must keep it—keep the impression of it in our minds. Satan, our Lord tells us, is at hand to catch it away; temptation will be like a hot sun to burn it up; the cares of the world will be apt to choke it. To keep it, then, so as to profit by it, requires watching, and thought, and much prayer. When you leave church, do not let the first idle speech you hear drive away every serious feeling. And when we have succeeded in keeping in our hearts and memories something of what we have heard, then comes the most difficult and important work of all—that of doing, of practising, of making the word of God bear upon our daily life and conduct—our tempers, words, and actions. Hence it is that we want, as our Saviour tells us, patience; patient waiting on God in prayer; patient struggling with our own weakness and rebellious will; patient endeavour day by day to perform our proper work and duties, to the glory of God.

Wide is the difference, brethren, between being a doer of God's word, and a hearer only. The "hearer only" is like a man who

has a journey to make, and who has had full instructions about the road he should go, but yet sits at home without moving. The doer of the word, on the other hand, is like one who, having learnt the way, and counted the cost, has set out fully determined to reach the place he is bound for. In a word, the difference is the same as between the true Christian and one who bears the name only. The doer of God's word denies ungodliness and worldly lusts, and wishes and prays that his whole soul may become an habitation of God through the Spirit; the "hearer only" may be hiding and indulging iniquity within. The doer of the word walks humbly and closely with God, in watchfulness and prayer; the "hearer only" keeps far from God, making no preparation for the day of trial. It is only of the doer of God's word that it can be said, that he is a real follower of Jesus; that his faith is unfeigned; his love sincere; his hope the hope of glory, built on a sure foundation.

III. Be ye, then, beloved brethren, thus "doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." What has our "hearing," what has our religion done for us? Has it convinced us of our sin? Has it humbled us before God? Has it brought us, as penitents, to Jesus Christ, for mercy and pardon? Has it wrought any change in our heart

and conduct? Are you any nearer to God? Is any besetting sin forsaken? Do you make God's word and will the rule of your daily life? Let us examine ourselves, lest we be self-deceivers; lest we be found among those who cry, Lord, Lord, but do not the things which He says; lest we fall under that awful description which our Lord has given us, "Every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Be, then, "doers of the word." If hitherto you have been hearers only, begin to take a new course. Think on what God says to you in the Scriptures. Try to do His will. His grace will then, for Christ's sake, meet you and help you. Pray to Him constantly; keep holy the sabbath, and command your servants and households to do the same. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you, and you will know by degrees the full meaning of that promise of Jesus Christ, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

May the Spirit of the living God teach us that hearing without doing is not religion; that knowledge without practice will not bring us to

heaven! May the grace of Jesus Christ so rest upon us, and constrain us, that we, being not forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, may be blessed in our deed, and may not be disappointed in our hope, in life, in death, or in eternity!

## SERMON XVI.

### THE TWO WAYS.

MATT. vii. 13, 14.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

THESE are plain words, my brethren; and the plainer they are, the greater is the mercy that speaks in them. God willeth not that any should perish; and in the Scriptures, which are His word, He sets before us, by marks that cannot be mistaken, the way of life and the way of death. When He speaks of destruction awaiting the impenitent, it is that He may warn us to flee from it; when He tells us of everlasting happiness, it is to persuade us to follow after it. For this gracious purpose the words of the text are written in the Bible—words of deep and awful meaning, yet how little regarded! May the Holy Spirit impress them on our hearts to-day with mighty and lasting power!

I. The first great truth which they teach us is, that there are but two roads in which all

mankind are travelling; in the one or the other of which each of us is at this moment. These two roads are called, from the ends to which they severally lead, the way of destruction and the way of life. The Scriptures speak of no other. According as God sees men proceeding in one or the other, so does He divide them into two classes, and no more. However great may be the difference in other respects, as, for instance, in worldly circumstances; before Him two states only are recognised in regard to eternal things. The Scriptures represent two events only as awaiting us:—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 16.) "There shall be a resurrection," it is said, "of the just and unjust;" the one to everlasting life, the other to shame and everlasting contempt. When an account is given of the awful day of judgment, mankind are divided into two classes only, the sheep and the goats; those who are placed on the right hand of the Judge, and those who are placed on the left; "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. xxv. 46.) We need not multiply texts from Scripture. We know it to be declared there, that all must be either happy or miserable for ever. Let us then, make a right use of this truth which we all admit. Let us bring it home to ourselves, to our own hearts. Let us reflect how

deeply we are concerned in it. Let us consider with ourselves, that there are but two ends, towards one of which we are daily travelling—destruction or life. There are but two states—everlasting torment and eternal glory, in one or other of which we must be placed for ever. And in one of the two roads that lead to them we must now be walking. The paths cannot fail to lead to their respective ends. If we go on in the way of destruction, we shall surely come to destruction; if we walk in the way of life, we shall as surely attain eternal life. God has told us, that as we sow so we must reap; that the end, the wages of sin is death, but the end of holiness is everlasting life. Accordingly the Scriptures speak of men under two names only; as believers, or unbelievers; as servants of sin, or servants of holiness; as children of God, or children of the devil. They recognise no middle state; no path running between the two great roads, in which we may walk without the fear of hell, even though we may have no very bright hope of heaven. It is of great importance to be persuaded of this. For we all are inclined to halt between two opinions; to hope, that, though we are not Christians indeed, yet God will not surely punish us eternally. But to think this, is only to deceive ourselves miserably and for ever.

My dear brethren, do not shrink from looking steadfastly at this truth—that each one of you

must be going onwards, either in the way of life, or in the way of destruction. Let us dare to consider it, with all its consequences. Let us say each to himself, 'Is it indeed so? Are there but two roads, one guiding to heaven, and one having its end in hell? Must I be following one or the other of these? And am I advancing accordingly, day by day, and hour by hour, nearer to Christ, to God, and to glory? or am I, indeed, every moment going farther away from all that is pure, and holy, and happy, and becoming more and more fitted for the company of evil spirits and of damned souls? As sure as the words of Christ are true, I must be growing in grace, or growing in sin. If my back is turned on heaven, if I am going in the opposite direction, every moment is placing me at a more awful distance, every step is increasing the difficulty of a return. Does it not concern me, then, to stop and consider? Shall I not ask myself, and that seriously, which road have I taken? which company of travellers have I joined—the wayfarers to heaven, or those whose end cannot be thought of without fear and horror?' Surely we should wish to be able to answer these questions; and that which follows in the text may enable us to do so. Marks are set upon the two roads to enable us to distinguish between them. Our blessed Lord has not left us in ignorance and darkness on so important a subject.

II. The way of destruction is described in the text by the following marks:—

1. The gate is wide. There is no difficulty in entering in. There needs no self-denial, no striving, no mastery over ourselves. Our own hearts naturally carry us towards it. We may be said to enter it as soon as we are born; for we are by nature children of wrath, and from the moment that we begin to indulge our own hearts' lusts, and sinful desires and passions, instead of obeying the law and Spirit of God, from that moment we are travellers in the way of destruction.

2. And as the gate of entrance is wide, so is the way broad. It is broad, because it admits of many paths, all forming, however, but one road, and all leading but to one end. The ways of sin are various; the devices of Satan for man's destruction are manifold. "All we," says the prophet, "like sheep have gone astray;" and he adds, "we have turned every one to his own way." Suppose an army of soldiers marching across a country to a certain spot. They may be moving along several roads, all bearing to the same place; they may be different in their language, nation, dress; yet they all carry the same colours; they all are serving under the same commander; they will all meet at last on the same field. So it is with those who are travelling along the way of destruction. All are going in the same direction;

all are the servants of sin; all have forsaken God; all are pleasing themselves. But the besetting sin, the ruining sin, that which holds each in especial bondage, is different in different men. It may be the love of money, or the love of pleasure, or the love of ease, or the sinful lusts of the flesh. One openly breaks God's commandments; another secretly keeps back his heart from God. Thus the way of destruction is a broad way, because there are many paths in it. But it is also called broad, because it is easy travelling there. It is smooth and pleasant to the flesh. Sin and Satan spread their delights along it. Fruits pleasant to the eye hang by the roadside, and tempt us to gather them. Men go along carelessly and joyously. 'It is a good way,' they say, 'what matter where it leads to?'

3. As the gate is wide, and the way broad, so there are many that go in thereat. This is another mark of the way of destruction. It is well trodden; it is thronged with travellers. And what wonder? If all men naturally love sin and the pleasures of sin, where may we expect to find the greatest part of them, but in the way of destruction? That way, then, is the way of this present world. Those who walk in it are all they who, forgetting and neglecting God, live for this world; whose principles and conduct are according to the spirit of the world. These are the multitude who keep one another

in countenance; who encourage each other by word and example in their course of ungodly carelessness and deadness to all religion.

III. Now turn to consider the way of life. See what are its marks. In every respect we find it the very opposite to the way of destruction.

1. In the first place, the gate is strait, that is, narrow and confined. The gate of the way of destruction is wide, and stands open before us, inviting us to come in. But the gate of life is not so easy to enter. And why? Has God made it hard? Is He unwilling that we should find the path of life? Surely not. But our own corrupt hearts love it not. We must struggle, we must put force upon ourselves, we must do violence to our own inclinations, we must seek and obtain grace from heaven, before we can so much as pass through the gate, or take one step in the way to eternal life. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

2. And after we have entered, we find that the way is narrow. There are many paths leading to destruction; there is but one that leads to life. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And what is holiness? It is to believe in Jesus Christ, to love God, and to have His Holy Spirit dwelling in us; to deny ourselves, that we may do His will; to raise our-

selves by faith and prayer above the world, and to set our affections on things above. This is the way of life, and there is no other; there is no short cut to heaven. And it is, therefore, called a narrow way, not only because it is but one, but also because it requires of us constant endeavour, unceasing watchfulness, mastery over ourselves. Jesus Christ has told us plainly, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." This is the will of God, even our sanctification.

3. No wonder, then, that the other mark of the way of life is this, "Few there be that find it." It is a way but little travelled. Men love ease; they naturally care for the pleasures of the body which are at hand. It is hard to be persuaded to think of spiritual joys. Superior as they are, and though they bring a sweetness which the world cannot give, most of us are content to let them go, because we do not like the pains and trouble of seeking them, because we have no heart for them. How few were persuaded by Jesus Christ Himself! How few, compared with the great mass of mankind, believed the preaching of the Apostles, and entered in at the strait gate! And still how few there be that find it! Christ's flock is indeed a little flock.

Such are the two ways which the text de-

scribes. Such the marks whereby we may know them. And now, can we not examine ourselves? Can we not form a judgment, in which of the two we ourselves are walking? Let us put to ourselves such questions as these:—Is the road which I am travelling the way of the many, or the way of the few? Am I doing as others do? Am I going on easily and carelessly, satisfied with being tolerably decent in my outward conduct, but never troubling myself to please God? never reflecting how my soul stands in reference to eternity? Am I joining the multitude to do evil? Am I following the way of the world? Or have I left this way? Have I turned my feet from the broad, the smooth, the downward road? Have I entered in at the strait gate? Have I repented before God, and forsaken by His grace the sins which I once loved? Have I begun to lead a new life? Do I pray, and strive, and struggle to keep on in the narrow road? Am I conscious of a warfare within me, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh? Do I now take God's word for my rule and guide, and try to keep it? Do I look to Him through Jesus Christ continually for help and strength? Do I allow myself in nothing, either before God or man, which my conscience tells me is wrong? Do I pray to God through Christ day by day? Do I ask Him for His Holy Spirit? Do I hope for heaven? Are my heart and my treasure there?

Beloved brethren, what does conscience answer to these questions? Does it bear witness to you that you are indeed sincerely walking in the narrow way? Have you found mercy from God to be faithful? If so, bless Him for His great goodness; hold fast unto Christ; press onwards; turn not back to folly; lay hold on eternal life. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved;" "but if any man draw back, My soul," saith God, "shall have no pleasure in him."

But does conscience rather say to you, Thou knowest nothing, feelest nothing, doest nothing of these things which belong to the strait gate and the narrow way; thou art still in the broad road? O listen to the monitor. Remember, that the broad way is surely the way of destruction. Easy as it seems, its end is death. Stay, then, no longer. Come out, and be separate. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Strive, and you shall enter. The time past may suffice to have walked in the road of sin and death. Henceforth, begin to walk in the way of life. Begin to draw nigh to God in prayer, and He will draw nigh to you. "Him that cometh to Me," saith Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out."

## SERMON XVII.

CHRIST THE WAY.

JOHN xiv. 6.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way.”

IF a man on a long journey were going through a country he did not know, and found himself perplexed and lost amid a multitude of paths; if, the more he tried to get right, the more he should seem to bewilder himself; and if, when he was ready to lie down in despair, he should hear some friendly voice calling aloud, ‘This is the way; follow me, and I will guide you right;’ would not his heart bound within him? and, having quite lost all hope of finding the way himself, would he not resign himself implicitly to the guidance offered him? So when a man, in this evil world, begins in earnest to think of his soul, and wishes to find the way to God, he is often at first like one that has lost himself; he sees that he has been a long time wandering from the right path, following sin and folly, stumbling on in darkness and blindness. How

shall he get into the right track? how shall he set his face towards heaven? Like the prodigal son, he desires to arise, and go to his Father, whom he has left and forgotten, but how shall he set about it? To such a one—to the repenting sinner, to the inquiring soul, Jesus speaks in the text and says, “I am the way.”

O if we were really in earnest about our salvation, how should we listen to these words! how should we ask what they mean! Alas! brethren, this is the last thing we are willing to concern ourselves about. The way to get money; the way to be easy and comfortable in the world; the way to gratify the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; the ways of sin and ungodliness: all these are sought after and followed. But where are they who inquire the way to God? That is a narrow way, and few there be that find it. When I look round on this congregation, and think how very many are staying at home who might be here, I cannot but feel—O that I could feel with the sorrow I ought—that few desire to find that way.

May God give us, dear brethren, a better mind, a wiser heart! May we hear to-day our Saviour's voice, and have grace to follow Him, who is the way to God, to peace, to happiness, to heaven; for truly there is salvation in no other; there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved.

At the beginning of the chapter from which

the text is taken, Jesus Christ speaks words of comfort to His disciples whom He is about to leave. He tells them that He is going to His Father's house above, there to make ready a place for them; and that He would come again and take them thither. "And whither I go," He says, "ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him," in the words of the text, "I am the way." I, and I only, can bring you near to God; for "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

Let us then consider, 1st. How Christ is the way to God. 2ndly. How we must follow this way.

### I. How is Christ the way?

1. Christ is the way, because He teaches us to know God. He is the "light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "No man hath seen God at any time," for He is a spirit; "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father; He hath declared Him." "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Christ is therefore called "The Word" in the first chapter of St. John, because, as we make known our thoughts one to another by our words, so He came to make known His Father's will. Thus He teaches us in the Gospel that God is a spirit, and they that

worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. In Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. They who saw Him saw the Father; for He is the image of the invisible God. Though He had put off His divine glory, and came and lived on earth as a man, yet in Him the wisdom, power, goodness, and holiness of God were plainly seen. Christ was God come on earth, that He might show us something of what God is in heaven. And none of us now can know God rightly, unless we study the words and character of Jesus Christ, as they are set forth in the Scriptures.

2. Christ is the way, because He has died to make our peace with God. He has offered a sacrifice for sin. Those of you who read your bibles least, or think least of what you read or hear, must sometimes have been struck with the account given in the Gospels of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Even you must sometimes have thought, what is the meaning of these things? Christ had done no sin; why was He led as a lamb to the slaughter? why did He humble Himself to death, even the death of the cross? O that you might go further, and think, Was it not for me? was it not to bear my sins? and what then must sin be? It was even so: Christ died to pay our ransom. If He had not died, our iniquities must for ever have separated between us and God. But now, by His blood-shedding, He has made a new and living way into the holy place,

even into the presence of God, for us. Do you understand what is meant by this? It means that we cannot come to God so as to be saved, unless we have our sins forgiven us, and are accepted by God; and there is nothing can cleanse us from our sins but the blood of Jesus Christ.

3. Once more: Christ is the way, because He has not only died for us, but He has risen from the dead, and is now our mediator in heaven. A mediator is one who acts for or between two parties. So Christ, who is both God and man, acts for God and for us. He offers our prayers, and makes them acceptable to the Father. If a man had a petition to make to the sovereign of his country, he would try to get one who was high at court to be his friend, and to obtain him a hearing. Christ is such a friend to us, when we carry our petitions to the great King. Whatever we ask truly and sincerely in His name, God promises to do for us. This is the reason why almost every prayer we use in Church ends with those words, "through Jesus Christ our Lord;" because through Him we draw nigh to God.

Thus is Christ our way, our only way to God and heaven. They who come to God by Him shall not fail; those who seek any other way, must bear their own weight of sin upon their souls—a weight which who can endure?

II. But how are we to use this way? How are we to enter it? How to keep in

it? How can we tell that we are following Christ?

1. The way to heaven is a way of faith, not of sight. We cannot see Jesus Christ; we cannot hear Him speak. We have never seen with our eyes the heaven to which He promises to lead His people, nor the hell from which He saves them. But, as He has told us, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Christ gives us His word, and on that we may rely. He is Truth. We need not fear to credit Him, and to stake the safety of our souls on His faithfulness; for the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him, amen. Men act in worldly matters on far less security. What makes so many leave this their native land, and cross the seas to another? Is it not because some have told them that they may better themselves there? And do they so readily believe the report of men, which so often deceives; and shall we, brethren, not believe Christ when He tells us that He is the way to God and to heaven? And shall we not show that we believe, by rising up and following Him? by leaving our sins? by coming out from this evil world? by setting ourselves steadfastly to flee from the wrath to come? So Noah believed the word of God, when He warned him that He would send a flood upon the earth; and he prepared an ark to the saving of his house. So Lot believed, when the angels came and told

him that the Lord would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and said to him, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." And he arose and fled.

2. The way to heaven is also the way of obedience, the way of holiness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "If ye love Me," says Jesus, "keep My commandments." This, my brethren, is the proof to which we must each bring ourselves. Do we keep Christ's words? do we have regard to all His precepts? do we strive to order our ways to please God? For He has assured us solemnly, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." "Every one that heareth My sayings, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it." We miserably deceive ourselves, if we imagine that we can go to heaven without a holy life; or if we think that we know Christ, and are following Him, when we willingly neglect or disobey any one of the least of His commandments.

3. That this may be applied more closely to our own consciences, let us remember that the way to heaven, the way which Christ teaches,

is also a way of purity. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: and we must take Him for our example. His Spirit cannot dwell in those who give way to and indulge the unclean lusts of the flesh. "Be not deceived," says the Apostle; "neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." No: heaven is a pure and holy place, and all its joys are pure. No heart that loves uncleanness can have entrance there. Are we praying and striving to be "pure in heart?" Are we through the grace of God not only abstaining from the act of sin, but are we mortifying every evil thought and desire? If not, we cannot be in the right way.

4. Again, the way to heaven, the way Christ teaches, and in which He has gone before us, is a way of love—love to all men for Christ's sake. "This is My commandment," He said, "that ye love one another." "Walk in love," says St. Paul, "as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Nothing is so often commanded us in Scripture; nothing so pressed upon us in every variety of manner as this,—that we should have fervent charity one towards another. It is made the mark of our being Christ's disciples:—"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love

one to another." It is the proof that we are born of God:—"Beloved," says St. John, "let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God." Ask, then, yourselves, whether you have this sign that you are in the right way? Do you practise this love? For instance, try yourselves in the point of forgiving one another. Can you follow Christ in this? Yea; can you forgive your enemies, and those that injure you? This is the highest point of love, and it is absolutely necessary to salvation. Try yourselves as to your tempers. Do you give way to angry passions? to violent, reproachful, abusive words? to peevishness, or sullenness, or gloom? Are you hard to please? easily offended? This is not love. Or do you fall into that fearfully common, but most hateful sin,—evil-speaking, slandering, and backbiting? This is not to follow Christ; this is not the way He teaches. No. What says the Scripture? "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted."

5. Once more: the way to heaven, the way Christ teaches, is the way of diligent attendance on all the ordinances of religion. Let none think this a light matter. It is a most evil and dangerous delusion which makes any suppose that they can save themselves without the help

of the services of the Church. It is the spirit of pride, and comes of the devil. God works by means, and those means are to be found in His Church and ministry. Forsake not, then, I beseech you, "the assembling of yourselves together" in this house of God; but rather invite others to come with you; for most surely, brethren, they are wandering far from the way of Christ, who keep not holy this His day; who waste its sacred and blessed hours in idleness; who do their own works, and seek their own pleasure therein; who suffer every vain and trifling excuse to keep them from the public worship of God. Unhappy are they; enemies to their own best interests; flinging away with contempt opportunities which they will bewail through all eternity! Unhappy, too, are they, and in much danger, who neglect from year to year the holy sacrament of Christ's most precious body and blood; who turn their back on the table of the Lord,—that special means of grace, than which there is no better, stronger help to carry us on in the narrow way of eternal life! May we, my brethren, remember the words of Jesus, that "except we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we have no life in us!"

And now, dear brethren, let me in conclusion press home upon you those most solemn words of Christ our Lord, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction,

and many there be which go in thereat;" whilst "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." There are but two roads, and we must be walking in one or the other. Are we going along with the multitude in the broad, smooth way which is pleasant to the flesh, but ends in death? This way tread the ungodly, the workers of iniquity, the swearer, the drunkard, the fornicator, the dishonest, the liar. In this way are the proud, the quarrelsome, the revengeful, the unforgiving. Here, too, are many who, in the eyes of the world, are decent and well spoken of, but whose heart and whose treasure are on earth, and who love not God; who mind earthly things alone. And who are those that follow Christ, the true, the narrow way? They are the poor in spirit; the penitent and contrite; the meek; the pure in heart; they that believe in Jesus, and, renouncing their own righteousness, trust in Him; they that forsake their sins, and pray daily for God's Holy Spirit to purify, and guide, and comfort them. To such is the promise given, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

Brethren, Christ saith to each of us to-day, "I am the way"—the way to God, to life eternal. Will you follow Him? Then must you

lay aside every weight, and the sin which does most easily beset you; then must you not, when you leave this house of God, go away, and drown amidst the world every better thought; but go and enter into your closet, and pray to your Father in secret, and to Jesus your Redeemer, and say, 'O Thou who art the way, the truth, and the life? Thou by whom we come to God,—Teacher, Saviour, Mediator, look down on me, a weak and helpless sinner; give me, O Lord, Thy grace, Thy Holy Spirit. Enable me to forsake the broad way, the way of destruction, and to follow Thee in that path of holiness and purity which leads to heaven and to glory. Wash out, in Thine own most precious blood, all my past transgressions, and make me a child of God, an heir of glory. Show me what is Thy will, and help me to perform it.'

And you, beloved brethren, who are striving to walk in the narrow way, to you I speak, in the words of the Apostle, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession

of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” (Heb. x. 19—24.) Amen.

## SERMON XVIII.

### DEPARTING FROM CHRIST.

JOHN vi. 67—69.

“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. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

WE are told, in the verse before these, that many persons who had been disciples of Jesus Christ, who had been for some time listening to His discourses, seeing the great miracles which He did, and going about with Him where He went, now, on a sudden, left Him, “went back, and walked no more with Him.” If we read the chapter, we see why this was. Jesus Christ had been speaking to them a doctrine which they could not understand. It was above them; or, rather, they did not like to understand it, it was too holy for them. So they turned their back upon Him; perhaps for ever.

Then it was, that, seeing many go away offended at His words, Jesus said to the twelve who were always with Him, “Will ye also go away?” ye whom I have chosen? It was grief

enough for Him who came to save sinners, to see any wilfully putting away from them eternal life. What would it be, if His own familiar friends forsook Him! But Peter, always forward and zealous, answered for them all, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" If we leave Thee, who else is there that can do us good? "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Though the disciples did not yet understand all Christ's words, yet they were sure that He taught them the right way to heaven. He had told them that they who believed in Him should live for ever; and they held fast by that plain saying, and were resolved (all, at least, but one) to cast in their lot with Him, for life and for death. And observe, my dear brethren, they knew why they did so; they believed Him to be much more than man; they did not think, as many of the Jews did, that He was Joseph's son, but they were sure that He was the Son of the living God, the Lord of all, God manifest in the flesh; and thus, that He was indeed that Christ, of whom the prophets had foretold, that He should come into the world. Now here brethren, we have two kinds of people brought before us; some who went away from Christ, and some who stayed with Him. We may make, by God's grace, this account very useful to ourselves. It is either a great warning, or a great encouragement, according as our hearts are disposed towards the truth.

I. Let us look at it as a warning. "Many of Christ's disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." They followed Him for a time, and up to a certain point; but then they left Him. Are not we in danger, now, of the very same thing? Let me apply it to-day to a particular case. Many persons attend, on the whole, constantly at church Sunday after Sunday, and so profess to be followers of Jesus Christ; but when an invitation is given them to come to the Lord's table, they leave others to do that, and turn away; and yet it is our Saviour's plain command, that we should eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him. If we look into the reason of this, we shall perhaps find that the Jews, who went away from Christ long ago, and those called Christians who turn away from His table now, act from much the same motives.

Let me speak plainly. Why is it, my brethren, that so many shrink back when this question is put before them, Will you come to the sacrament of Christ's body and blood? Some are really afraid of their own unworthiness; their faith is weak, and their knowledge is but small. These want to be instructed more, and to be encouraged; they should be dealt with tenderly. But you, if there be any such here, ought not to continue in this state. You must diligently pray for more faith, and seek for more instruction. If you do not try to come nearer to Christ,

you will surely go farther away from Him. You cannot remain as you are. But I fear, my dear brethren, that many may say, 'I am not fit to come to the sacrament,' would speak more truly if they said, 'I do not really wish to be fit;' and that those who say, 'I am no scholar, and do not understand it,' would be dealing more honestly with themselves, if they said, 'I have never really used any means to get a better knowledge about the matter;' for they surely know, that he who hath a willing mind is accepted of God, and that no one ever yet earnestly asked God to make him better, who was not heard. If a man were invited to some rich person's feast, he might say, I have no clothes fit to go in; but if he were then offered a suitable dress, and he still refused, it would be plain that his bad clothes were only an excuse, and that, in his heart, he did not wish to go. What, then, I would urge upon you is, that being unfit is indeed a reason for not going as we are, but none for not going at all. See here, then, brethren, one great use of the return of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood at stated times: it gives us a special opportunity of trying ourselves. A person may go on at other times easily enough. Coming to church does not put any particular mark upon him. He may content himself with being called a Christian, while He has no real faith in Christ as his Saviour; no love to Him in his heart; no

waiting on Him by prayer from day to day; no real endeavour to please Him in his life. But when such a person hears himself invited to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he thinks, and thinks truly, 'Here is something more than common; something that requires me to be more serious; something that brings God nearer. What am I to do?' Brethren, conscience within tells such a person what he ought to do. It whispers, 'You are unfit to go to this sacrament as you are; and if so, you are surely unfit to die. It is your duty, then, and your wisdom, to consider your ways; to turn to the Lord, and to pray to Him to give you a new heart and a right spirit.' Thus conscience, and thus God whispers. But there are other advisers—the devil, and the love of sin in our hearts. These say, 'Not yet, not yet. It is all very right to go to the sacrament; but to live as you ought to do, think how hard that is; and if you fall into sin afterwards, you will be worse than you are now. Wait awhile: after a time, you may have less to trouble you; and then you can think more of these things.' Thus many, very many put off repentance. Jesus speaks to them by His word, as often as His table is spread, and says, "Will ye go away? I am the bread of life." 'Come to Me in penitence and faith; believe truly in Me, and seek my spirit of grace, and your soul shall live for ever.' But they turn, and go away.

II. Let us compare with this conduct that of Christ's true disciples. St. Peter speaks the feelings of all those whose hearts have been led by the grace of God to set a value on Christ's salvation. Unto them that believe He is precious. Such a person sees many going away; perhaps he sees some who once seemed to have put their hand to the plough, turning back; and it is as if Christ asked him, 'Wilt thou also go away?' Then may he well answer, 'Lord, to whom shall I go?' Yes, brethren; to whom indeed?

Beloved brethren, those who leave Christ would do well to consider to whom they will go, and whether they can expect to find rest and peace anywhere but in Him. Shall we make court to the world? It will certainly deceive us. Shall we go back to sin? It will certainly destroy us. Shall we listen to those who call religion a lie? What can they give us in its place? Can they comfort us in sorrow, and in death? Shall we go where is the sound of merriment, where the drunkard fills his glass, and blasphemes his God. What shall we then do in the end thereof, when our flesh fails, and death and judgment are at hand? 'No,' says the believer, 'Lord, I come to Thee; let me never leave Thee, the fountain of living waters, to go and hew out for myself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Thy word hath said, they that are far from Thee shall perish.'

Does the devil suggest to the believer that he is too unworthy, too sinful to draw near to Christ? Does he whisper, 'How can a sinner, such as thou art, hope to be accepted?' Still the answer is, 'To whom else can I go? Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and He has said, that He will in no wise cast out any that come unto Him. I dare not stay away, though I may be unfit. The more unclean and guilty I am, the more need have I to go to Him, whose blood only can cleanse from sin; the weaker I am in myself, the more do I want His grace to strengthen me. No other can do for me what Christ can do. I will cleave to Him; He is my hope, my portion, and my refuge; and if I perish, I will perish at His feet.'

It was no blind faith, my brethren, which made St. Peter hold fast to Christ. He knew in whom he believed, and why; and if we would be enabled to venture our souls on Jesus, we must well consider who He is, and what He promises, and is able to do for us. So shall we be able to give a reason of the hope that is in us.

Consider Him, then, as the Son of the living God. You have often, brethren, in the Creed professed your belief, that Jesus is God's only Son; but have you thought upon that great and wonderful truth? have you considered what it means? Do you know that God was made man for us? that He who was born of the Vir-

gin Mary, was the same who made the world and all things therein; that when He is called the Son of God, it means that He was so from all eternity? that He is equal and one with the Father and the Holy Ghost? And have you thought, that this great and glorious God came down from heaven, and took upon Him our nature, becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, made like unto us in all things, only without sin! And why did He come? That He might keep that law of God which man had broken, and might lay down His life a ransom for many, bearing our sins in His own body on the cross. This, brethren, is the gospel truth, that Jesus Christ is both God and man. As man, He hath suffered for us; as God, He is almighty to save us. None but God could have brought us salvation; and none but man could have died in our stead. And not only did He once suffer on the cross, but now He is ever near to those who come to Him—near to them at all times, but especially in the sacrament of His body and blood. He is near to pardon, to strengthen, and refresh them.

Consider, also, what Jesus Christ promises to His people. “He has the words of eternal life.” Thus, in the chapter before us, He says, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood,”—every

one who by faith receives Me, loves and follows Me, and is quickened by My Spirit,—“hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” And again, Jesus saith, “I am the resurrection and the life; whosoever liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never die.” Yes, brethren, they who are now made Christ’s by His Spirit given unto them; who are now raised by His grace from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; who now walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; they shall not die eternally. They are Christ’s, and His sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Even now they have the earnest of His Spirit in their hearts; and He will raise them from the grave to dwell with Him in His everlasting kingdom and glory.

Brethren, to those of you, who have hitherto neglected to obey the Lord’s command, “Do this in remembrance of Me,”—to you Jesus seems to say, ‘Why will ye go away? How would I have gathered you together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.’ O, dear brethren, great and precious is the privilege of which you now deprive yourselves! You seem now each to say, ‘I can do without a Saviour. I have indeed been baptized into His Church, and have taken His vows upon me; but I have no intention of keeping those vows.’ What can we, your ministers, do for you? We would not cease to warn you;

to beseech you; to pray for you; until, by God's free grace, you are led to see your need of Christ, your sin and danger, your lost and ruined state; until the Lord make known to you His great salvation, and call you out from a world that lieth in wickedness to be sons of God, and heirs through grace of eternal glory. For, brethren, while we urge you to turn to God, we must also warn you, that without His renewing grace you can neither will nor perform anything that is good.

Finally, brethren, may we who kneel together at the Lord's table, learn there a lesson of love—love to that Lord who has so loved us as to lay down His life for us, and love to each other for His sake. May our hearts be enabled, with Peter, to choose Him indeed for our portion, whom to know rightly is eternal life; and, as often as sin and the world tempt us to be unfaithful to Him, may we hear His voice saying to us, "Will ye also go away?" Let us be watchful over ourselves; let us prove ourselves whether we be in the faith. Peter answered for all the twelve disciples; but Jesus knew there was one among them, a traitor and a devil. May, then, the holy power of that sacrament of which we partake monthly, not pass away from us. May we let men take notice of us, that we have been with Jesus. Again we are about to renew our covenant with Him; again to receive the pledges of His love; for the bread which we

break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? Highly favoured as we are, shall we not go forth to glorify in our life Him who has redeemed us with no corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with His precious blood? And let us be more earnest in prayer, more diligent in the study of God's word, more fervent in charity one to another; and thus let us wait for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XIX.

EXCUSES OF NON-COMMUNICANTS.

LUKE xiv. 18.

“ And they all with one consent began to make excuse.”

WE can each of us understand how painful it is, when in trying to show kindness to a person, we are met with slight and contempt. Suppose, for example, any one of us had, with much care and pains, got ready a feast, and asked our neighbours to come and partake of it; then if all or most of them took no notice of our message, or only made some trifling and vain excuse, should we not feel grieved and hurt? and the more so, in proportion as we had put ourselves to trouble and expense? We should be apt to say, ‘ Well, they are an ungrateful people. I will concern myself no more about them: I will ask them no more. The loss is their own. So might the Lord say of most of us, whom He has been, month after month, and it may be, year after year, inviting to a feast, not indeed for the body, but for the soul. As often as yonder table has been spread at the stated seasons, and

the bread and wine duly prepared, Jesus Christ has said to you, by the mouth of His ministers, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me." And of the wine,—“ Drink ye all of this; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins: Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me.” How often have you, brethren, been invited in this place to this sacred feast! and how have most of you, as it were with one consent, made excuse, and turned away! Thus you have grieved the loving kindness of the Lord; and yet He has invited you again and again, and even yet waits to be gracious unto you. It is my intention to-day, by His grace (which I earnestly pray may be with us), to look into some of the excuses which are made for not coming to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and to endeavour to show that they cannot stand before God.

I. First, then, it is not uncommon for people to say, 'I do not pretend to be a scholar, and I do not understand the meaning of this sacrament.'

Now to those who rest contented with this excuse I would say, What means have you taken, what pains have you been at, to become acquainted with its meaning? Can you really say, that you have been earnest to gain instruction? or have you not rather been well satisfied

to be ignorant? Let me ask you, dear brethren, if the life of your body depended on your knowing how to plough, or sow, or reap, would you not take pains to learn? should you not think yourselves justly blamed if you did not? And is ignorance, then, to be so easily excused where the life of the soul is at stake? Might not the necessary knowledge be gained, if you were bent on finding it? Undoubtedly it might; an honest desire to know the will of God is never in vain.

But some there may be, really afraid to come to this sacrament, because they do not understand what it implies. I will, therefore, endeavour once again to explain it; and I will refer you to the catechism of the Church, which some of you, at least, have learned. There we are taught, that Christ has ordained two sacraments in His Church, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. We are told that in a sacrament there are two parts; the outward sign which we can see, and the inward grace which we cannot see. The outward sign in the Lord's Supper is bread and wine, which the Lord has commanded to be received; the inward part, or thing signified, is the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received in the Lord's Supper, by the faithful; that is, by those who believe. The benefits of which we are partakers thereby—the good which we get in this sacrament, are the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ as

our bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine. The catechism further teaches us, after what manner we should prepare ourselves to come to the Lord's table;—that we should examine ourselves, whether we repent us truly of our former sins; whether we steadfastly purpose to lead a new and better life; whether we have a lively faith or belief in God's mercies through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and whether we be in charity with all men. Here is so plain a direction, that the most unlearned, if they will, may follow it, and come, in an acceptable manner, to the Lord's Supper. But let me remind you further, dear brethren, that those whose consciences are troubled, are earnestly exhorted to come to their minister, and open their grief. Need I tell you, that we are at all times ready to receive you, and to give you instruction according to the best of our ability? Need I say, what joy it would cause us to see any coming forward, and inquiring seriously, 'What must I do to be saved?' If any, then, are desirous of further instruction, do not, I beseech you, let fear or shame hold you back; but come to us, and show that you regard your ministers as your counselors and friends. And I here mention, that on Friday evening, at seven o'clock, I shall be present in the school-room,—and I invite and intreat all who wish, to attend—that I may further explain the meaning of this sacrament.

II. I come now to consider another excuse, which is most commonly made, for not attending this sacrament:—‘I am not fit to come.’ And this is a very difficult one to answer; for it is made by a great number of persons of very different characters and feelings. It may be the language of mere carelessness and indifference, or of wilful intention to go on in sin; or, it may be the mistake of some person really humble, and thinking himself unworthy to draw near to so holy a thing. Now to the former I should desire to speak in such terms as might alarm and rouse them; to the latter, I would wish to use words of encouragement.

The greater part of those who say, ‘I do not feel myself worthy to come to this sacrament,’ would speak more truly, if they said, ‘I do not wish to be worthy.’

This is the case with those who are living in any known sin. They think, and rightly, that, if they receive the holy communion, they ought to become better men; they ought not to swear, to get drunk, to quarrel, to be passionate, to stay away from church. They know all this well, but they know also that these are pleasant to them; they have no wish to give up their favourite sins; and they come not to the Lord’s table, because they are not willing to cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye—even the lusts they love. To all such we cry aloud in earnest and affectionate warning, and

say, How long, wilful sinner, will you provoke God? Are you safe in your sin, because you stay away? No. Whilst any one continues in sin, in impenitence and forgetfulness of God, he is not fit to join in any holy ordinance; he cannot pray while the love of sin has entire rule in his heart. And most surely he is utterly unfit to die. What, then, must such a one do? To him the word of God speaks, when it says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit." He must, then, forthwith resolve to turn from his iniquity; he must begin to pray with real desire for the grace of God; he must look for pardon to the Lord Jesus Christ, who died even for the chief of sinners: and so he must come to the table of the Lord, there to be confirmed and strengthened in his purposes of good.

Brethren, is there one among you given to any wilful sin? Is there a swearer? Is there a drunkard? Is there a fornicator? Is any a slanderer, or one who entertains malice and hatred in his heart? "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." They that do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Repent you, and be converted; and so, for Christ's

sake, shall your sins be blotted out. Come not to the table of the Lord as you are, but so prepare yourselves that you may come: dare not to rest, no, not a day, in your present state.

There are others, who, perhaps, do not think themselves guilty of such sins as have been mentioned, but still never come to this sacrament, and content themselves with saying, 'I am not fit.' They feel that they do not govern their tempers as they ought; they know that they have often neglected God's service; in a word they are conscious that their heart is not right with God, and they think that to say, 'I am not prepared,' is excuse enough. To you, also, brethren, I would say, 'If you are not prepared to receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, you are not prepared to die;' and, if death should suddenly come upon you, what would become of your soul? If you dare not now draw near His seat of mercy, how could you stand before His seat of judgment? What, brethren, in other words, is your excuse but this, 'I have no wish to be fit; I love a life of carelessness, better than one of strict religion: I know, that if I would receive the holy communion aright, I must be different from what I am; and I have no heart to make the preparation?' To you, too, then, we must say, How long will you dare to trifle with God? How long do you mean to treat the blood of Christ as a common thing? to despise it, and turn away?

How long do you intend to hold back from repentance? Take heed; God is not mocked: His Spirit will not always strive with you. He comes, year after year, to look for fruit upon you, and finds none: He may shortly give the order, 'Cut down the barren tree; why cumbereth it the ground?' O turn ye, then, and seek Him while He may be found.

But I would speak now to a case sometimes found, namely, that of one really penitent and humble, yet fearing to receive this sacrament; so deeply conscious of his sin, that he knows not how so rich a mercy can be extended to him; so deeply feeling his own weakness, that he hesitates thus to bind himself publicly to God's service. Such will also say: 'I am not fit.' Of you, then, I would ask, Is sin a grief and a burden to you? Are you indeed sorry that you have offended God? Do you desire His pardoning mercy? Do you wish for grace to serve Him for the time to come? Are these the feelings of your heart? If they are, then to you the Saviour speaks: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." For you Jesus shed His blood, and you are commanded to believe in Him for pardon, and are invited to draw near Him in this sacrament, to receive the pledges of His forgiving love. He who truly knows his own weakness, who truly sorrows for past sins, who earnestly desires grace to be holy; he is fit to come to the Supper of the Lord.

III. Another excuse is, 'I am now too much troubled with worldly cares; I cannot attend as I ought to my soul; but I hope the time will come, when I shall be more at liberty.' And who, then, are you, who thus promise yourself many years to come? And how dare you, in other words, charge God with putting you in a situation where you cannot work out your salvation? Is not His grace sufficient for you, if you truly seek it? Your excuse for neglecting the sacrament is like that of one who should say, 'I am too ill now to have a doctor; when I am better, I will send for one.' The more our earthly cares press upon us, the more need have we to seek strength, and consolation, and hope in God.

IV. Again; youth is made an excuse for not coming to the Lord's table. And when, indeed, the young see those who are older neglect it; when the parents take no pains, and set no good example, can we wonder that the children turn away from God? But let me speak a word to the young among you. God says in the Bible, "Those that seek Me early, shall find Me." (Prov. viii. 17.) Happy those, who hear His voice! Is it too much to give the prime and best of your days to God? Can you too soon know the Saviour, who shed His blood for you? or too early share the grace of that blessed Sanctifier, the Holy Spirit of God, who fills the heart with peace and joy in believing? Was not Samuel

blest, who, early devoted to the Lord, grew up in His service? Was not great grace upon Timothy, who from a child had known the holy Scriptures? Did not the blessed Jesus from His childhood increase in wisdom, and in stature, in favour with God and man? Take Him for your example. Remember, how the vows made to God in your baptism are upon you,—that you will renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Go not, then, in the way of the vain and light-minded, the lovers of dress and folly; join not the profane swearer and the mocker of God's word; be not among the heady and high-minded, the disobedient to parents; but remember, that to youth should belong humility and a teachable mind. Draw near to God, and pray to Him now, and come to His holy sacrament, and thus may you find that heavenly wisdom, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.

I will now address a few words to those who may be intending to come to the Lord's table. While such vast numbers utterly neglect it, there may be some in danger of coming to it too lightly. Brethren, it is not mere custom, it is not simply the wish of a parent, or the eye of a master or mistress upon you, that should bring you thither; but let each one examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. It is a work that must pass between your own heart,

and Him who knows the very secrets of that heart, and requires truth in the inward parts. You may not appear wanting in the eyes of man; and yet be utterly without repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Find, then, a time to commune with your own heart, in your chamber, and be still; a time for prayer, and for serious meditation with yourself as to the manner in which you are coming to that holy feast. Renew your deep repentance for every past sin. Now is the time to confess them to God, humbling yourself before Him. Now is the time to cast yourself anew upon the unsearchable riches of grace and mercy, which are in Christ Jesus your Redeemer. And to those of you who, being conscious of your own weakness and sinfulness, are humbly looking by faith to Him who is all your hope; to you who are desirous to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, to become holier, purer, more meet for heavenly joy;—to you I say, Expect much blessing in drawing near to Jesus in His appointed ordinance. Think of it not only as a remembrance of Him, but as a special means of grace, by which He doth work invisibly in us: and where you know yourselves weakest, whether as to any sin to be overcome, or any grace to be obtained, there at this time, in this ordinance, beseech God to supply your need out of His riches in glory by Christ

Jesus. So shall you find, that His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.

Once more, in concluding, I do most earnestly and affectionately remind those of you who live in neglect of this ordinance, that you cannot be right. I do warn you, my beloved brethren, from the word of God, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." These are awful words: "turned into hell." O, who can bear the devouring fire? who can dwell with everlasting burnings? O Lord of all love and peace, now awaken and convert us, and bring us home to Thee, that we, escaping the wrath to come, may have eternal life!

## SERMON XX.

BALAAAM.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

SUCH was the wish uttered by the lips of Balaam. The Church has lately brought his character before us in the appointed Lessons. On Sunday last\*, you heard how “the dumb ass, speaking with man’s voice, forbade the madness of the prophet;” and, this morning, was read the account, how, when called upon to curse the people of God, a mightier power constrained him, and the lips that would willingly have pronounced upon Israel desolation, and ruin, and woe, were forced to be the prophets of good, and to speak of blessings alone.

Balaam stands forth in Scripture a solemn warning to us—a prophet of the Most High, yet a servant of iniquity. The light of divine knowledge shone upon his mind, but his heart lay in

\* The first Sunday after Easter.

the darkness of sin. With his lips he prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous;" his end was that of the ungodly, cut off by the righteous judgment of God in the midst of his wickedness. There is much and awful instruction here. May God enable us to receive it!

Balaam, then, appears to have been a prophet of the true God. The knowledge of the Holy One, whose hand had made the heaven and the earth, was found as yet not only among God's people Israel, but lingering in other countries, though amidst much corruption, darkness, and idolatry. But though the Spirit of the Most High was upon Balaam, enabling him to foretell things to come; though he had the gifts of knowledge and prophecy, his heart was not right with God. One sin, one cherished besetting sin, seems to have held him in bondage, and to have been the cause of his destruction. That sin was covetousness—the love of money, the eager hankering after this world's wealth and honour. Balaam thus becomes a most solemn and striking warning to us all, showing that gifts and holiness do not always go together; that there may be much knowledge of divine things, while the world is secretly the idol that is worshipped and followed.

When the Israelites, after wandering in the wilderness of Arabia for forty years, at last drew near to their long-promised and wished-for home,—the good land of Canaan, Balak, king of Moab,

whose country lay in their way, saw the approach of this great army with fear and trembling.—“Now shall this company,” he said, “lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.” Dreading, therefore, their power, and eager for their destruction, he sends for Balaam, whom he knew by fame, to come and solemnly curse them; supposing that the words of the prophet would surely come to pass. But God forbids Balaam to go. Again, Balak sends other messengers, more, and more honourable; offering higher rewards than before, riches and honour. Balaam at first answers well, even as a servant of God should answer: “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.” A noble purpose; and here he should have stayed. God had declared His will;—had plainly said, “Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.” What further direction was needed?

But alas! though Balaam’s lips spoke well, his heart went after its covetousness. The gold and the silver and the promised honours of Balak the king, were too much in his thoughts, and he yet hoped the Lord might alter His word, and let him go. Instead of allowing the messengers to depart at once, he said, “Tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.” See the

struggle that was within him; his convictions led one way, his corruptions another. He honours God with his lips, but he secretly inclines to the temptations of Satan. He dares not openly disobey the Almighty, but he is all the while seeking some excuse to sin. How great is the deceitfulness of sin! How do the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, blind the understanding, and harden the heart! How dangerous it is, brethren, to trifle with the tempter! If we resist not at once and entirely, if we bid not Satan wholly depart, and look not up to Christ for grace and strength, we are sure to fall.—“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Balaam should have said, ‘God hath declared this people blessed; I cannot, I would not for all the world can give, pronounce curses upon them. I will not go with you: tempt me no further.’

It may surprise us that God should afterwards give him a partial permission to go. The Lord said to him by night, “If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them: but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.” God permits, or, at least, bears with, many things which He does not approve. If we set our heart on sin, and resist His Holy Spirit, He may leave us in anger to follow our own ways. So did He unto Balaam. It is as if He had said unto him, ‘Since thou hast such a mind to go, go.’ But Balaam gave

no heed to the displeasure of God. Eagerly he rose in the morning, his heart filled with worldly and covetous desires,—loving too well the wages of unrighteousness. And then it was, that as he journeyed, he “was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.” (2 Pet. ii. 16.)

Why, we may ask, was such a miracle as this wrought? Why were the laws of God’s creation so strangely departed from, as to give to a brute beast the power of man’s speech? Partly, no doubt, to teach us that with God nothing is impossible. But it was also to humble Balaam’s pride of heart, when he who boasted that “his eyes were open, and that he saw the vision of the Almighty,” was silenced from the mouth of a brute, and so justly reprovèd for his hard-heartedness and cruelty.

Balaam was still permitted to go upon his way. But a mightier hand was upon him; a will stronger than his own, constrained him; and when Balak expected him to open his lips in curses upon Israel, God turned them into blessings. The Spirit of the Most High fell upon him, and he exclaimed, “How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the

nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

Such were the words, such was the prayer of Balaam. And was not this to be righteous? Was not this to be indeed a servant of God? Who could express a better wish than to die the death of the righteous? and so be like him in his end? Alas! what was the end of Balaam? If we turn to the 31st chapter of Numbers, we read that Moses, by God's command, sent an army against the Midianites. "And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain . . . Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword." And why was he thus given over by God to a violent and bloody death? The true reason is given in the second chapter of the Revelation, where we read that Balaam "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." So then, though he dared not, could not, curse God's people openly; though his lips were forced to utter blessings upon them; though in word he was the servant of God, he went away to do the work of the wicked one. He took a more secret, but a surer course. He taught the king to put temptation in Israel's way, and to lead

them into idolatry and fornication, knowing well that to induce them to turn away from God into wickedness, was sure to bring about their ruin.

And this was he who so lately had spoken in God's name! who was called a prophet! who had uttered the solemn prayer—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Does not Balaam, brethren, awfully preach to us how vain are idle, empty wishes; how fruitless are prayers put up from a heart that still loves iniquity? Does not his example call upon us to be in earnest? to strive to enter in at the strait gate? to turn to God through Christ? to follow by divine grace after that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord?

If we would indeed die the death of the righteous, we must make it our main business to live his life. And who is the righteous? Who can claim that name? Who may plead merit before the heart-searching God? Not one; in this sense there is none righteous. But the righteous man of whom Scripture speaks, is a justified sinner; one who has found mercy at God's hand—even the forgiveness of his sins, through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ; who having tasted of God's goodness, and being accepted in the Beloved, has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and delights to render Him a willing service. He is righteous, because the righteousness of Christ is

imputed to him; because God accepts him for Christ's sake, and turns away His anger from him. Ever bear this in mind, brethren, that it is not your own works, your own doings, your own goodness, which can justify you before God, or can bring peace to your souls. Think not that a sinner can be saved by his own righteousness. You need something more, something better, which can be found in Christ alone. The very first step towards living the life of the righteous, is to seek from God the grace of repentance, and the grace of faith in the Saviour of sinners. All power to be good and to do good, must come from Him. Would you indeed be among the number of the righteous, that your end may be like theirs, and your portion be with them for ever? Go, then, first of all, and seek of Christ in earnest prayer to cleanse your soul from the guilt of sin; go and seek to be reconciled to God through Him who is your peace. And then remember, that faith, real saving faith, must be proved by the fruits it bears; that the man who is righteous before God—justified, pardoned, and accepted by Him—will be righteous also in the sight of men. Every one that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity, must daily endeavour to follow the steps of His most Holy life. "Keep innocency," says the Psalmist, "and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last." (Psalm

xxxvii. 38.) A spiritual obedience to God's commandments, springing from the love of Christ, is assuredly the only path that can lead us to a happy death, to a well-founded hope of glory to come.

Let us, then, learn one or two special lessons from Balaam's example.

1. Let us remember our Saviour's solemn warning:—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness." (Luke xii. 15.) And what is covetousness? That man of course is covetous who, like Balaam, or, like Judas, commits sin to gain money; who gives in to any dishonesty, and who uses the sabbath for worldly business. But many are also (it is to be feared) covetous in the sight of God, who yet earn their money fairly and honestly. If they love their gains better than they do their God; if their heart and affections are set on this world; then they are guilty of that covetousness which is idolatry. Let us try ourselves. Are we contented with what we have? Are we willing to give without a grudging spirit to the poor and needy?

2. Let us beware, lest, as Balaam did, we provoke God to give us over to our own hearts' desires. Let us not grieve and resist His Holy Spirit by continuing in sin. No more fearful calamity could happen to us, than that God should leave us to our own ways. There is no length of wickedness to which we might not then run, so strong is the corruption that dwell-

eth in us. Let us, therefore, obey every whisper of God's good Spirit; let us not receive His grace in vain; let us fear and fly from sin as the worst of all evils. Let us cleave to Him by earnest and continual prayer; and may He work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XXI.

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

EPH. iv. 30.

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”

THERE is in this expression a beauty and a tenderness which must affect the mind of every one who seriously reflects upon it. The Holy Spirit of God is here represented as dwelling in the hearts of Christians as their wisest and kindest friend; but, unlike a human friend, He is not said, when they act in a manner unworthy of their profession, or contrary to His secret suggestions, to be angry with them, but is represented as grieved on their account.

The first thought which the text brings before us is:—

I. To whom is it addressed?

We shall have then to consider,

II. In what way we grieve God's Holy Spirit.

III. The consequences of so doing.

I. Who, then, are they, who are told not to grieve the Spirit of God? It must needs be those with whom He has already taken up His

abode. We may anger a stranger, but we grieve a friend. The very term "grieving" implies, that there has been some previous familiarity, some close and endearing intercourse; that, on the part of the person who is grieved, there have been many offices of kindness, many benefits conferred upon us. It implies, on our part, an indifference, or forgetfulness of all these; a want of due gratitude; a self-willed or hasty spirit, which indulges itself, at the expense of pain to another. Thus a son who rebels against and behaves ungratefully to a kind father, is thought guilty of a great offence. But, if that father has been his best and kindest friend; if he has loved his son, cherished, advised, entreated him, and still the son has set at nought all his counsel, and despised all his reproof; then the sin seems doubly great. So it is with those, whose hearts have been once touched and softened by the Holy Spirit of God; who have been led to see the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness; who have been called by God's secret voice out of a world lying in wickedness, and by Divine grace have begun to walk in the way of righteousness. If such persons commit sin; if by carelessness and indifference they are untrue to their holy calling: then they are said to grieve God's Holy Spirit; they do that which is highly displeasing to Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The text, then, is a special warning to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have been in part renewed in their minds unto holiness. St. Paul wrote it first to the Christians at Ephesus. He had put them in mind of the high privileges, the happy state to which they were called in believing the gospel. "Now therefore," he said, "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 19—22.) They were now become children of God, and members of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit, unless they had been baptized in vain, was dwelling in them, according to the promise of Christ:—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." "Repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins," said St. Peter, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Hence St. Paul asked of the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are the

temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Brethren, this is the great truth which the Scriptures and the Church teach us, that the Holy Spirit of God is given to them that believe; that their bodies are His temple; that He is with them as a Sanctifier, a Teacher, a Guide, a Comforter. Worldly and wicked men mock at this, which they understand not; the humble believer reverently trusts the word of God, and doubts not but that, in answer to his prayer, the Spirit of God is more and more given him, to strengthen him inwardly, and to make him holy.

But though the text belongs especially to those who have been made partakers of converting grace, yet who is there with whom God's gracious Spirit has not striven? Who can say when and where He comes, whose motions are like the viewless wind? Does He not breathe upon the heart of childhood? We bring in faith and prayer the little infant to holy baptism, and we ask God to give to it His Holy Spirit, that it may be born again: and will He not hear our prayer? And as the child grows older, and knows right from wrong, are there not often stirrings of good in its bosom? and whence come these but from the Spirit of Christ? Brethren, can you remember none such in yourselves? Did God never speak to you inwardly? Had you never any convictions of sin? any secret relentings? And can you not remember, too, how

you resisted those heavenly motions, how obstinately you would not hear them; but rushed into sin as a horse rusheth to the battle? So you grieved God's Holy Spirit of grace; you sinned against light, and knowledge, and conviction; you did what you could to make the Holy Spirit leave you for ever. And, if He has not left you, if your hearts are not yet hardened, to what is it to be ascribed but to His long-suffering mercy, who willeth not the death of a sinner?

There is a class of persons to whom the text can scarcely be said to be addressed; I mean those who by a long course of wilful sin or utter worldliness have driven from their hearts the pure, the Holy Spirit of God; who are described in Scripture as "sensual, having not the Spirit." They have quenched His blessed influence—grieved Him so often in time past by repeated acts of sin, that He has left them to their own ways. It must not be said, then, to such, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" but rather it must be proclaimed in their ears, "Awake from the dead." "Repent and be converted." "Arise, and call upon God, if so be ye perish not." Seek Him again, while yet He may be found. Return unto Him, if so be there may be hope. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. Go, then, to Him, and that speedily; and beseech Him to restore His Holy Spirit unto you; for most surely you are

now in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

II. But let us consider in what ways the believing Christian may grieve God's Holy Spirit.

Read through the chapter from which the text is taken, and the following one, and you will see against what things even the regenerate Christian is cautioned. If we give way to any sin in thought, word, or deed, we are then grieving the Holy Spirit; and such is the weakness of our nature, and so fallen are we from God, that we have all need continually to watch, and pray, and strive, lest we fall again into the very sin we have repented of and renounced. Therefore the Apostle warns Christians to beware of the wickedness that is commonly practised around them. "Putting away lying," he says, "speak every man truth with his neighbour. . . . Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath. . . . Let him that stole steal no more. . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." All lewdness, brethren, all filthy jesting, all profane and impious words, all cursing, swearing, and blasphemy; these do in an especial manner grieve God's Holy Spirit, and provoke Him to depart. And again it is said, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speak-

ing be put away from you, with all malice." God's Spirit is a spirit of love, and He cannot dwell with those evil passions; nor can He remain where the unhallowed lusts of the flesh are indulged. "Fornication," says the Apostle, "and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints." "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess." These are some of the unfruitful works of darkness, with which the Christian must have no part or fellowship, but rather reprove them. Deeply will he grieve the Holy Spirit and wound his own soul, if ever in any degree he yields to their temptation. Nay, it is written, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

But it is not only thus that we are in danger of grieving the Spirit of God; it is not only by what we do amiss, but by what we leave undone. Some plan for doing good to others in their bodies and souls, and for promoting the glory of God, may have been suggested to our minds, but through carelessness, or love of ease, or love of money, we have held back, and done little or nothing. We intended to do it, perhaps, but we let the time pass by, and the motions of God's good Spirit faded from our minds.

Another way of grieving the Holy Spirit is, by neglecting those means of grace by which God is pleased to work in our souls. The public worship of God; the hearing His word preached; the commemoration of the love of Christ our Saviour at His holy table; the more private duties of reading the Scriptures, of secret and fervent prayer, religious meditation, and diligent examining of our own hearts; these peculiarly call for the devout attention of the Christian. Some who pretend to call on God in private, take little heed to seek Him in public. My brethren, those of you who are negligent in using the means of grace, would do well to consider whether you are not greatly "grieving the Holy Spirit of God." I entreat you all to remember, that the ordinances of the Church are not merely of man's appointment: Christ ordained them. He has given ministers and sacraments, and the Spirit is pleased to work by them. O prize the means of grace. Use them diligently; and take heed how you use them.

The too great love of the world; the ungoverned tempers; the want of Christian meekness and love, which appear in many of whom we would fain hope that they are true believers, must greatly grieve God's Holy Spirit. In a word, brethren, we are surrounded with temptations, with inducements to turn aside from the narrow way of life. Our own hearts are too ready to second the efforts of Satan and the

world. Great need have we, then, to watch our own hearts, to examine every step we take, to fly from every thing that is evil, to shun even what is doubtful in its nature, and constantly aim to approve ourselves in the sight of God. In order to excite ourselves to this cautious watchfulness, let us consider,

III. What are the consequences of grieving the Spirit of God.

1. We thereby become guilty of great ingratitude. Has God Himself deigned to come to us, and to make our hearts His dwelling-place? Has He sent His Spirit to guide, comfort, and strengthen us? Surely, the least we can do in return is to yield ourselves up to His direction; to obey His motions; and to perform His will. And are we not most ungrateful when we wilfully resist Him, and harden our hearts against His secret admonitions?

2. We also hinder our own advance in holiness and goodness. For the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian's heart, that He may carry on there the work of sanctification; that the believer may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God, and in all things that accompany salvation; in a word, in fitness for heaven. But if we grieve Him by resisting His motions, by letting our hearts become ensnared by the world and sin; then we sorely clog our souls in running the race set before us.

3. And, in so doing, we lose the comforts of

religion. For we have then no sure evidence that we are children of God, and heirs of heaven. While we walk humbly and closely with God, the Holy Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we grieve Him by sin or negligence, that comfort is gone; for he who thinks himself a child of God while he indulges sin; he, at least, who has no fear on that account, is deceiving himself with the hypocrite's hope, which shall be swept away like the spider's web. What was the prayer of the repenting Psalmist? "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit."

4. Once more: by grieving God's Holy Spirit, we unfit ourselves for doing good to men, and so adorning the gospel. For what is it that encourages the Christian to labour? It is the hope, that he shall ere long rest from his labours in the blessedness of heaven. But when he knows that all is not right with respect to himself; that the seal of the Spirit is not upon him; that after all his exertions for the good of others, he himself may be at last a castaway; O how does that thought cut through the sinews of exertion, unfit us for meeting difficulties, and make all our efforts painful and wearisome instead of delightful!

Do we, my brethren, in any sufficient degree realize that truth, that the gift of the Holy Spirit, in a fuller and more abundant measure, is one

distinguishing mark of the gospel dispensation? He rested upon God's saints and prophets of old, and made them meet for glory; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven, the humblest possessor of gospel privileges, may look for a fulness of His comforting presence beyond what saints and prophets enjoyed. Do we indeed appreciate the Apostle's words, "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you?" Do we bring before our minds the thought, that we are His temple; an habitation of God through the Spirit; consecrated through the blood of Christ to His entire service? and that, our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we are in all things to be holy to the Lord? Do we consider as we ought, that God worketh in us both to will and to do, of His good pleasure? and do we hence derive motive and encouragement to follow after holiness, being conscious that strength is imparted to us from above? Do we indeed so believe that God's Holy Spirit dwelleth in us, as to be always fearful of grieving Him? Is even the thought of sin rejected with instant abhorrence? Do we feel, that not only a life of open wickedness, but one of mere self-indulgent worldliness, is utterly inconsistent with that spiritual mind which becomes those who are God's habitation? Do we desire and seek for ourselves a share in that high and heavenly grace which the Apostle prayed might be found in the Christians at

Ephesus? “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

If any of you, my dear brethren, have been drawn by the Holy Spirit of God; if you have been awakened from the deadly sleep of sin,—you, in whose hearts so holy and heavenly a guest has taken up His abode—take heed, watch and pray, that you grieve Him not. Rather seek to have Him more and more abiding with you; rather abound in all things that are pleasing in His sight. Have you tasted His comfort? O keep it; hold it fast; let it not go. It is your life, your peace, your hope for heaven. Walk, O walk closely with your God.

## SERMON XXII.

### BROTHERLY LOVE.

#### ROMANS xii. 10.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.”

THIS chapter and the following one I would earnestly recommend, beloved brethren, to your most serious and prayerful study. They show us what the Christian character should be; and so excellent are the precepts given, so beautiful, so tending to promote man's highest happiness even in this life, that the most careless, nay, the mocker at the Gospel, must allow them to be worthy of God. They bear the impress of His Spirit. They are heavenly in their origin; and, if we truly followed them, we should realize somewhat of heaven even here.

Out of the many precepts given, I have chosen one for our special consideration. O that the Lord may give us grace to practise it! May He enable us to be true believers in Him! May He so change and renew our hearts and minds unto holiness, that the fruits of His Holy Spirit may appear in us! For, bear always in

mind, brethren, that we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds, before we can prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Ever remember, that in ourselves dwelleth no good thing; that out of our natural hearts comes evil, and that continually; and that we cannot do good except by the grace of Jesus Christ, sought by earnest, persevering prayer.

“Be kindly affectioned,” says the Apostle, “one to another with brotherly love.” He points out here a particular feature of that charity or love, which is, as it were, the family likeness of all true believers; and which, in so many forms, is pressed upon us in this chapter. Here, in the text, it is affectionateness—that temper, manner, and conduct, which calls into exercise every kinder, softer feeling; which gives rise to every delicate and considerate attention to others, that can win the heart, can cast a charm on life, can soothe and lessen its burthens and cares, and light up all its joys and pleasures with a more delightful glow.

I. In considering the words of the text let us observe, that it is possible to be in some measure kindly affectioned one to the other, without having that love of which the Apostle speaks.

There is a natural affection in man’s heart. There is the love which beats in the breast of parents for their children—a love common to all

who claim the name of man; for those who have it not, have forfeited that name, and sunk themselves lower than the brutes, in whom it is strongly marked. Again, there is the love which unites the brothers and sisters of one family in a bond, which absence cannot weaken, time and change cannot wholly destroy. This affection may often be seen, and sometimes strongly, in those whose hearts, so far as man can judge, have never submitted to the grace of God; who are yet strangers to true religion, and, it may be, living in open transgression of God's commandments. How many a family is there, where this is true; where the members of it are, on the whole, kind, and ready to render each other all the service in their power; not selfishly seeking their own interest at the expense of the rest. There may be some outward observance of religion. There are some of them at church once, perhaps, on the sabbath day, and sometimes a chapter of the Bible is read at home. But when we look for the life and power of godliness, it is not there. Serious things are never on their lips. They never join in family prayer. Their Saviour is not thought of, for they do not feel their need of Him. Their religion is confined to the church, and never goes beyond its walls. This world, with its cares, and gains, and pleasures, and sorrows, fills all their mind. The all-important truths of the Bible are no welcome theme to them; for

they have never bowed to them their hearts and understanding; and so have never tasted the sweetness which such a reception of them can alone convey. Do these love one another? They may; but it is with an unchastened and ill-directed fervour.

II. How greatly, brethren, is this affection improved and exalted, when grafted with a higher principle of Christian love: when it becomes such as the Apostle exhorts us to in the text. For the grace of God does not destroy natural affection, but increases, purifies, and exalts it; and fixes it on a foundation that will outlast this passing world, and make it bloom for ever, a fair and immortal plant, in the garden of God, by the water of the river of life.

1. True Christian affection, then, such as is taught by the Spirit of God, springs from higher and purer motives:—from love to God; from a desire to please Him; from a sincere endeavour to obey the command of Christ, that “we should love one another.” Yes, brethren, the Gospel may be despised; serious religion may be scoffed at; the necessity of being changed in heart may be mocked at; but never shall we love each other with a pure heart fervently, until we have purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit; until the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

2. Again, Christian affection will aim at

higher ends—the glory of God, and the spiritual good of those we love. Divine grace will teach us, whatsoever we do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; and to strive to please our neighbour for his edification. Try yourselves here, brethren. You are parents, or friends, or brothers, or sisters, or children. You have each some relatives whom you love. How do you show your affection? Do you regard them only as to this world? Does that end all your desires and hopes? Are you toiling to provide for their bodies, while you neglect their souls? Do you never care for their salvation? O, if so, how poor is your affection! Does it deserve that name? Ye parents, who leave your children in ignorance of a Saviour, can you really love them? You who set them a bad example, are not you their murderers? the murderers of their souls! O stop, and think, and may you turn to Jesus Christ, and seek His Spirit for yourselves! and then will you care for the souls of those entrusted to you. You who bear each other affection, but not such as the Gospel requires, how much do you lose! Is it not a blessed thing to love for eternity? to be not only companions on earth, but fellow-travellers to glory? so to live together now, as those who hope to enjoy a blessed immortality together in the presence of their God and Saviour, in a heaven where all is love? This hope is theirs only who now make religion their all in all.

3. True Christian affection, true brotherly love, such as is learnt of Christ, will give more entire confidence one with another. What a picture is a family that truly loves the Lord! how heart is there open to heart! they are agreed on the main point of all; they have one common interest, one chief pursuit. They set God before them, and, sure of each other, they freely open all their mind and thoughts to each other without restraint. There, surely, godliness hath the promise of this life. There we see realized what the Psalmist has sung:—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

4. Affection, too, when it is purified by the grace of God, is more certain, more steady. In the unconverted heart it often gives place to passion, resentment, pride, ill-humour. But the true Christian will take for his guide the holy rule of God's word. He will try to act up to that standard, and feeling how much and how often he comes short, he will depend for daily help on God's Holy Spirit; he will look to the cross of Jesus Christ, and learn there to prac-

tise daily self-denial; to give up his own will that he may add to others' comfort.

5. Once more: Christian affection will spread wide. While it seeks first the happiness of those most near and dear—those of the same family and household; whilst it delights most in home, it embraces also all who are of the household of faith. It counts all as brethren, who bear the name of Jesus Christ, and, as opportunity is given, will endeavour to do them good.

III. Brethren, may we be thus kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love! Suffer me to point out a few of the ways in which this affection will show itself.

1. It will lead us, in honour to prefer one another; in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves. True humbleness would be a sure guide to us in all our conduct towards others. Were we really humble, what causeless irritations, what secret sores, what pain inflicted on others, what uneasiness on ourselves, would be avoided! And grace, sought from above, can make us humble; can bless us with that meek and quiet spirit, in which love grows and thrives.

2. Christian affection will show itself in a constant kindness, obligingness, and courteousness; teaching us to avoid every thing in manner, word, or deed, in great things or in small, which is grating and painful to the feelings of others. How often do we offend here! We

fancy we are waiting for some great occasion on which to show affection, while we are, perhaps, ruffling our every-day life by ill-temper, selfishness, unwillingness to do at the moment what others wish us, and what would add to their comfort. Yet it is in these little things that grace appears. Grace will lead us to suppress our own griefs and cares, lest we add to others' burdens. It will dispose us to find out the inclinations of others, in order that we may, in all things lawful, meet and please them, and will teach us, in doing a kindness, not only to consider what to do, but how to do it in the most delicate and suitable manner. It is thus that the Christian is bidden to follow all things lovely; to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness.

3. Christian affectionateness will also appear in bearing and forbearing much, and in readily forgiving. We shall almost every day have occasion for this; such are the infirmities even of the best; so different are our dispositions and tempers. But, if we be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love, we shall be slow to anger. The feeling how sinful we are in God's sight, will teach us to make large allowance for others, to excuse many faults, and to forgive our brother even unto seventy times seven, remembering how God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

4. But this may well consist with giving faithful counsel, and, if need be, faithful reproof

to others. There is no greater proof of affection than this; so it be done in humility and tenderness. How often do we fail here! how often do parents, from false indulgence, fail to do this part of real love! So Eli sinned, and reaped the bitter fruit of his sin in the wickedness and the untimely death of his children.

5. Above all, we must show brotherly love, by praying for others,—by interceding for them at a throne of grace. Before that throne the believer will often kneel in deep consciousness of guilt; of hasty tempers and unkind words; of pain caused to those who love him, by his own selfishness and sin; and, while he pours out his heart in confession and humiliation, and seeks for pardoning mercy through the blood of Jesus Christ, he will also plead fervently for those he has wronged, and beseech the Father of mercies to bless them with the riches of His grace. And not only in such a case, but at all times, he will make supplication for all saints, but especially for those most near and dear, that their sins may be forgiven and subdued; that they may grow in grace, and, finally, enter into the everlasting joy of their Saviour and God.

In some such ways as these, my brethren, should we be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love; preferring one another in honour, by all kindness, obligingness, and courtesy; by bearing, forbearing, and for-

giving much; by faithful counsel, and reproof; by fervent intercessions with God through Christ Jesus.

IV. We are not left without examples in Scripture of this Christian grace. Example will best recommend it, and best teach us how to practise it.

See it, then, exhibited in Joseph. Was he not the object of his brothers' hatred, cruelty, and unjust persecution? Torn from his father who loved him dearly; sold as a slave into a foreign land; wrongfully accused and imprisoned there; afterwards, through God's protecting love, raised to be first over the land of Egypt; if ever resentment and deep anger might be felt, his was a case that seemed to allow it. But Joseph still remained "kindly affectioned, with brotherly love." God's providence put his brothers in his power: their life was in his hand. If he seemed to treat them roughly when they knew him not, it was but seeming. He did what St. Paul now bids us do:—"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This is the Christian's revenge; so, perhaps, we may melt our enemy into kindness. Who can read of Joseph's conduct to his brethren, and not feel the exceeding beauty of brotherly love? "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no

man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." How gentle is his reproof! There is no word of railing, of angry reproach. And immediately, as if he feared that even so he had given them pain, he adds, "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." How he turns their thoughts from their own wickedness to the good which God in mercy had brought out of evil! "And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them." Is not Joseph an example of loving with a pure heart fervently? of forbearing, of forgiving much? and of doing so in deed, and in truth? And when, after the death of his father Jacob, his brothers, conscious of their own guilt, and meanly suspicious of their noble-minded brother, feared that he would now take revenge upon them, and came to him with fresh entreaties for forgiveness, which their father, they said, with his dying breath, had charged him to grant them; Joseph

wept when they spoke to him; wept for grief that they should still judge him so wrongfully, "and he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." (Gen. l. 21.)

We have another affecting example of brotherly love in the friendship of Jonathan for David; a friendship that stood firm through all difficulties and dangers; and why? Because it was founded in the fear of God. When David was flying from Saul the father of Jonathan for his life, Jonathan forsook not his friend in his extremity. He arose, sought David out in his lonely retreat, and "strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee, and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." (1 Sam. xxiii. 17.) True love, saith Saint Paul, "envieth not." Jonathan, the son of Saul the king, might have thought it hard that God had appointed David to succeed to the throne; he might have envied and been jealous: but he bowed to God's holy will; and he loved not David the less for it. He would be content to see him king, and himself only second in the land. But an early death was ordained for the good, affectionate, and generous Jonathan. True to his father and his country, as well as to his friend, he died fighting bravely in that same battle which caused his father's overthrow and death. David's lamentation for him shows how deeply he felt his worth and his

affection:—"How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." (2 Sam. i. 25, 26.)

V. Beloved brethren, is it not a lovely temper which the text enjoins?—"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

O that it dwelt in all our hearts. If to glorify God, who has redeemed you even with the precious blood of Christ, is your aim and desire, how can you more adorn your Christian profession than by this most excellent way? "By this," says our Lord, "shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." "Love one another; as I have loved you." "Love as brethren," says St. Peter, "be pitiful, be courteous." Do you desire happiness? Seek it in self-denying, active love. Would you have assurance that you are Christians? "We know," says St. John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

And how shall we be able to learn this love? how get the better of the natural selfishness of our hearts? There is but one way, well known to us, but O how seldom, how coldly used!—the way of prayer; for love, like every other grace, is the fruit of the Spirit; and the

condition is, "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find." Pray, then, pray continually and fervently, to the Giver of all good, that He may send His Holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues.

To prayer let us add the study of the word of God, with diligent self-examination; and let us set before us the example of Him, who perfectly exhibited in His life all kind affection, all brotherly love. How tenderly considerate was our Lord of the wants, the feelings, the desires of others! how full of compassion! how ready to relieve! See Him weeping at the grave of Lazarus; see Him give back to the widowed mother her son restored to life, while, in tender mercy, He bids her weep no more. How did He bear with the faults, and unbelief, and dullness of His chosen disciples! how freely did He forgive their backslidings!

May we go and do likewise. May we walk in His steps. May we attain that charity which faileth not; which makes the heart wherein it dwells, as born of God, the habitation of the Spirit of love.

## SERMON XXIII.

EVIL SPEAKING.

JAMES iv. 11.

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren.”

HOLY SCRIPTURE, my brethren, is given us to be a rule of life. It should govern our every thought and desire, our every word and deed. Accordingly, it has an eye that follows us not only in public, but into our most private retirement. Our secret ways, our social conversation one with another, are brought under its searching light. So is it in the text. A sin is there forbidden, than which none is more common among us; none, perhaps, less considered, less feared, less avoided. It may be termed a ruling sin, even among those who are called religious; yet are there few sins more dangerous, few more injurious to religion, more directly contrary to the word of God. The command, that believers should put it away from them, is often repeated in Scripture. Thus, in Eph. iv. 31, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you.” In

like manner, St. Peter exhorts;—"Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere [pure] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.) St. Paul, directing Titus what he should teach his flock, bids him "put them in mind to speak evil of no man." What the Holy Spirit has thought worthy of such frequent notice, and express prohibition, surely well deserves our earnest and prayerful consideration. And let us ever bear in mind, beloved brethren, that we hear the word of God not to amuse our fancy, but that we may become wise unto salvation; that we may grow in grace and holiness. That word is a glass which, if we will behold it faithfully, shows us to ourselves; displays our corruptions, infirmities, and besetting sins; not that we may go away and straightway forget what manner of men we were; not that we may be offended, when it sets before us our own peculiar faults; but that we may honestly and truly, in dependence on divine grace, seek to amend them. What other evidence have we, that we are doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves? What other proof is there, that we really desire to please Him, who has bought us with His blood? May the Spirit of God this day bless His testimony to our souls!

What I shall now say on the sin of evil

speaking, may be arranged under the following heads:—I. The nature and extent of the sin. II. Its evil consequences. III. Its check.

I. We may ask, What is evil speaking? In its worst shape it, no doubt, signifies lying and slandering of every kind; all falsehood and calumny, and wilful asserting to the disadvantage of another person what is known not to be true. In this sense it is a plain transgression of the ninth commandment, and a direct violation of the whole law of love. The slanderer of his neighbour's reputation is also a thief and a murderer. He is a thief; for though he may not steal his neighbour's goods, he does what he can to steal his character and fair fame; he is a murderer, for calumny and slander come too often from malice and hatred in the heart; and "whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer." But further, a slanderer adds to his murder, cowardice. He is no open adversary that assaults in the face of day; then, perchance, there might be means and opportunity of defence. No, the slanderer is an assassin; he stabs in the dark; he smites his victim stealthily under the fifth rib. He keeps himself concealed and out of danger, while he sows in darkness the seeds of misery and discord. His is the secret counsel of the wicked, who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect;

suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. He is a serpent which hisses, and cherishes his venom, but always flies the light. Beloved brethren, we cannot earnestly enough pray against, our heart cannot hold in sufficient detestation, the sin of speaking evil falsely of another.

Next to the sin of inventing a lie against our neighbour, is that of repeating another's falsehood. This may be called tale-bearing. The tale-bearer is only so much better than the man who invents a slander, as the receiver of stolen property or counterfeit money, knowing it to be so, or even suspecting it, is less guilty than the thief or the forger. There is little difference in the sight of God. The motive of the heart is equally impure and hateful. The injury done to our neighbour is equally great.

So far I have supposed that the evil spoken of another is wholly false; a malicious fabrication, or, at least, wilful misrepresentation. But is this the only evil speaking, forbidden in the text? Does the Apostle, when he bids the believer put away all evil speaking, mean only that he should not slander his neighbour? Nay, then many might think that the precept had little to do with them; for they are not, they believe, guilty of wilful calumny. But, in truth, the sin is of a far wider extent. All that a man says of another may be true; and yet the saying

it be evil speaking. For, as it has been well observed, 'evil speaking is neither more nor less than speaking evil of an absent person, relating something evil which was really done or said by one that is not present when it is related.' Suppose, for example, that having seen a man drunk, or heard him swear, I tell this in his absence, merely for the sake of telling it:—this is evil speaking. Do any start? For we are apt to think, if what we say be true, there is no harm in telling it. No harm, beloved brethren! Is it our part to expose a brother's nakedness? Is it keeping the law of love, to trumpet abroad his fall? to hold him up to public gaze and un pitying censure? Is this the charity that covers a multitude of sins? O no! and though the tale be softly whispered, with expressions of pity, with hope that things may not be quite so bad, with declarations of goodwill to the person, what is this, but honeying over the sting? Still it is evil speaking, to relate, except in the way of duty, the fault of a third person, when he is not present to answer for himself.

But, if this be so, beloved brethren, then how widely prevalent is this sin! It spreads through all orders and degrees of men; high and low, rich and poor, wise and foolish, learned and unlearned,—all run into it continually. Persons, who differ in all things else, agree in this. How few, how very few, are there who can tes-

tify before God, 'I am clear in this matter; I have always set a watch before my mouth, and kept the door of my lips.' What conversation do we hear, of any considerable length, of which evil speaking is not an ingredient? In what society can we join, where the faults and failings, or the sins and follies of our neighbours, do not become the subject of discourse? Well and truly has it been said, that the very commonness of this sin makes it difficult to be avoided. As we are encompassed with it on every side, so, if we are not deeply sensible of the danger, and continually on our guard against it, we are liable to be carried away by the torrent. In this instance, almost all mankind are in conspiracy against us; and their example steals upon us, we know not how, so that we insensibly fall into the imitation of it.

Besides, it is recommended from within as well as from without. There is scarcely any wrong temper in the mind of man which may not be gratified by it. It gratifies our pride to relate those faults of others of which we think ourselves not to be guilty. Anger, resentment, and all unkind tempers, are indulged by speaking against those with whom we are displeased; and, in many cases, by reciting the sins of their neighbours, men indulge their own foolish and hurtful desires.

Evil speaking, too, is more difficult to be avoided, because it often attacks us in disguise.

We think that it is a proper, a noble indignation against sin, which moves us to speak; that we should be countenancing wickedness, if we were silent. True, there are times when, if called on to express an opinion, we may do so in meekness; but why so ready to do it of our own accord? Let us not do Satan's work, and think we are rendering God service. Let us not palm sin upon ourselves under the veil of holiness. This sin often besets, in this subtle and deceitful shape, the young convert to religion; well if we might not say, "older professors too." We are tempted to believe, that severe censure of others, strictures on their inconsistency of conduct, condemnation of one for too much conformity to the world, and of another for needless precision or legality;—that thus to sit in judgment, and deal out our anathemas, must needs argue a very high spirituality in ourselves. One would almost suppose that some people imagine religion to consist in finding fault with others. O how infinitely deceitful is the heart within us!

Again; a strong temptation to relate a wrong, which some one may have done us, lies in the pity we hope to obtain. We tell ourselves, that thus we shall get rid of the burden which weighs upon us, and be less in danger of a lasting resentment towards the person who has injured us.

II. Such are some of the forms of evil speaking; such is its extent; such its ever-besetting

nature. Let us consider, in the second place, its evil consequences, if indulged.

“The tongue,” says St. James, “is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth.” Evil speaking is the fruitful and never-ending source of half the miseries of social life. “A whisperer,” it is said, “separateth chief friends.” Hence come wars and fightings; hence arise jealousies, enmities, suspicions, wrath, strife, divisions; hence begin coldness and distrust, where once was confidence and cordial love. How often does one report, secretly spread, sever the closest ties, destroy the unity of the Spirit, and break the bond of peace! How often may the tale-bearer add fuel to the flame of secret resentment, and supply irritation to a rankling wound! But suppose that the conscience of many bears witness that they have not been guilty thus far; that they have invented no slander, framed and uttered no wilful calumny; are they as clear of evil speaking in its more common form and degree? If the discussion of others’ faults, the recital of others’ sins, hasty judgment on others’ motives, words, and actions, be allowed or indulged, deep, very deep still is the wound given to charity. We cannot touch the subject without imminent danger. It fosters the evil propensities of the heart. It checks and chills that temper of love to all, which it is one chiefest end of the Gospel to raise and cherish in our

bosoms. It hinders our intercessions at a throne of grace. Above all, it grieves and drives away the Holy Spirit of God; robs us of His comforting influence; leaves our souls dead, cold, and unfruitful in good. Yes, beloved brethren, if we would enjoy communion with God; if we would grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ; if we would have the mind that was in Him; if we would walk in love, as He hath loved us, and given Himself a sacrifice for us: let us fear, avoid, and resist the ever-besetting sin of evil speaking; let us know our danger; let us be ever on the watch against it.

III. And what is the check to be offered? Can there be found a cure for so prevalent an evil? Can the Christian stem the torrent which is ever threatening to carry him away with overwhelming power? Can he escape the infection? Yes; there is nothing too hard for the Lord. Divine grace can achieve the victory; can enable us to do what no resolution, no watchfulness of ours could perform. Does, then the believer, trembling at the strength of this temptation, conscious of past transgression, fearing for the time to come, does he ask—What is the remedy? where is my succour?

1. The answer, in one word, is, Pray. Be instant in prayer for the grace of God's Holy Spirit. Beseech Him to pour into your heart that most excellent gift of charity—charity which suffereth long and is kind; which thinketh no evil; hopeth

all things; believeth all things. Where the mind thinks no evil, the tongue will not utter it. As pure and holy love to our brethren for Jesus' sake begins to find a place in our heart, and really and effectively to spread its blessed leaven through the lump, we shall learn more and more to bridle the tongue, to suspect ourselves, to set a watch at the door of our lips. Love will forbid us to sacrifice, on the altar of our own vanity, for a momentary selfish gratification, or out of a mere heedless inconsiderateness, our neighbour's fame. Another's weakness, another's fall, another's grievous sin can never be a pleasing subject to the heart where that heavenly wisdom resides, which is pure, peaceable, and humble, full of mercy and compassion, without partiality and without hypocrisy. A believer, if obliged to speak of a brother's sin, should scarcely do it but with tears. Let him, then, who would overcome, or avoid the habit of evil speaking, pray earnestly for the spirit of Christian love; and let him in the same way endeavour to press upon his own heart the following considerations.

2. Let him try to realize the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Are my thoughts, is my conversation, such as He would approve? He, who has said, 'This is My commandment, 'That ye love one another? Can I bear the thought that His ear is listening to every word I say?'

3. Let the believer bear in mind his own exceeding sinfulness; his own deep need of

mercy at God's hand; his manifold failings and defects; his distance from the Gospel standard; the often experienced deceitfulness and depravity of his own heart; the certainty that, but for God's restraining grace, he would have been among the vilest; and that in every offender he sees a brother, a fellow-sinner. Shall he, then, be so quick to discern the mote that is in his brother's eye; and so blind to the beam that darkens his own? Can he bear to be dealt with by the Lord according to the measure which he deals to others? Can he endure judgment without mercy?

4. When a person is on the point of repeating any evil respecting another, let him pause a moment, and ask himself, 'From what motive and for what end am I about to speak? Shall I really do good by exposing my brother? Can I truly say, as in the sight of God, that my intention is pure? Will piety and holiness be thereby promoted, or vice and irreligion be checked? Am I not rather in danger of injuring my own spirit, and of leading others to doubt the reality of religion in my own heart, when they see me not bridling my tongue, but running in the same course with those who profess not religion at all? May it not be justly said to me, What doest thou more than others?' If the Christian set not an example of abstinence from evil speaking, then who can be expected to refrain?

5. It may be asked by some: 'If a person has done me a wrong; has affronted, insulted, or otherwise injured me, may I not speak of it? What other vent have I for my wounded feelings? What better relief to my overburdened heart? Is it not too much for man's endurance to sit down patiently under it? What can I do?' Your Lord and Master has already told you what you should do. He has pointed out the way, the course to follow:—"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii. 15—17.) Have you, then, adopted this course? have you privately, and then with others, remonstrated with your offending brother; and, if he still persist in his wrong, have you announced it to the ministers and elders of the Church? If you have not thus obeyed your Lord, what wonder if your heart is burdened? Add not, then, to the sin of disobedience to Christ's command, another trespass. Speak not evil of your neighbour, when he cannot answer. It were well, my beloved brethren, to accustom

ourselves never to think, far less to speak, of another, what we would not, or dare not, say before his face.

6. But the most effectual means to keep ourselves from the sin of evil speaking is to abound more in prayer for others; in intercession for our neighbours, and for all mankind. Could we lightly speak evil of those, for whom we had lately bent our knee in the prayer of charity? Have any wronged us? let us speak of them, but let it be to God; let us ask of Him a blessing upon them; and we cannot then go forth to curse them. Let us beseech the Lord to forgive them; and so all enmity and rancour, all secret resentment, and painful sense of wrong in our own breasts will die away beneath the sweet influence of that Spirit, whose fruit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance.

7. And as we abstain from this sin ourselves, let us not consent to it in others; let us not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely; let us rebuke it, or fly from its infection. Thus, beloved brethren, when this noisome and poisonous weed is rooted out, love will have room to spring and grow. Even where there is no intention of unkindness to others, the very mention of their faults tends to alienate our affections from them. May we seek and obtain that charity which may bind us together in brotherly love; which may teach us to be jealous

of our neighbour's reputation as of our own—to be slow in imputing an evil motive, quick to acknowledge another's excellence. So may we, speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ! So may we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus cleanse us from all sin! Amen.

## SERMON XXIV.

### THE USE OF GOD'S HOLY NAME.

#### EXODUS xx. 7.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain.”

IN my last discourse I spoke of the use of our speech in reference to our neighbours; that is, to all our fellow-men. The third commandment, which forms my text, regards the use of our speech in reference to God; to God, who having gifted us with the power of speech, and therein distinguished us high above the brutes, expects us to use it to His glory. He has commanded us, therefore, to take especial heed how we ever mention His Holy name:—that name, before which cherubim and seraphim, and all the hosts of angels bow their heads, adoring; that name which He has declared shall one day be great among the heathen, and revered among all people.

The ten commandments, given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, contain, as I trust you all know, the sum of our duty to God and man. Jesus Christ did not come to set us free from keeping these commandments, but to give us

grace to obey them: and He has taught us that we are not only to take the mere letter of them, not only to look to the very words; but to follow out the spirit of each commandment in its widest extent, making it reach to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. For instance, in the sermon on the mount, He tells us that a man breaks the sixth commandment, not only by the act of murder, but by causeless anger,—by hatred and malice in the heart; and that the seventh commandment is transgressed, not only by adultery and uncleanness, but also by sinful desires. The same rule must be applied to all the commandments; and hence the third, which I propose to consider to-day, not only forbids our taking God's name in vain, but must be understood as enjoining upon us the highest possible reverence and love. The name of Him whodwells in the highest heavens, in light which no man can approach unto, should be, as it were, enshrined in our hearts' inmost sanctuary. The thought of One, who is so infinitely above us, in majesty, in power, in holiness, in goodness, should fill us with deep humility and adoring wonder. But, above all, when the name of God brings Him to our minds as our Redeemer in Christ Jesus; as having given His only begotten Son for our sins, and as ready to pour out upon us the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier; what gratitude and love ought to mingle with our deeper emotions of fear and awe! No, brethren, if the love of God

has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, we cannot lightly take His name in vain. The consideration of this commandment, then, will enable us to try ourselves; and if any here are in the habit of openly breaking it, may it lead them to repentance, may it send them to Christ for pardon! And if we will all examine ourselves by the spirit of the command, we shall see our need of uttering that prayer taught by the Church:—"Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

You observe at once, that there are two parts in the commandment. The first is the precept—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" the second is God's solemn declaration, that He will surely punish those that do so,—“He will not hold them guiltless.”

I. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Here, then, comes the question, Is all swearing, all taking of oaths, all calling upon God as a witness, forbidden by this command? No, surely, for we find God saying to His people Israel, in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name." And again, by His prophet Jeremiah, He says, "Thou shalt swear, 'The Lord liveth in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.'" (Jerem. iv. 2.) Some kind, then, of swearing by the name of God is plainly lawful; but even this, of course, must

be only on such occasions as are most important and solemn; as, for instance, when any person is called on to give evidence before the lawful magistrate or judge. And when kings, governors, and others take on them public offices of trust, it is right that they should bind themselves by solemn oaths, for the maintenance of truth, justice, and fidelity.

1. What God's command, then, first forbids, is perjury, that is, false swearing. If any call Him to witness to a lie; if any vow before Him to declare the truth, and all the truth, and then speak what is untrue, or keep back a part; this is, in the most awful sense, to take God's name in vain, and to bring heavy guilt upon the soul.

2. Again, to take an oath without seriousness, lightly and irreverently—too common a practice, I fear, in this our Christian land, and which may well make us fear God's judgments,—this is to take His name in vain.

3. But I pass from these to the still more frequent sin—swearing in common conversation. This is indeed one of the crying sins of our land. It meets us at every turn. From our roads and streets, from the market-place, and the ale-house, rise the sounds of cursing and blasphemy. The name—the most holy name, is uttered from the lips of the reeling drunkard, and the furious reviler. I speak now of profane swearing in its worst form. Brethren, when we hear God thus

mocked, insulted, defied; when we hear the wretched sinner calling on that God to damn his body and his soul, may we not stand amazed that he is not taken at his word? that the earth does not open her mouth, and hell yawn from beneath, to receive him, according to his prayer? O the long-suffering patience of God, who, while He is blessing the sinner every day with gifts of His bounty, is paid back in curses, blasphemy, and scorn! The tongue which He has made, is raised against Him; the speech which He has given, is employed to His dishonour.

4. But as profane swearing is forbidden by the commandment, so also is the using of God's name lightly, and all needless oaths of every kind. This is our Lord's solemn direction in His sermon on the mount: "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the earth, for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil." The Jews, it seems, supposed that so long as they did not use the very name of God Himself, it was lawful to swear by anything else; but Jesus Christ teaches us, on the contrary, that to swear by God's creatures is to swear by Him. He forbids us, then, to call God to witness in trifling things. He forbids

our using those expressions—too common, but not the less wrong—‘God bless my soul,’ ‘Thank God,’ and many others, when there is no serious meaning attached to them. So also His words condemn our saying, ‘Upon my life,’ or, ‘Upon my soul;’ and why? because we are pledging that over which we have no power, as our life; or that which is too precious, as our soul.

These are some of the more open transgressions of the third commandment; namely, perjury, or swearing falsely; or, if there be no falsehood, yet taking an oath without seriousness and reverence; all profane cursing and swearing; and all use of God’s name, and mention of serious things, without a serious mind.

5. But the commandment in its spirit reaches much further. Brethren, do we never in this house of God take His name in vain? How during the last hour have we been employed? We have been professing to kneel in prayer. And have indeed our heart and our thoughts gone with our lips? Or, while seeming before men to be praying, has God marked us, in our imaginations, going far away from Him? Surely then we have been taking His name in vain, whether we have spoken it or not. And, if the earnest and devout Christian finds it most hard to pray as he ought, with reverence and attention, what is the case with the generality? How many think it too much even to put on the appearance and attitude of devotion, but sit

through the prayers with the look of utter indifference! The sponsor who makes, at the baptism of an infant, promises he never means to fulfil; the young who receive the solemn rite of confirmation, pledging themselves to keep the vows of their baptism, but not really purposing through God's grace to do so; those who treat with contempt the marriage ceremony; and those who come, without repentance and faith, to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper;—these are all more or less guilty of the sin of taking God's name in vain. Surely, if we thus try ourselves by the third commandment, we shall find cause for deep repentance. How often have we affronted God by heartless prayers! how often have we been hypocrites in His sight when man perceived it not! how often has His name passed our lips without the reverence, the fear, and the love which are His due!

The spirit of the command teaches us further not only to abstain from all irreverent use of God's name; but to pay it all possible honour and regard. We honour His holy name, then, when we keep the sabbath day as a day set apart for His peculiar service, not profaning it to our own ends and pleasures; when we constantly and devoutly attend in His house, coming with a sincere desire to glorify Him and to get good to our souls; not thinking one attendance on one day in the week enough for Him, who gives us all we have. We honour God's

name, when we have family prayer in our own houses, thus teaching our household to fear and obey Him. And we must not only not take His name in vain ourselves, but rebuke those who do so.

II. Let us turn, in conclusion, to the awful threatening contained in the text:—"The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain." And let me here offer you, brethren, a serious and affectionate caution against the sin of swearing in common conversation; and let me exhort every one of you, in your several stations, by every means in your power,—by example, by instruction, by rebuking the offender,—to discountenance and stay this dreadfully common habit, which is so hateful to God, and so ruinous to men's own souls.

Are there any now before me who indulge it? What is your excuse? Do you say, that you are not aware of it? that you mean nothing by it? that it is only a careless way of speaking? What says the word of God? "The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. xii. 36, 37.) Are we not told to set a watch at the door of our lips? And will God forgive us, if, in wanton carelessness, we take no heed what words we utter? Nay, breth-

ren, be not deceived; God is not mocked; every profane word is written in His book. Do any dare to think, that because God's vengeance falls not at once upon the profane swearer, he will escape? that the Lord will not execute His threat? O miserable delusion? Is God a man that He should lie? He hath said: "I will not hold him guiltless, that taketh my name in vain." He that perjures himself with an oath, may escape the knowledge of man; he that swears profanely, may be unpunished now: but God's ear has heard, God's hand has marked down the sin, and surely it will find out the sinner, unless in unfeigned repentance he turn to Christ for pardon; unless through His blood it be forgiven, and grace from Him be obtained to go and sin no more. For thus God hath said by His prophet Malachi:—"I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the adulterers, and against false swearers. For I am the Lord, I change not." (Mal. iii. 5, 6.) And again, He hath said, "Whosoever curseth his God, shall bear his sin." (Lev. xxiv. 15.) "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment; so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." (Psalm cix. 17, 18.)

There are not wanting well-attested instances where God's just anger has struck dead on the

spot the hardened and daring profaner of His name.

In connection, then, with that certainty that God will punish the sin of profane swearing, let me add one or two further considerations to keep you from it.

1. Think of the unprofitableness of it. There is no direct temptation in a man's nature to this sin. It brings no pleasure, no gain. The swearer makes a worse bargain than Esau did, when for a mess of pottage he sold his birth-right; for he forfeits heaven, and rushes into hell—for what? for nothing. The thief may be pitied whom hunger forces to steal; but what excuse has the swearer, who breaks God's law for a word, and gratuitously gives away his soul to Satan?

2. Consider, again, how often this sin may be repeated. If a man be overcome in drink, he cannot all at once go to his cups again; if a man profane the sabbath, he can do it but one day in seven. But what stop is there to the profane swearer's sin? One oath is ready to follow another; blasphemy is heaped on blasphemy, till a man's language becomes one horrible din of profaneness. And, since God will surely visit for all, what a heap of iniquity lies at the common swearer's door! What a burden is on his soul, ready to sink him to perdition!

3. Think, lastly, that this sin is only fit for hell. Devils, who have cast themselves from

God's favour for ever; lost souls, who have for ever rejected His grace and mercy: these, we can imagine, raving in their torments with curses and blasphemy against the Most High. But that men, who are still receiving blessings from God, sharing His bounty and His love,—that these should curse Him is an offence so terrible, as should make us weep to think how low our nature has fallen.

If, then, these things be so, it is incumbent on all to do their utmost to stem the torrent of this sin. We owe it to God's honour, and our neighbour's good. Magistrates, and all in authority, are bound by the law to suppress it. Masters, suffer it not in those under you; rebuke it; show your detestation of it. Would you hear your friend reviled and dishonoured, and say nothing in his behalf? How much more should we maintain the honour of our God, our Maker, our Preserver, our Saviour, our most bountiful and gracious Friend! Parents, suffer it not in your children. They catch it with their earliest breath; their young lips, that should praise His name, soon learn to profane it. O, as you would save their souls and your own,—as you would not see them reprobates from their God,—tell them how great is that sin; teach them to pray against it; correct them as often as they offend. Be not like Eli, lest you have also the curse of Eli—ungodly children, an upbraiding conscience, a broken heart.

Let me address myself to all here present; and if any have been, or are, in the practice of this sin, I beseech them to repent, and pray for grace to avoid it. What, though it is so common,—what, though multitudes thus offend,—follow not a multitude to do evil. Ten thousand examples cannot shake one word of God. Hundreds of thousands may tread the downward road to hell, but it is the downward way still. The ungodly may say, Who is the Almighty, that we should fear Him? They may defy His power, and laugh at His threatenings; but that word once delivered from Mount Sinai, in thunders and lightnings, in fire and thick darkness; that word is still proclaimed from sabbath to sabbath:—“The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain.” To you, then, for whose souls I watch as one that must give account,—to you, I say, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ‘Above all things, my brethren, swear not.’

And let me remind you, that the best way to avoid this sin is to pray. Kneel daily in prayer to God. Prayer will bring Him before you in His holiness, power, and love. You cannot one moment kneel seriously before your Maker, and ask Him to keep you from sin, and to save your soul alive through Jesus Christ, and the next moment go forth to take His name upon your lips in blasphemy, or to speak of hell and damnation as things of no concern. The pro-

fane swearer, while he remains such, cannot be in the habit of prayer. Pray, then, for grace to break off that sin, if it is begun; to keep you from it, if it is not. And rest not there. Seek to know the love of God to your souls, to taste that He is gracious. Press on, to win Christ and to be found in Him. It is not enough to leave off one sin: our whole heart must be changed and renewed; our body, soul, and spirit be sanctified to God's service. You, who do not offend Him by profane swearing, yet ask yourselves, Do you restrain your lips from evil speaking, from angry words, from slander and ill-natured speeches? Do you warn the sinner? Do you admonish others to think of their souls? Do you glorify God with your tongue as you might do?

## SERMON XXV.

THE RIGHT OBSERVANCE OF GOD'S DAY.

ISAIAH lvi. 2.

“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it: that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.”

HERE is a blessing promised, a blessing from the Most High:—On whom? On the man, and the son of man,—on every one who keeps the sabbath of the Lord; keeps it so that he pollutes it not; keeps it as a talent intrusted to him, as a treasure placed in his hands—a talent to be used—a treasure to be valued; who so employs it that it becomes to him what God intended it to be, a means of his sanctification, a help to holiness, a preserver from evil.

I shall endeavour by God's grace to speak briefly,—

I. Of the institution of the sabbath.

II. Of the right manner of keeping it.

III. Of the blessing promised to those who do so.

I. The institution of the sabbath day is as old as the creation of the world. In the second chapter of Genesis you may read:—"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made. And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work, which God created and made."

Here, then, is a reason binding upon all men, to hallow, to keep holy, one day in seven. It is the appointment, the command of God Himself. And when the Almighty chose out one nation to be His own people, and when He gave them His laws and His statutes, He often and solemnly repeated the command, "Ye shall keep My sabbaths." When, amid thunderings and lightnings and thick darkness, He came down on Mount Sinai and gave to Moses the two tables of stone, on which were written the ten commandments (a rule of duty, not only to the Jews but to all mankind), one of those commandments was, "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day." God enforced the observance of it on the Israelites by fearful penalties; he who did unnecessary work upon that day was to suffer death: and if they obeyed His command in keeping it holy, He promised great and manifold blessings to them. But they kept not the

command. The sabbath day was neglected or profaned; true religion and the fear of God were forgotten; and God's anger arose against them until there was no remedy. He gave them into the hands of their enemies, and they were carried into captivity for seventy years, including 3640 sabbaths. Their city was burned, and their lands lay desolate; so terribly they were taught that God is not mocked. When at last He permitted them to return and rebuild their city under the guidance of Nehemiah, we find that good man rebuking them for not observing the sabbath:—"What evil thing is this that ye do," he said, "and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us?" (Nehem. xiii. 17, 18.)

When our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, we read that He constantly observed the sabbath, entering the synagogues or churches, and joining in the public worship of God. But when He had died and risen again, and gone back to heaven, having finished our redemption, His Apostles, directed no doubt by God, kept holy the first day of the week as the day on which He rose from the dead. Thenceforth this was called the Lord's day—the Christian sabbath; which we now keep holy, in memory both of God's resting from all His works of creation, and of a still greater and more glorious event, the redemption of Christ's people

from sin, and death, and hell—the bringing in of a hope full of immortality and glory. On this day the Apostles and first Christians (as we learn from Scripture) met together to worship God, to hear His word, to join in prayer and praise; and at first, when love and zeal were warm and strong, they were accustomed, every Lord's day, to break bread together, that is, to partake of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ their Saviour.

II. Such is a very brief account of the institution of this holy day. I proceed to speak of the right manner of observing it. And let me call your attention to it as a day of rest to the mind and body, and as a precious means of grace to the soul. In either light it is a proof of God's wise and tender consideration for the weakness of man, and of His merciful care for our best happiness. Alas! that man will so often be his own enemy, and run contrary to the kind intentions of his great Creator!

The sabbath day, then, is meant by God to be a day of rest. Man is called by it as by a voice from heaven, to cease awhile from his weary round of toil and business, of thought and care—to cease and be still. Our Maker knows that neither mind nor body can bear to be always at work. Rest they must have, or they will soon sink. How mercifully, therefore, has He ordained that night should succeed to day, and that sleep should come with its healing,

soothing, restoring power to fit us for labour again. But this is not enough. God, who knoweth whereof we are made, has ordered also that man and beast should rest one day in seven, and woe to him who does not regard God's command: he is, he must be the sufferer. He breaks it to his own loss, even in this world; sins against his own mercies, casting away what is a precious gift from heaven. The man who does not rest upon the Sunday, is doing to himself what a farmer would be doing to his land, if he should never let it lie fallow. The very ground must have its sabbath; it must rest. And does not the earth keep its sabbath during the months of winter? It rests, but not in idleness; it is storing up strength and riches, that, when spring and summer return, it may pour them forth in plentiful crops. So should Sunday be to you, brethren, a resting day. What hath God said? "Six days thou shalt labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt do no manner of work"—none, that is, which is not positively necessary to be done. Mercy has given this command. It is found that those who, in defiance of it, work every day, generally shorten their lives. It is given in mercy to the poor brutes, also, who labour for us; it is man's interest as well as his duty to let them thus rest, that they may serve him longer and better.

But is man's sabbath and a brute's to be the same? Is he to rise no higher than they? Is his Sunday to be no more than a day of eating and drinking, of idleness, or pleasure, or mere amusement? It might be, if man had no reason, no soul, no God to worship, no Saviour to love, no eternity before him, no heaven and no hell. But now "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

The sabbath is given to be a day of rest, but it is also given to be a means of grace to the soul. It regards us not only as dwellers for a few years on earth, but as beings who are to live for ever. The Sunday is not only to be taken from labour, but it is to be hallowed—to be sanctified to God. It is His day: He claims it; He has a right to claim it. He gives it to us, not to abuse to our own purposes, but to use it for Him; and in so ordaining, He provides most truly for our comfort, our peace, and our happiness. If we turn the sabbath to other ends, we rob God, and we ruin our souls.

How, then, will those employ the Sunday who regard it really as a means of grace to the soul—an opportunity for working out their salvation?

They will surely "keep from polluting it." They will not do those things which are plainly contrary to God's holy word and will. To waste the Sunday in idleness, in sleep, in folly; to spend it in visiting, or in the grosser sins

of revelling and drunkenness: this is to pollute it. To do work upon it which might be done on a Saturday; to make it an opportunity for settling accounts, going on errands, cleaning the house; to buy and sell upon it, or to transact any worldly business, except in cases of absolute necessity:—this is to pollute the sabbath of the Lord. Every one who fears God, and who has any love to Christ, will abstain from these things. But the Christian will do much more: he will endeavour to turn Sunday to account for his soul's good; and if he does not this, he thinks he is not keeping it holy. The duties of Sunday are partly public, partly private, and the Christian will not neglect either.

The great public duty of Sunday is attendance on the public worship of God. Nothing but sickness, or infirmity, or some other unavoidable necessity, ought to prevent any one who claims the name of a Christian from being, if possible, twice; and, if that be not possible, once at church on the sabbath day. I say this strongly, brethren; I desire to express it plainly, because I think that the view which many take, in regard to attendance at church, is very different from what it ought to be; those, I mean, who, instead of counting it a privilege and joy to go up to the house of the Lord, think it much, if now and then, when it suits their convenience, they are seen within the walls. Now I say, that those who do no more than this, are not

keeping holy the sabbath day. You may indeed meet with some who will tell you, that people can be equally good Christians without going to church at all. To such persons I would say, Do you not believe the Bible to be the word of God? Then turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the tenth chapter, the twenty-fifth verse, and read what God there says by His Apostle: "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day [the day of judgment] approaching." What plainer command could be given, that we are to assemble together for Christian worship? And are we to disobey the command of God? 'But many go to church,' some will say, 'who are no better Christians than those who stay away.' To all such I answer, What is that to thee? what hast thou to do with judging others? To their own Master they stand or fall. Would you go without your daily food because you saw your neighbour's food did not nourish him? And am I to go without the means of grace to my soul, because others use them amiss? Let it be a lesson to me to use them better. No, my dear brethren, the true reason for all such excuses is, that there is no desire in the heart for communion with God, no relish for His ordinances, no feeling of the soul's wants, no thirsting for the water, no hungering for the bread of life.

How does the believer in Christ regard the public worship of God? He will say to himself:—Here is a means which the Lord Himself has appointed for the good of my soul. He has Himself declared, that wheresoever two or three are met together in His name, He will be in the midst of them. It was when the disciples were assembled together on the first day of the week, that Jesus stood among them, and said, “Peace be unto you.” It was when they were all with one accord in one place on the Lord’s day, that the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the likeness of fire. Has not God said, that His house shall be called a house of prayer for all people? Did He not promise to those who joined themselves unto Him, to be His servants, to keep the sabbath for polluting it—that He would bring them to His holy mountain, and make them joyful in His house of prayer? I know, indeed, that God is present everywhere; I know that His temple is the Christian’s heart. If I call on Him at home, in my secret closet, that is His sanctuary: but because I seek Him in private, shall I not own Him in public? Is not the church a place where rich and poor meet together, as alike in the sight of God? Are there not some there, striving to lift their hearts and desires upward to Him? And shall not their devotion quicken mine? Have I not reason to believe that in the house of God angels are present? Let me, then, join with the

holy Psalmist, and say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. . . . O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!" (Psal. lxxxiv.)

But while the true Christian will constantly attend the public worship of God, he will not think this all. Oh, my brethren, if the Sunday were made by us what it should be; if it were begun with earnest prayer in private, and in our families—prayer for God's grace and sanctifying Spirit; and if it were closed again with reading God's word and prayer; what a blessing we might expect! And is this more than might be done? Some perhaps will say, 'I have much to occupy me on Sunday; my cattle must be tended and fed.' True! they must, God intends it; but suffer me to ask, Is no more time so taken up than is absolutely necessary? Let conscience answer.

III. But what encouragement have we to keep holy, to devote Sunday more especially to God's service? He tells us in the text:—"Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and that keepeth his hand from doing any evil." A blessing is promised,

not as if man can deserve it, but from the rich and free mercy of our heavenly Father, shown for Christ's sake to them that keep His covenant, and that think upon His commandments to do them. They shall be blessed—even in this world; for most surely godliness hath the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come. To know God as He is revealed to us in the gospel of His Son; to know Him as One who pardons our sins, and accepts us in the Beloved; and to endeavour to show that we know Him, by honouring Him before men, in keeping His commandments: this, my brethren, believe it, is the shortest, the surest, nay it is the only road to comfort, to happiness, and peace. Then only do we really enjoy life's blessings, when we can hope that God is with us. But the Christian, who turns Sunday to good account for his soul, in drawing near to God, shall be blessed for ever; earthly sabbaths shall be so many steps to an eternal rest in heaven; while waiting upon the Lord in His ordinances, He grows in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is no need to make Sunday a day of gloom and weariness. Devoting it to God will not make us enjoy it less, but more. Let there be social happiness in our families; let friends meet together; let there be the quiet country walk, and at home the reading of God's word, or of other books which, by His grace, may make us better; let the father and mother

instruct their children; let all at last join together in prayer. I ask you whether, after such a Sunday, you would not lie down at night in peace and comfort, rather than if you had spent it in worldly pleasure, or in rioting excess, or in unprofitable idleness?

Such, then, should Sunday be to us—rest to the body,—a means of grace to the soul. Thus God hath given it to man, in tender mercy and in love. Let us not misuse, let us not waste it; let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together: but let us stir up one another to love and good works. And so may the sabbath's holy influence extend through the week; and by spending the first day well, may we be led to devote all our time, and all our talents, to God our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. May we experience the sweetness of His pardoning mercy, and, being endued with saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, may we grow up more and more into the knowledge and likeness of Him; and when we draw near to death, may the remembrance of sabbaths spent in God's service speak comfort to our souls. He that shall have lived to threescore years and ten, will have passed on earth 3640 Sundays, or ten years of sabbaths. Is not this a solemn thought? God grant that the day of His holy rest may be more and more prized and honoured among ourselves, and through the length and breadth of our land. Then may we trust that God will

bleſs us, and that righteousneſs and peace will be eſtabliſhed among us for all generations; and that thouſands, and tens of thouſands, of redeemed ſinners, will praiſe God for ever, that the ſabbath day aroſe upon them.

## SERMON XXVI.

LABOUR WELL BESTOWED.

JOHN vi. 27.

“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.”

GREAT crowds of people had been following our Lord Jesus Christ, to see His miracles, and to hear His discourses. So intent were they upon His words, that they forgot for the time their bodily wants; they remembered not that they had nothing to eat. Yet they were far from home, in the midst of a waste and barren wilderness, where no food could be procured. What could they do, faint and weary as they were? The tender and compassionate Saviour pitied their case, and determined to supply their wants. The whole store which His disciples had, was but five loaves and two fishes; little enough for their own use. What could it avail for such a multitude? Yet it was more than Christ needed; for He who daily supplies angels and men, could have fed that multitude, had nothing been at hand. The same almighty

power that formed the world from nothing, spread a table for them in the wilderness; five thousand men did eat, and were filled. But, alas, for man's carnal mind! Their bodily wants were satisfied, but this miracle had no good effect upon their hearts. When, on the day following, they took much pains to seek out Jesus, and came crowding round Him as before, He, who knows the hearts of all men, and who saw what was in theirs, met them with a severe rebuke:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." And then, according to His usual custom, anxious for their souls' salvation, He exhorted them in the words of the text:—"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." In these words Jesus Christ speaks to us still; for He sees in most of those who call themselves Christians now, the same worldliness that was in the Jews; the same need of warning from His lips. The text shows us,

I. What we are not to labour for:—"the meat which perisheth."

II. That for which we are to labour:—"the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." And

III. From whom we must receive this blessing:—"The Son of man;" our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. Our Lord bids us, not to “labour for the meat that perisheth.” By the word “meat” in the text He does not mean only the food which supports the body. The “meat which perisheth” signifies all those things of an earthly and passing nature, on which men are apt to set their hearts in an improper and excessive degree; such as worldly pleasures, worldly riches, the indulgence of bodily appetites, gluttony, drunkenness, and such like. The “meat which endureth unto everlasting life” signifies that grace of God in Jesus Christ our Saviour, which is the fountain of all pure and holy joy; which inwardly sanctifies the heart and makes it fit for heaven: which lasts beyond death and the grave.

When our Saviour says, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth,” He does not mean to tell any of us that we are to be idle in this life, and do nothing for our subsistence. The Scripture elsewhere teaches us very differently; that “man must eat bread in the sweat of his brow;” and that “if any would not work, neither should he eat.” We are instructed from our childhood to “learn and labour truly to get our own living.” The greater part of mankind spend their lives in providing their daily bread. It was not honest industry that our Lord found fault with; it was the thinking of the body only, and caring little or nothing for the soul. He reprov'd the Jews, because their motive in coming was, that He might feed them again with loaves and

fishes, not that they might learn the way of salvation.

Think, then, brethren, that the Lord Jesus Christ commands each of you to do your duty and your appointed work in that state of life to which He has called you: but think, also, that He warns you, not to labour only for the meat that perisheth; not to labour for it as if it were the one thing needful; not to be so wrapped up, so immersed and engrossed, in this world's affairs, as to give no thought to anything beyond them. Does not the man who has no other care but to make money, labour for the meat that perisheth? When we see any one with his whole soul so bent on gain, that, not content with working six days in the week, he must needs take part of the sabbath, too; when we see him looking well to his flocks and his herds, but forgetting that he has a soul to be saved; and when we look onward, and think, 'Pass away a few years, and this man will have left all that he is toiling for,—his house, his goods, his farm, his stock; his body will be in the grave, and his soul will have been called to answer before God; and the question then will be, not whether he left his children so many hundreds of pounds, but whether he was a Christian; whether he served and loved God; whether he lived like one whom Christ died to redeem; whether he sought to lay up treasure in heaven?'—when we consider these things,

what must we think of the man, who lives for this world, and forgets the other? Surely, he is labouring for the meat that perisheth. He is laying up treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt; straining every nerve for that which, if he gets it, cannot make him happy; nay, which endangers his salvation; for is it not written in Scripture, "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition"? (1 Tim. vi. 9.)

Or, is not the intemperate man,—the man given to gluttony and drunkenness, is not he labouring "for the meat that perisheth"? Look at his haggard or bloated countenance; at his diseased and enfeebled body; and ask yourselves, 'Can that man have fed on the bread of life, or drunk at the fountain of living water?' Look at him again: the light of the eye is quenched; the colour of health has faded from the cheek; and the bearing of the man is gone. Is not that man's a perishing enjoyment? Is he not cutting short his life? Does not conscience tell him, in a voice at the sound of which his heart dies away within him, 'Know thou that for all these things—for the sins of a whole life—God will bring thee into judgment?'

Alas! my brethren, does not the heart of every one present tell him, that, "careful and troubled about many things," cumbered with

the concerns of this world, absorbed by its business or its pleasures, "rising up early, and late taking rest, and eating the bread of carefulness," he has through life laboured too much "for the meat that perisheth"? But, perhaps, you feel, 'We must labour, and that constantly, or we cannot live.' True, brethren; but, while you do so, it is very possible, nay, if you will save your souls, it is absolutely necessary, to labour also "for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Most of those who came to Jesus Christ, we know from Holy Scripture, were poor, and, no doubt, had to work for their daily bread; yet He said to them, "Labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

II. This, then, is what we are to labour for; and our Lord assures us, that if we do make it our main concern, God will give us all besides. And what is this meat? It is Christ and His grace. "I," said our Lord, "am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." As meat is necessary for the body, so is the grace of Christ needful for the soul. We cannot, spiritually, live without Him. And this meat endureth unto everlasting life, because Christ Himself abideth for ever, and he who believeth in Him, shall never die. Dear

brethren, are not the things which are seen, temporal? Are not the things which are not seen, eternal? The bread which springeth from the earth, can never satisfy; he who eateth of it shall hunger again; the necessities of to-day shall return on the morrow, and the cravings of nature shall never cease, till nature itself be dissolved. But the true bread is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the soul. If a man eat of this bread, his soul shall be satisfied.

He who feeds only on the bread of this present world, on the meat that perisheth, has no support under trial and trouble. Amid the changes and chances of the world, he finds only disappointment and vexation; the desire of his eyes is taken from him; earthly things cease to give him pleasure; disease and disquiet seize upon him; he sinks to the grave heartless and hopeless.

But he who eats of the bread from heaven, he who receives the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and is a partaker of the grace of God, that man shall live for ever. Hunger in this world he may, and die he surely must; but his hunger shall be only that of the body, and the death shall not be that of the soul. He shall not be free from sorrow; but sorrow shall lose its sting, for he shall repose his grief on the bosom of his God. Though all he loves best be taken from him, he is enabled to look beyond the grave with a hope

full of immortality. Labour, then, “for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” Seek that most precious of all blessings, the presence and the grace of Christ’s Holy Spirit in your hearts. And how must you labour for it? Can anything you may do earn it? No, the way to labour for the bread of life is to labour in humble and obedient prayer. “Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you:” and again, “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” You must seek the grace of Christ in earnest prayer.

III. For the text tells us, in the last place, that it is a gift:—“The Son of man shall give it unto you.” We have nothing wherewith to purchase it; “for the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.” It “is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto it.” He who died to redeem us from death, shall give unto those who truly seek Him, the bread of life,—the meat that endureth. What comfort is there in the thought that it is a free gift! that, unworthy and sinful as we are, we may draw near to God, and ask Him in Christ’s name to bestow this gift upon us; to pardon our sins; to renew us with His Holy Spirit; to sanctify and save

us! What consolation and encouragement in the Saviour's promise, "him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Yet Christ tells us to labour for this gift. It is a gift, because nothing we can do can deserve it; but He requires us to wait upon Him for it. It is to those who ask, that it shall be given; it is those who hunger and thirst after righteousness that shall be filled. O, my brethren, the Scripture tells us to seek first the kingdom of God; but most of you put it last of all. Christ would have you labour for this world in a proper manner; but He tells you, that, after all, worldly things are but meat that perisheth. He warns you, that it would profit you nothing to gain the whole world, if you lose your own soul. He promises that, if you will seek God before all, you shall never be losers even in this world.

Labour, then, I beseech you, for the meat that endureth to eternal life. God expects you to make an effort to learn what His will is. He bids you pray, and read His holy word. He enjoins you to wait upon Him in all the means of grace. He commands you to lay aside everything which you know that He condemns—all sin and unrighteousness; and He will fill your soul with good things, even with the peace that passeth understanding.

Now, observe, another opportunity is given you of labouring for the bread from heaven.

Come and seek God here in His house on Tuesday. Come and hear how St. Luke, the servant of Jesus Christ, gave up all this world's goods that he might go about preaching the Gospel of the grace of God. Will not you give up an hour to pray for yourself and others? Will you not leave for a little while your work, your business, your engagements, your pleasure, that here in the holy calm and quietness of God's house of prayer, you may let heavenly things steal in upon your soul? And if there are any here who are able to attend church twice on Sunday, but will not; if the morning of that sacred day is spent like any other morning; if it is used for transacting business, for settling accounts, for going on errands, for overlooking your farms, for cleaning your houses, for doing any work that need not then be done, or for reading newspapers and common books: I ask you most solemnly, most seriously, Is this labouring for the meat that endureth to eternal life? Is this working out your own salvation? Is this doing the will of your Father in heaven? Is this a Christian's part? If the morning of His holy day be given to sin and to the world, will He count your afternoon presence here an acceptable sacrifice? No, brethren, if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us. Be earnest, if you would receive His blessing. But, alas, my brethren, when every month you are invited to the Lord's table, to eat His

flesh and to drink His blood; and you turn away, paying no more heed than if the invitation did not in the least concern you, can I believe that you are anxious to feed on the bread of life? I cannot. I sorrow and pray for you.

O blessed Spirit of God! may Thine all-powerful influence incline the hearts of all now present to embrace and hold fast Thy proffered mercy; grant that they may “labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” Do Thou, O Lord, awaken them to feel their need of Thee, and grant to them that living bread, of which he who eats shall never die.

## SERMON XXVII.

RELIEF FROM CARE.

1 PETER v. 7.

“Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.”

IF we felt, as we ought to do, the power and excellence of the word of God, should we not say to ourselves, on hearing this text, ‘What a gracious, merciful, loving command is here?’ For, in a world where care is constantly pressing, it bids us to cast all our care on God. And why is it that so few, whatever be their troubles, ever try to find relief in the way which the text points out to us, and which seems so easy and so sure? Alas! my brethren, it is because few know God in the time of health, strength, and prosperity; how, then, can they turn to Him all at once when affliction comes? What right can they have to feel that this great and comforting privilege of the true Christian belongs to them? or that God cares for them, in the same way in which He cares for those who

are His dear children by faith in Jesus Christ, who love Him, and walk in His ways? I should, then, but deceive you, my brethren, if I led you to think that all alike are addressed in the text. The worldly, the careless, those who have never come to God by Christ, those who never pray to God, nor make any attempt to please Him;—such are not bidden to cast all their care upon God, while they continue in their sins: that would be but an abomination unto Him. The text speaks to the humble, patient, obedient Christian; to the child of God, who has been long struggling to bring his heart into submission to the Holy Spirit of grace. It is necessary, therefore, that I should point out to you more clearly:—I. To what kind of persons the text belongs. II. The care which God has for them. III. The duty and privilege belonging to all such, of casting all their care upon God.

I. First, then, the whole of this epistle of St. Peter teaches us, to what kind of persons he is speaking. He calls them at the beginning “elect,” that is, chosen by God to receive His sanctifying Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ upon their souls; “begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;” “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” He describes them as believing in, and loving Jesus Christ, though they had not seen Him; and as

even rejoicing in Him “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” These words, my dear brethren, can speak of none other but of true Christians, who have found mercy from God, and have been called out of the darkness of sin into the bright light of heavenly truth. ‘And are these,’ some of you may say to yourselves, ‘the only persons who are allowed to cast their care upon God? What, then, must become of me, for I am conscious I am not like those to whom St. Peter speaks; I am far from being a Christian such as they were; my hope in God, my love to Christ, my joy in the thought of glory to come, is not like theirs. Would I were one of that happy number! but with all my prayers and endeavours I only seem to halt towards heaven, and I often doubt if I shall ever reach it.’ If in any of you there are thoughts like these, remember, dear brethren, that the precepts and promises of Scripture are not meant only for the established and rejoicing believer; they are the property of all whose hearts are set towards God through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Are you in earnest? Are you really anxious to know the way of salvation, and to walk in it? Do your prayers testify that you are sorry for your weakness of faith, and coldness of love towards God? Do you ask forgiveness, and pray, through the blessed name of Jesus, for more grace to be given you, more assistance of the Holy Spirit? Do you constantly and seriously attend all the ordinances

of the Church, because there God has promised His blessing? And do you really endeavour to perform the duties of each day, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth the hearts? If this be so, take courage. Be sure that God is with you; that you are one of those for whom He careth. If you have not the full assurance of faith and hope, yet there is nothing to hinder your drawing near to God at all times, and casting upon Him your care and trouble, whatever it may be; for

II. "He careth for you." And it is of the care of God for His people that I am to speak in the second place. Now, in one sense, God cares for all which His hand has made. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works." He openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Yea, He may be said to care even for the wicked and ungodly; for who but God sustains and feeds them from day to day? who else watches over them in the slumbers of the night? who makes His sun to shine upon their fields, giving them fruitful seasons? If those who live in sin, would consider, that for every blessing of God to them, they are returning evil to Him; that for every gift of His bounty, they are provoking Him to His face; they might be led to repent of their wickedness and ingratitude to the Best of all

beings. For indeed God has shown yet greater care even for the ungodly: "He so loved the world"—this world of sinners—"that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God offers forgiveness, and His Holy Spirit, and a new life in Christ, to all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel. His universal care for His creatures has thus opened a way of mercy to all.

But it is a different care which God has for those whom He marks as His own people, in the midst of a wicked world. His care for them is the tender, watchful, guiding care of the most kind and affectionate father for his child. Nay, He has told us that it exceeds even a mother's love:—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget," (it is a possible thing,) "yet will I not forget thee." (Isa. xlix. 15.) Such is the promise made to the Church of Christ; and every true member of the Church has a part in it. This care of God for His children who are reconciled to Him through the blood of Christ, is most chiefly directed to their everlasting salvation. If, to save their souls for ever, he sees it needful to send them affliction and trial, He will not withhold the rod; for "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He

receiveth." And then comes in again the gracious promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." Hear, too, with what confident hope St. Paul speaks of the care of God to the Christians at Philippi. "Being confident," he says, "of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And does the Almighty God extend His care for His people to the things of this life? What says our gracious Saviour? "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." God clothes the flowers; will He not much more clothe you? God feeds the birds; will He not much more feed His children? But what words can describe the care of God for those who love Him, and are led by His Holy Spirit! It is a care springing from His everlasting love. He has given them all things in His Son; all things that pertain to life and godliness. They are members of Christ. Our Lord Himself uses the remarkable words, "Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." The glory of heaven, the blessedness which the redeemed of the Lord will there enjoy through all the ages of eternity, will alone fully show the care of God for His people.

III. You who believe in Jesus Christ, and

pray for His Holy Spirit, endeavouring by His help to work out your salvation from day to day with fear and trembling; see what is at once your duty and your privilege. You are bidden to cast all your care upon this most merciful and gracious God, knowing that in a manner beyond all that you can think, He careth for you. Here is the true secret of a light and happy heart. If we did but more earnestly and truly cast our care on God, its bitterness would be taken away, because the sting of sin would be gone from it. You observe it is said in the text, "Casting all your care." None is too small for God's regard; none too great for His power to relieve.

1. Cast on God, then, my brethren, your daily care. Duly, morning by morning, ask in prayer for the help of His Holy Spirit, that you may be able to go calmly, wisely, and safely through the usual business and trials of the day. For what day does not bring its trial and temptation? Are you not tempted to over-much care for this world? to an anxious mind? to hasty tempers? to rash and wrong words? often to wicked and unchristian thoughts? If you cast the burthen of these temptations beforehand upon God in prayer, and are watchful also yourselves, He will be faithful, for Christ's sake, to keep you from falling into sin.

2. Cast on God also, dear brethren, all care

for the future. If you are not in trouble at the present time, you may be afraid it is coming. You may expect losses; times may be bad, and growing worse; poverty or other ills, may seem to be threatening. Now what a store of heavenly wisdom there is in those few words of our blessed Saviour:—"The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our Lord does not mean that we are to be rashly careless about the future, so far as we have power to do anything. But He knew how little we can do, and therefore He would have us leave the future in the hands of God, content with the mercies of the present day.

3. But on some of you heavy affliction and sorrow may have already fallen. Still you are bidden, beloved brethren, to cast your heaviest care and trial upon God. Who else, indeed, is able to support you? And how often have His people found His promise true:—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." (Isa. xliii. 2.)

But in every case, remember what it is to cast our care on God. It is not to pray and then go away to fear, and fret, and be anxious as before. No; if you hurl a burden from your shoulders, you feel it no more; at least, the weariness is soon gone: so should it be with us. We should try to leave our care with God,

as Hannah did when she prayed to the Lord, and went away, and her countenance was no more sad. Endeavour, having prayed, to go cheerfully, but watchfully, about your proper duties.

## SERMON XXVIII.

### DAVID'S VICTORY OVER GOLIATH.

1 SAMUEL xvii. 50.

“So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.”

THE account of David's victory over the giant of Gath is not merely an amusing story; there is conveyed under it much spiritual teaching. It shows us, in the most striking manner, the power of faith in God—faith in His almighty protection and assisting grace; that by Him the weak are made strong, and that they who trust in Him shall never be confounded. The whole chapter seems to say to us, in the words of the Apostle Paul, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” (Eph. vi. 10.)

Think of the scene brought before you in this chapter. Imagine the army of the Philistines and the army of Israel drawn up in battle array; while in front of the Philistine army there advances a man of immense size, whose height measured upwards of nine feet,

covered with complete armour, bearing in his hand an enormous spear. This giant-champion challenges any of the army of Israel to come forth and fight with him in single combat. But none are found bold enough. The bravest and hardiest soldiers are dismayed at his appearance; and, day after day, the proud Philistine renews his challenge, and scoffs at those who claim to be the army of the living God. Then imagine one, not arrived at the strength of manhood, a very youth to look at, coming forth on the part of Israel to meet the Philistine; no helmet on his head, no coat of mail, no spear in his hand, no shield upon his arm—all he carries is a sling, and a few smooth pebbles in a bag. The Philistine Goliath laughs to scorn so feeble an adversary. "Come to me," he says to David, in all the consciousness of strength and certainty of easy victory, "and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." David's answer is the answer of faith and holy courage; of reliance on a mightier arm and better strength than his own. "Thou comest to me," he says, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . and all this assembly shall know, that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He

will give you into our hands." Nor did David trust in vain. God strengthened his arm, and guided the stone, which he slung, to the forehead of the proud Philistine. The helmet of brass, the spear and shield, could not avail him. The haughty man was brought low; the boaster's glorying was silenced in death. David took the sword of his fallen enemy, and cut the head from his body. The army of the Philistines broke up and fled in terror; and all Judah and Israel arose, and shouted, and pursued them.

Now, that the character and example of David may have its right effect upon us, we must turn our attention to his earliest history. We read of him first in the preceding chapter; where we find that God the Searcher of all hearts and made choice of him to be king over Israel, when death should have removed Saul from the throne. In the beginning of the chapter it is related, that the prophet Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse at Bethlehem, and there directed to single out David, the youngest of his eight sons; not that he was superior to his brothers in appearance:—"the Lord looketh on the heart." The holy consecrating oil was poured on David's head; and, from that time forward, the Spirit of the Lord rested in an especial manner upon him. But though designed and marked out for the high dignity of king, he continued, as yet, contented and in-

dustrious in his humble occupation of shepherd. No thoughts of pride or ambition seem to have disturbed his mind; not even when the providence of God opened a way for him to be brought into public notice. David played sweetly and skilfully on the harp; and he was sent for to court, to play before the king, and to soothe the dark and melancholy fits which oppressed the spirit of Saul. When no longer wanted, he returned, without murmuring, to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. There it was, that he experienced in so remarkable a manner the protection and assistance of God, that his faith was strengthened and his courage confirmed for greater exploits; for he tells king Saul, when asked by him how he could dare to fight with the Philistine Goliath, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumeised Philistine shall be as one of them. . . . The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

1. Observe, first, from this account, that a humble station is no hindrance to the grace of

God. David, unknown and unnoticed, feeding his father's sheep at Bethlehem, was chosen by God to be an instrument to promote His glory, and to do great good in the world. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." If any man love God, and seek to do His will, the same is known to the Lord, whether he be high or low, rich or poor, a shepherd in the field, or a statesman in parliament. Think of this, brethren, you who earn your bread by daily toil. Do not say, "Because God has made me poor, it cannot be expected of me to be religious. Rather say, "To the poor the Gospel is preached." The Scripture says, 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." May not I obtain these riches? May not the inheritance of this heavenly kingdom be mine? Is not the grace of God offered to me through Jesus Christ my Saviour? Has not the Lord said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out?" I will seek a place in God's kingdom; I will pray to be made a child of grace: and then I shall possess the true riches, the good part which cannot be taken away from me.

2. Observe, again, that faithfulness and diligence in appointed duties is the way to honour and respect. It was so with David. The work given him to do, he did in the fear of God.

Zealously and boldly he watched over his father's property. The words addressed by the Lord to the good servant in the parable might be applied to him:—"Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." In the performance of his daily duties, in obedience to his father, in submission to man, he was prepared for great and noble deeds. Even so every child of God, every one in whose heart divine grace dwells, is trained, through suffering and duty here for eternal glory hereafter. Nay, even in this world there is gain in godliness, for it brings favour and respect from man. But its richest gain is to come. Brethren, this is the light in which a Christian ought to regard his daily work. It is his preparation for heaven. If there be in the heart love to God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the meanest office is sanctified, and made a sacrifice to God. Do, then, all you have to do, as unto the Lord, and not as unto men, knowing that if you be the Lord's servants, ye shall receive of Him an everlasting inheritance.

3. But the lesson especially taught us in this chapter, is that which the Apostle Paul elsewhere enforces:—"My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If we trust in Him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour, we need not fear our spiritual enc-

mies—the enemies of our souls. David went forth single-handed against the giant Goliath; but “we,” says the Apostle, “wrestle not with flesh and blood;” we have mightier adversaries than the Philistine to overcome—even sin and Satan. By our baptism we have been called into the Lord’s service, we have vowed to be soldiers of Jesus Christ; and however that vow be neglected, broken, forgotten, it rests upon our souls—it cannot pass away: the mark of the Lord is on our foreheads.

Let me address myself to the young. How shall you keep your solemn vow? How shall you resist temptation? How overcome the world? How, in the midst of wickedness, and with a wicked heart within, shall you keep yourselves pure? Is it possible to be a Christian indeed, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, while multitudes around you are consenting together to do evil? Must it not be a miracle of grace that can save you from such dangers, that can put a right heart within you, and enable you to pass unharmed through snares on the right hand and on the left? It is, indeed, a greater miracle than that which gave to David, young as he was, weak and unarmed, the victory over the giant Goliath. But are you willing to make the trial? Has the Spirit of God led any of you to feel that it is a blessed thing to be a Christian, a child of God, a follower of Jesus, an heir of heaven? If there be one such, re-

member that David's God is yours also. You cannot be too much convinced of your own utter weakness. Be assured that in yourself dwelleth no good thing; be assured that your heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that of yourself you cannot even think that which is good; that, if you try to resist the tempter in your own strength, you will surely fall—sin will gain an easy and entire victory over you. But though this be so,—though you are indeed fallen, weak, sinful, helpless as to any spiritual good; yet remember that there is a strength not your own,—an all-sufficient strength, promised you from above. You may, as David was, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Yes! bear in mind what your Saviour Jesus Christ has said:—“Only believe.” “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Believe that He has loved you; that He has washed you in His blood; that He wills your salvation. Believe that He will hear you, if you pray to Him, and will endue your soul with much strength; that His Holy Spirit will come and dwell in your heart, and give you grace to resist sin. Are you tempted to evil? Do thoughts of wickedness arise in your mind? Lift up your heart to God, through Christ, and say, Lord, help me! Lord, give me Thy grace! Enable me to overcome this temptation! Are you afraid of being laughed at?

of being ridiculed for your religion? Do you shrink from the sneer of the scoffer? Does the power of wickedness seem to raise itself on high, like the Philistine giant, and mock at those who call themselves servants of the Most High God; and do you feel as an helpless child before it? Or, do you hear around you words of ungodliness, cursing and swearing, of scoffing and blasphemy, of lewdness and filthy talking; and do you fear to reprove them? O think then of David with his sling and stone—a feeble weapon, but God could make it strong. Greater is He that is with you, than he that is with them. Be bold for God, so it be in meekness and humility. Speak a word for Him; you know not what power may be given it. It may even convert a sinner from the error of his way, and save, through God's grace, a soul alive.

David is placed before us in this narrative as an emblem of the whole Church in its warfare with the powers of darkness, with the spirit of wickedness and unbelief. To that Church our Lord has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" and, weak as it appears, fighting not with carnal but spiritual weapons, He has ensured to it at the last a glorious victory; and each individual member of the Church has a share in these promises. That word of God, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," is fulfilled in each

child of light, and heir of salvation who is struggling now with sin and corruption.

The same scorn with which the Philistine regarded David's feeble weapons, is cast by the worldly on those means of grace which Christ has given in His Church for the strengthening and saving of the soul. What mean these ordinances? this sprinkling of water in baptism? this rite of confirmation? these elements of bread and wine? To what purpose are these stated times of prayer? Can they bring holiness, or lead to heaven? So the world asks, clad in its own armour of pride—its self-chosen wisdom, and, thrusting away God's own appointments, rushes on to its own ruin.

Meanwhile, the humble believer puts his trust in God's word and promise; he looks for invisible grace, for strength to his soul, through the appointed means; he walks by faith and not by sight; and, where worldly men behold only a barren form, he feeds on the bread of life, and drinks the water of salvation.

Christian brethren, as David chose for the battle his five smooth pebbles from the brook, choose you also your weapons wherewith to meet the enemies of your soul. Let them be humility, and prayer, and faith, and hope, and obedience. O, especially hold fast that smooth stone, taken from the river of life—earnest, unceasing prayer; drop it not from your hand; let it not go; but pray always, and no enemy

shall prevail, no sin gain the dominion, no trial be too great; but God, for Christ's sake, shall strengthen you with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

Let David teach the Christian another lesson—to make the goodness of God in time past an encouragement to trust Him for the future. “The Lord that delivered me,” he said, “out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” Believer, have you not experienced the Lord's mercy to you heretofore? Can you call to mind no occasions on which He has raised you up; snatched you from temptation; given you victory over sin; filled your heart with joy and thankfulness? At least, has He not preserved your life? extended your day of grace? continued your opportunities of salvation? Are not these proofs of His goodness? Trust, then, in Him still. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” Trust in Him to preserve you in all temptations—all trials; and to bring you, for His dear Son's sake, to His heavenly kingdom. Fear not even death, the last enemy; for, as David overcame the giant, so has He of whom David was the type and figure, the Lord Jesus Christ, overcome death, and trampled sin and Satan under His feet, and brought life and immortality to light for His people. Cling fast to your Saviour, and obey Him in doing His holy will, and so

shall you share His glory, when, having vanquished all the enemies of our salvation, He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all.

## SERMON XXIX.

THE APPOINTED WEEKS OF HARVEST.

JER. v. 24.

“He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”

INGRATITUDE to God for His continued mercies is one mark of the corruption of our hearts. We receive the gifts of heaven; but seldom, or coldly, do we lift a thought to the Giver. This, which is true as regards all the daily blessings we enjoy, may be especially applied to the harvest. God Himself made it a complaint long ago by the mouth of His prophet Jeremiah: “Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, That giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.” When God, then, covers the fields with plenty; when He permits the sickle to be again put to the corn, bending with the weight of the full and ripened ear; when the husbandman’s toil is rewarded by the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, the Lord and Giver of all leaves not Himself without witness. The harvest-time is

a special call to us to think upon His power, His faithfulness, and His goodness; it is an emblem of the work of grace upon men's hearts; and it sets before us the final judgment.

Now, then, that the reaper's hand is once more busy in the fields, and many of you are labouring to secure what God has given, let us endeavour, by His grace, to learn the lesson He teaches us; to draw spiritual instruction from that which we see around us; and to raise our hearts in thankfulness, love, and obedience to our heavenly and gracious Father, who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness; who sendeth fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness; who yet, if it please Him, can punish us by bidding the rains of heaven destroy all our hopes, and can spread want, and famine, and misery through the land.

1. Let us look upon the harvest, and learn the power of God. See the field ripe for the sickle. What a multitude of ears are waving in the wind! How they spread before the sun their rich deep colouring of brown! How tall and firmly knit is the stalk that supports them! How gracefully they bend the head laden with precious produce!

Go back a few months. The field lay with its soil bare and rough; the plough had gone over it, and turned up its ridges: there was not a sign of vegetation. The sower came and cast in the bare grain; it might chance of wheat,

or of some other grain; the harrow followed: and man had done his part. In a little time the green blade appeared. Who made it spring? Who quickened the grain to life? Who cherished and preserved it through the bitter and frosty winter? Who, in spring, unfolded its leaf, raised gradually the tapering stalk, and filled out the ear? Was this man's doing? Can he, with all his skill, make one single plant like these? No: let him, then, acknowledge an almighty power—a hand that works silently and unseen; let him confess that this is God's doing, who, every year, performs a fresh miracle before us, though we regard it not.

Again, let the harvest teach us the faithfulness of God, that He is true to His word and promise. When the flood of waters that once overwhelmed the world had passed away, and Noah and his family, preserved by God's mercy in the ark, stepped out upon the dry green earth, Noah, filled with wonder and gratitude, "builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; . . . neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

(Gen. viii. 20-22.) More than four thousand years have passed, since God made this promise to Noah. Generation after generation has come and gone; kingdoms have arisen and fallen: but God's word remains the same. Seed-time and harvest have not failed; the rainbow still appears in the cloud,—the sign of God's covenant, the pledge that His promise shall be fulfilled, and that the season shall hold on their course until the last great harvest comes, which is the end of the world. "God is not a man that He should lie."

3. Let the harvest also teach us the goodness of God. Climb some hill, and look around you: as far as the eye can reach, the country is studded with corn-fields. Here the reapers are making long lanes through the standing corn; there the sheaves are set thick and orderly along the ground; and here again the slow wagons are conveying the produce of the earth to the yard and to the barn. What is it on which we look? It is the food of thousands and of millions for months to come. If the harvest failed, the cry of a starving people would go up to heaven. And do we deserve that God should feed us? Have not our sins forfeited all claim upon His bounty? Yet He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good; He causeth the fields to stand so thick with corn, that they seem to laugh and sing.

4. But there are other thoughts connected

with Scripture, which the sight of the harvest may awaken in our minds. Our Lord Jesus Christ has drawn from it many lessons, and left them in the Gospel for our instruction.

The seed-corn, He tells us in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, is like the word of God. In the time of sowing, many seeds fell upon yonder hard and beaten path which crosses the field; and, before they could enter the trodden earth, the birds came and picked them up. Many a word of divine truth, my brethren, falls upon hearts hardened by sin and worldliness and selfishness; and Satan catches it away before it is listened to, or has made any impression to turn the sinner from his sin. Look where the wheat has failed in spots about the field. The seed was cast on them as well as on other parts; and the early blade came up full and green. But the summer heat has scorched and withered it. There is scarcely a handful worth gathering there: there is no depth of soil. So the word of God, heard in public or in private, seems to touch many; Christ appears to them precious for a time; but soon the evil heart of unbelief gives room to the temptations of the world and the deceitfulness of sin; and those who promised well, turn out at last worldly and vain. Look again: in one corner of the field is a rank bed of thistles, and here and there some bushes of thorns; but no corn. Some seed was scattered

there; but the thorns grew up the fastest, and overpowered the young wheat: the reaper does not so much as think of carrying his sickle thither. So the warning of truth, the word of salvation, has been pressed upon many a person who at the time seemed not unmindful; but then the love of pleasure, the desire of gain, the things of this world, the troubles which vex the heart—some, or all of these, have taken hold of the thoughts and affections; religion will not flourish; there is not time for it. Christ is not so important to such a heart as the things its thoughts run upon; and so, when the end comes, there will be nothing to gather. But the rest of the field, the full ears, the heavy sheaves that bear each other up, tell a different tale, and give rise to far other feelings in the Christian. What a rich return is there from the little seed put in the ground! So what a store of comfort and joy comes from faithful attention and obedience to the word of God! Then there is the blessing of an humbled heart, instead of the curse of pride; there is trust in Christ, instead of false dependence on ourselves; there is a hope full of immortality, instead of a hope full of foolishness. The word of God, really received into the heart, brings forth a harvest of good desires, and the fruit of a good life, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Think, then, my brethren, when you look on the harvest, what part of the field do you most resemble?

How have you received the word of God? Has it had any effect in leading you to a better life?

Or, let us take another lesson of our Lord's. There is not only corn in the field. See where the thistles lift their heads above it; and see where the bindweed has twisted itself round the stalks, cumbering and choking the corn. What does this represent to us? The children of the wicked one—the ungodly and the unbelieving, mixed with the true people of God. Have we not cause, when we look on the harvest, to ask ourselves—Am I like the fruitful wheat? am I living to God? Or is my place yet with the worse than useless weeds?

A more awful thought yet remains. The time will come when a voice will be heard from heaven saying, “Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” (Rev. xiv. 15.) The time will come when all mankind shall rise again with their bodies, and shall be called to judgment. “The harvest,” said our Lord, “is the end of the world: and the reapers are the angels.” The Son of man will send them forth, and they will bind the tares, the useless weeds, in bundles to burn them; they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and will cast them into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. But they shall gather the wheat

into His barn. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Or, let us take from Scripture another awful image. See where the barndoors are thrown wide open, and the corn, threshed out with the flail or the machine, is being winnowed on the floor. What thoughts does this suggest? Such winnowing, such sifting must take place in the Church of God. Nothing but real wheat will be kept; yet not one grain of that will be lost. Christ will thoroughly purge His threshing-floor. All who profess to be His people, must be sifted; the chaff—all the chaff, will be separated and consumed, burnt up, or blown away. O beloved brethren, will our faith bear this sifting? Will our religion stand? Is the love of Christ in our hearts? Or is all but husks? all outside? There are ears of corn fair to look at, but which yield little or nothing to the flail. Such are we, if we cry, "Lord, Lord;" if we hear Christ's word, and attend His ordinances, and are called by His name, yet do not the things which He saith. "By their fruits," said our Lord, "ye shall know them."

Let the harvest, then, speak to us in warning. It tells us of a judgment to come. It tells us, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We cannot escape the eye of the

Lord of the harvest. He will call us each to account. If, then, you know that you are living without thought of Him; if you are doing that which He hates,—tremble and be afraid. Think of the end; think of the final separation of the wicked and the good; repent and be converted.

For the harvest speaks to us also in encouragement. Reflect on the goodness of God—that He is love. Does His mercy provide food—the bread that perisheth—for our bodies? and will He not be ready to give to our souls the bread of life? Hear what Jesus Christ Himself has said: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth,”—not for that only, but labour “for that meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.” And again, He says, “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” And how can we eat of it? By believing on Christ as our Saviour; by seeking Him in prayer; by feeding upon His word; by endeavouring to keep His commandments: “him who” thus “cometh to Me,” He saith, “I will in no wise cast out.”

Reflect on the faithfulness of God. He promised long ago that seed-time and harvest should not fail; and He has kept His word. Will He not keep it in other things also? Will He not bring to pass all that He has said in

the Holy Scriptures? Assuredly not one jot or tittle shall fail. Christian! hold fast by those great and precious promises which are written there. "He that believeth in Me," saith our Lord, "hath everlasting life." Let that hope be as the anchor of your soul, sure and steadfast. Faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it. "Be not weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Brethren, would that thankfulness to God were the feeling of all hearts and the language of all lips at this season! Read the book of Ruth, and see there, in the character of Boaz, one who was not ashamed to own God before his servants; to own Him in the harvest field. "And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, 'The Lord be with you: and they answered him, 'The Lord bless thee.'" Mark, too, his kindness to the poor and the widow, giving out of the abundance with which God blessed him. Go and do ye likewise.

## SERMON XXX.

THE RICH FOOL.

LUKE xii. 20.

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

THESE were awful words, brethren. To die that night—that very night; to know that the morning’s sun would look upon his corpse; to have no time given for repentance—none for seeking peace with God; to be summoned at once into eternity—to that dread tribunal whence there is no appeal, to that sentence which knows no reversion of woe or blessedness; to pass from the bright and cheering light of the sun to the dark chambers of the grave—from this world of sense and feeling to that spiritual world, of which we know so little, which stretches out in endless prospect; to leave all here—the friends we love, and that love us, and to go to meet God? Even the true Christian whose loins are girded and his light habitually burning, might start at the sudden call; might look with anxious eye to see if there be oil at hand to trim his lamp; might

turn to his soul, and say, O, my soul, art thou ready? canst thou meet thy Lord? What, then, must such a summons be to the worldly man—to him who is living without God in the world; whose heart, whose hope, whose treasure is on earth—what must it be to him to hear a voice from God declaring, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee?”

Such was the man to whom our Lord represents the words of the text to have been spoken; who, in the sight of God, was a fool. Let us read the account given of him, and see whether God and the world agree in their estimation of folly and of wisdom. “The ground of a certain rich man,” said our Lord, “brought forth plentifully.” By the worldly wisdom and diligence of his forefathers, or by his own, he had acquired large possessions—he had added field to field; he looked around him, and was master of all he saw. On every side his flocks and herds spread over the green pastures; the valleys were thick with corn ripening for the harvest: his heart was lifted up with joy and pride. But in the midst of his delight a thought struck him: he saw that the crops of the year promised to be abundant beyond measure, exceeding former seasons; already his yards were filled with stacks—his barns were occupied with last year’s corn; “and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?” A strange cause for

perplexity—for being at a loss! The poor beggar, who knows not where to find his daily food, may well ask, What shall I do? But here was a man troubled, not because he had too little, but because he had too much. God had given him a plenteous increase; he had more than he knew what to do with. At last, a plan occurred to him of which his heart well approved. He said to himself, pleased with his own worldly wisdom and forethought, “This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and I will build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.” And most would say, How could he do better? was there any harm in making preparation to secure what God had given him? Perhaps not; but let us hear further what were his intentions: “And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” This, then, was the use he purposed to make of God’s bounties; for this he meant to enlarge his barns and store up the fruits of the ground:—that he might revel in self-indulgence; that he might pamper his bodily appetites; that, as years, he fondly hoped, should pass over his head, he might eat, and drink, and be merry; while the morrow should be as to-day, and yet more abundant; while his wealth should command respect from all around him, and men should praise him because he did well to himself. The end he put far away; death came not into his

thoughts. Life was in its prime with him; health and strength rendered him secure. How then came to him the voice of God? How awful, how terrible! "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The lightning from heaven bursting at his feet, the earth opening before him, could not strike more dismay into his heart. What a breaking up of his dream of happiness! What a change from hope to despair! His many years are brought down to a few hours! his moments are numbered! the sand in his glass of life is fast running out! his soul to which he had promised a long course of carnal pleasure, must go to the unseen world, must appear before God, and render up its account of mercies unacknowledged, and gifts and bounties misused!

Man seeth not, brethren, as God seeth. Would not the world, looking at this rich man in the midst of his possessions, have called him happy? Would not many have said, 'I would I were in his place; what a lucky man he is, for all goes well with him: and what a wise man! he takes good care of what he has.' And yet, in the sight of God, this wise man was a fool! It will be well for us to inquire how he was a fool, lest we, perhaps, without knowing it, may be walking in his steps.

1. He was a fool, because he gave not God the glory. When he saw his ground bringing forth plentifully, he thought not of the Giver;

he thought but of his own care and skill. True, he had ordered the land to be manured and ploughed, and the seed to be sown; but had he made that seed spring and grow? Had he brought upon it the rain and the sunshine? Could he have filled one ear of wheat with grain? Could all his power and wealth have ripened it? When he said, then, Where shall I bestow my fruits and my goods? would it have been amiss to have felt some gratitude—to have uttered some word of thanks to his Almighty Benefactor?

Brethren, does not this lead us to bring a similar charge against ourselves? Are we never wanting in thankfulness? Day by day we taste of the bounty of God; it is He who spreads our table: do we give Him thanks? are we sensible of His goodness? might He not too often justly say of us, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider?” Has not God been good to you in lately granting you the appointed weeks of the harvest, and enabling you, for the most part, to gather in your corn uninjured? And, if you were really thankful to Him, would most of you be such unwilling, such unfrequent worshippers here? No weather keeps you from the market, or from business; but any excuse is sufficient for neglecting the house of God. O, what evil has sin wrought in our fallen hearts! With what wondrous long-suffering does God bear our ingratitude!

2. Let us look again to the rich man's folly. He was a fool in God's account for the use he intended to make of his possessions. "Take thine ease," he said to his soul, "eat, drink, and be merry." And is this the end of life—to eat, and drink, and to be merry? to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetites, without any thought of doing good to others? Or was there no folly in his making sure that he could thus take his ease? Cannot one thorn spoil a bed of down? Could he guard against sickness? and if his body should be racked with pain and weariness, and sleepless nights should be appointed him, could he have enjoyment of his wealth? If, for instance, disease should destroy all relish for his food, what would his plenty avail him? Could he then take pleasure in costly meats and drinks?

3. Further, he was a fool because he confounded body and soul together. It would have been better sense, had he said, 'Body, take thine ease, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.' Such low and gross enjoyments suit not man's soul, for it is spiritual. It has desires and capacities which cannot be so satisfied. When the body is indulged in surfeiting and drunkenness, the soul—that heavenly part within us—is kept down, buried, clogged, sunk, its light half put out. What a mistake to call this the soul's enjoyment! It is the great folly of worldly

men, that they think to portion their souls with the wealth of the world and the pleasures of the body.

4. But, most chiefly, the rich man was a fool in this,—that he so confidently and surely reckoned on many years to come. Alas! was life, then, in his power? Could he by all his wealth make a league with death, and bribe it to hold back its hand? He stood in fancied security, with years of happiness in his view, and knew not that at that moment the decree was gone forth,—“This night thou shalt die.”

Is it not strange that, like this man, we should all of us, with death around us, feel so confident of life? No man believes his own time will be short. We see others drop into the grave, ay, the young, the strong, the healthy; we see many who have toiled and laboured for earthly good, never permitted to enjoy it,—death comes and hurries them away. Continually we are made to feel, that “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.” “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.” Every accident, every sickness we hear of, every newspaper tells us that life is uncertain. The very leaves that fall and rustle under our feet preach to us of death. But the truth, that we ourselves must die, gives us little concern. Most of us live as if we were to live here for ever. Men mostly form their plans for many years to come, as if they, and not the Almighty, had the disposal of them. They

think not of the words of Scripture, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." (James iv. 13-15.) It becomes not frail creatures like us to boast of our security. It better becomes us humbly to commit ourselves and our plans to the direction of our gracious God and Saviour. Knowing that life is uncertain, we should enjoy indeed its blessings with a thankful heart; but not loving too well what to-morrow we may be called to part from. Some forethought, some provision for the future, is right; but let us remember, too, that we may never require it, for death may soon set us free from earthly wants.

If God has given us already enough—enough for life's necessaries, perhaps comforts, then let us take heed and beware of covetousnes, of desiring more, lest we provoke Him to visit us in His anger, or to curse us by giving what may prove the ruin of our souls for ever.

Brethren, does it seem to you, that none of you are in the rich man's case, and that there is no lesson in the parable for you? Yet, think again. Though you be not lords of the soil, many of you can look upon the fields ripening

for the harvest and say, These are my fruits and my goods. Does not God bless the labour of your hands? Does He not often grant you a plenteous increase? And what, then, is the thought of your hearts? While you are properly anxious to secure God's gifts, while you rightly think of paying all their due, while you labour to provide for the future welfare of your sons and your daughters, do you remember that this world is not all? Do you reflect, that all you have, is but lent you of God for a season, that you may use it to His glory? If He grants you more than enough for your necessities, do you consider that the poor and needy, the widow and the fatherless, have a demand upon you? Do you show thankfulness to your heavenly Father by devoting a portion of your substance to relieve the wants of your fellow-creatures? As money is that on which men's hearts are most set, so to part with it in obedience to God's command, is one of the surest proofs of our sincerity towards Him.

Or, let me ask you again, brethren, is it for the body alone you care? Is your thought only what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and wherewith you shall be clothed? Is it to this world, and this world only, you are looking? All of us are disposed to do this. The body and its wants, earth and its concerns, are uppermost in men's thoughts. How to make gain, how to be richer than a neighbour, how to live at ease;—

these and things of a like nature are all that men can be persuaded to believe are worth care and diligence. I say, this temptation is around us all; for earthly things are ever before our eyes, and pressing upon our notice, but heavenly things we do not see. And men love to hush themselves to sleep; and they make themselves secure, and put death and judgment away; and they think religion a troublesome thing, and say, Why cannot you leave us to ourselves? we harm nobody; we live as others do; we eat and drink, and follow our callings;—what charge can you bring against us? What did God say to the rich man in the parable? “Thou fool”—a fool for laying up treasure for himself, while he was not rich towards God. This was the charge against him; and it is applicable to each one of us, so long as we care for the body only, and neglect our souls.

O brethren, if any of you have this world's goods, but are living without God—without repentance towards Him—without faith in Christ—with no regard to His word, or desire to please Him; then, whatever be your worldly wealth, you are poor indeed. If any of you who earn your daily bread in the sweat of your brow, and have nought beyond it, are ignorant of the grace of Christ, and without the knowledge of God, then you are doubly poor. To be rich towards God—rich in His pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ; rich in the hope of eternal glory; rich

in the grace of His Holy Spirit; rich in humility, in patience, in love, in a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; this is to be rich indeed. Happy, thrice happy, those who have found this heavenly treasure; who, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, are seeking to know more and more of Him. Most blessed are they, who have obtained a well-founded hope in Christ. Theirs is the good part, which shall never be taken away from them.

Brethren, may we take warning from him whose case we have been considering! Let us not say to our souls, Soul, thou hast many years to come; but let us say, O my soul, this night thou mayst be summoned to stand before God. Art thou ready? are thy sins forgiven? art thou washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb? Brethren, let us turn unto the Lord; let us seek Him while He may be found; let us go to Him by faith in that Saviour who came to seek and to save the lost. "In the midst of life we are in death; of whom may we seek for succour but of Thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased? Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

## SERMON XXXI.

GOD'S HUSBANDRY.

1 COR. iii. 9.

“Ye are God's husbandry.”

THE harvest is passed; the summer is ended; the year has almost run its round. Your corn is safely housed; the reaper's sickle is put by; shouts of joy have welcomed the harvest home. Is the farmer's labour done? No, the plough is even now at work again; the ground must be prepared; the seed must soon be sown for next year's crop; the sower treads close on the reaper's heels. So continual is the round; so sure the word of God, that seed-time and harvest shall not cease, and that man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. But as the seasons pass by us, as the work of husbandry goes on, as the plough and the harrow, the hoe and the reaping-hook, are one after another called into use,—is there no lesson to us in these things? is there no spiritual teaching, no voice from God? Yea, surely, my brethren, all nature speaks to us if we would hear, and the words of

the text call us to listen to its voice. "Ye are God's husbandry," says the Apostle, addressing all baptized Christians. Ye yourselves are the field of God, which He has enclosed and hedged in; which He has purchased to be His own possessions; on which He has bestowed His care; and on which He comes to look, expecting to find some produce, some growth, some return answerable to the management bestowed.

I shall endeavour, then, by God's help, from these words to offer some thoughts to you, which, through His blessing, may go with you to the farm and to the field; may occur to you at the plough; may rise to your mind in your morning or your evening walk, and may win you perhaps for a while from the care of earthly and passing things, to meditate on those that are of eternal importance. May God's Holy Spirit vouchsafe His presence!

"Ye are God's husbandry." Let these words teach you:—I. The care which God has had for you. II. The return you ought to make to Him.

I. The care which God has had for you.

1. In the first place, He has shown His care in choosing you to be part of His own field. The field of God is the Church of Jesus Christ. God has granted you to be baptized into the body of His dear Son, whereby are given unto you exceeding great and precious promises—promises so great and so precious, that our blessed

Lord has told us, that many prophets and righteous men of old desired to see the things which we see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which we hear, and did not hear them. Judge ye yourselves, if it is a light thing to be the adopted children of the Most High; to be called to the knowledge of His truth; to have the promise of His Holy Spirit? Think that you are plants set in the Lord's garden, branches once grafted into the living Vine; that your heart is the soil on which Almighty God deigns to bestow culture, and from which, barren and bad as it is in itself, His grace, if you resist it not, is able to bring forth fruits of heavenly flavour, meet for the paradise of God.

2. You are God's field—He has shown His great care and love for you in the price He gave for this field. "Ye are not your own," St. Paul tells you, "ye are bought with a price." With what price? with what has God redeemed His people? Not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of His dear Son. Christ loved His Church—His people, and gave Himself for them. You owe it to your Saviour's agony and blood, that you may dare draw near to God, and call Him Father.

3. You are God's field—think how He has enclosed and hedged you in, designing you to be holy to Himself. Have you ever seen a piece of ground taken in from a common,

hedged round, well cultivated, and bearing good crops? While all around it is still barren and wild, covered with ling, and sand, and stones, is not that one spot fair and goodly to the eye? This is what God intends His Church should be; what He would have you be in the midst of a world that lieth in wickedness. You ought to be His praise and His glory; a witness of His power and love. Therefore He received you into His Church by baptism: solemn promises were made for you; Christian instruction vouchsafed you—to some more, to some less; confirmation given to strengthen you; the sacrament of Christ's body and blood to feed you; the word of God, the sabbath-day, public worship, to instruct, warn, and edify you. Thus you have been fenced off, as it were, from the world. God at least hath done His part; and His grace, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to you, teaching you to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

4. Again, God shows his care for you, in that He is ever seeking to improve the ground of your hearts. What is the first work to be done before rough and barren ground can be made fit to bear produce? Must it not be broken up with the spade or plough? Must not the soil be turned to the air and light? So God deals with us in His goodness. He would lead us to repentance; He would drive the ploughshare of

conviction deep into our hearts. But, as the farmer does not use the same management to all kinds of soil—the stiff stubborn clay must not be treated like the light dry sand—so God, who knows the secrets of men's hearts, deals with one after this manner, with another after that. Now He tries to win us by mercies; now to frighten us by judgments. Perhaps your heart clings to the love of this world; then He shakes it loose by storms of trouble. Perhaps he sees you indulging in sinful pleasures; then He makes you taste their bitterness and gall. One He draws by the gentle cords of love. To another fear is needful; therefore, before him God sets his secret sins, the iniquities of his youth and his manhood; awakens conscience in his breast; darts through his mind the fear of hell, of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched; visits him with sickness, and places death before his eyes. Thus it is God sends sorrow, wringing the heart with anguish. He disappoints our earthly hopes, and takes away, it may be, the desire of our eyes. And all this for what purpose? To humble us, and to do us good; to make us know ourselves, our own wretchedness, sinfulness, and stubbornness of heart; if so be we may hear His voice, and believe His mercy to us in Jesus Christ, and seek His almighty grace to cleanse our souls, and to enable us to live a new life.

5. Then consider, what is the seed which

Almighty God is ever sowing in your hearts. The seed is His holy word. Why has He put the Bible into your hands? Why has He ordained His ministers to read, preach, and expound it in public; to urge and apply it in private? What is this but a continual sowing of that good seed? When you read the Scriptures, when you hear them read, when a parent or a friend reminds you of some text or passage,—think that God is sowing the seed of life in your hearts, and do not reject it, but remember that if it is received with faith, it will make you wise unto salvation.

6. Once more, my brethren, God shows His care for you, by employing labourers in His field, for your sakes. He sends to you His ordained ministers—the stewards of His mysteries, the ambassadors of Christ. They are sent to labour among you, if, by any means, they may save your souls alive. They warn, teach, and bless you in God's name: their hands administer unto you the bread of life, and the cup of salvation. Thus God shows His care for you. You are His husbandry; and we, the ministers of Christ, are said to be God's fellow-labourers; and you are taught how you ought to regard us,—as, in ourselves, nothing; as, in God's hand, the instruments of your salvation; of ourselves only able to plant and to water, while God alone can give the increase. We sow the seed of God's

word, but He must make it spring; we labour to do our part, but unless God send down the rain of His Holy Spirit, and Christ, the Sun of righteousness, lift up the light of His countenance upon us, disappointment will mock our efforts, and God's field will be covered with tares instead of wheat, and no harvest will be gathered into the heavenly garner.

II. What, then, my brethren, is your part? Surely, to take care that you do not receive the grace of God in vain. Surely, to consider what return you should make to Him. When a farmer has bestowed much care and management upon a field; when he has drained it, dressed it, spared no labour and no expense upon it, does he not expect some increase? Is he not with reason disappointed, if, after all, his crops fail, and weeds instead of corn are offered to the sickle? But how seldom is this the case! How few soils are so hopelessly bad, as not to be made better by good management! The poor soil becomes richer; the stony ground is cleared; even the stiff binding clay yields to the farmer's skill. The earth is no insolvent debtor; you do not put into its bank to receive nought again. No, it pays you back with interest—some thirty-fold, some sixty, some an hundred. It does not remain sluggish and barren under the gifts of heaven, but drinking in the rain which comes oft upon it, it yields herbs fit for them for whom it is dressed.

What beautiful sights, what sweet smells does it pour out around us! Shall the very ground we tread on put us to shame? Shall the earth awake at the first call of spring, and shall we remain deaf and dead to the call of God? Does it acknowledge the rain of heaven by giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater? And shall we, on whom God pours His Holy Spirit, be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? Are we God's husbandry, God's farming; and shall He see no return from us?

Ask, then, yourselves, are you bearing fruit to God? What does He expect of you? My brethren, the first return, perhaps the best that any of us sinners can make to God, is repentance. A broken heart is His accepted offering. You know what great things God hath done for you. Have you been hard and untouched under all? It may be that for God's mercies you have paid Him back a life of sin. It may be you have been offending Him in word and deed. Have you never taken His name in vain? profaned His sabbath? spoken that which is not true? neglected His ordinances?

There is one sin, in which the greater part of you are living—a sin of which you have been warned again and again—a sin in which if you persist there is every reason to fear it will shut you out from heaven. Yet most of you are committing it month after month. My brethren,

it is the sin of not receiving the holy communion. Remember what our Lord has said:—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Now, then, let your repentance show itself here. Resolve to live in this great sin no longer. Bethink yourselves seriously, and ask God's grace; and let me have many new names to add to my list before next Sunday comes.

See how the case stands with us. In this parish there are full four hundred souls. It is usually reckoned that one-third of a population are able to attend Divine service. This gives one hundred and thirty-three persons. Now of these how many are communicants? The number has rarely on any occasion exceeded twenty-five. How few to come to glorify God, and to receive the cup of salvation at the table of the Lord! O brethren, is this a suitable return for God's great love? Does this become you, who are His own husbandry? Would you be satisfied if your land were only to yield you in like proportion? Would you be content to receive from one hundred and thirty-three acres no more than the produce of twenty-five?

No, my dear brethren, it ought not to be so. Greatly was I cheered on Wednesday\* with your willing and devout attendance here. I did indeed thank God and take courage, when I

\* St. Matthew's day: thanksgiving for the harvest.

saw you meeting together in His house to praise Him for His goodness. We seemed to be of one heart and one mind. But, as the holy Apostle said to the Thessalonians when he had praised them for their love one to another, so now I say to you,—“I beseech you, brethren, that you increase more and more.” Thank not your heavenly Father by one act only, but thank Him by a life of continued obedience. You drew near Him, I would trust, on Wednesday; draw yet nearer to Him at His holy table. He has given you the fruits of the earth in their season. Come and present your thank-offering at His altar. Come and cast into His treasury something for the poor and needy, remembering what His word says,—“Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Prov. iii. 9, 10.)

And now, my brethren, take away with you for meditation the words of the text. Think that you are God's husbandry; and, when you see the earth bring forth its produce, ask yourself, What return am I making to God? When you look at your corn laid up in the stack or the barn, reflect:—Have I laid up treasure in heaven, or am I letting the summer and autumn of life pass by without giving any care to gather fruit unto life eternal?

God's field has now tares as well as wheat.

The good and the bad are now mingled in His Church; but the time of an everlasting separation will come; and at that great harvest-home, the angels will welcome the righteous with shouts of joy into their Father's kingdom. God's elect—His redeemed people will then rest with Him. O strive to be among them. Turn from sin; believe in Christ; wait on God; seek Him in His ordinances, at His table; live in love; and thus, though you should sow in tears, you shall reap in everlasting joy.

## SERMON XXXII.

NAAMAN A LEPER.

2 KINGS v. 1.

“Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.”

THIS chapter begins and ends the history of Naaman; but though that history is comprised in a small compass, it is full, from first to last, of most useful instruction and of affecting interest. Let us always bear in mind, that all the Scriptures are written for our learning; that every part has its use and profit when applied by the Spirit of God. May that Spirit, then, be with us, while we consider the account of Naaman!

There is a great deal contained in the words which I have read for the text. They give us the picture of a man possessed of all that the world accounts able to confer happiness. For, glance a moment at Naaman's situation. He was a great warrior, and had gained great victories.

Being captain of all the army of his master, the king of Syria, and a mighty man of valour, he had often led out the host to battle against the enemies of his country; and the Lord, we are told, "had by him given deliverance unto Syria:" "for the battle is the Lord's," and He giveth victory to whom He will, though men know Him not. Thus Naaman had justly become a great man with his master, being held by him in high honour and esteem, on account of his excellent services; and his reputation was, no doubt, great through all the country. But, more than this, Naaman appears to have deserved his greatness. He was honourable, also, as a man of worth and uprightness in his private character, respected and beloved for his kind and amiable disposition. This seems evident from the manner in which his servants and dependants are represented in this chapter as addressing him by the endearing name, "My father," and from the way in which he listened to, and followed their advice. What more, then, we might say, could Naaman desire? Arrived at the height of power and ambition; second only to the king; successful in all his undertakings, and covered with glory; surrounded with wealth and splendour; and, above all, rich in the esteem of his countrymen, in the honour and regard paid to his high character and moral worth—what lacked he yet? Was he not happy? and an object of envy? Mark what

else is recorded of him. True: he was great, glorious, rich, brave, and honourable; loved by his king, his country, and his family; thus eminently and deservedly a man of renown:—"but he was a leper." That you may feel the full force of these words—of that "but,"—of the fearful drawback upon his happiness, you must understand what a leper is. You may remember, that lepers came to our Lord Jesus Christ when He was on earth, to be healed by Him; and you may also, perhaps, remember, that, on one occasion, when ten lepers came, they stood afar off, while they lifted up their voice, and cried to Him for mercy. And why did they act thus? Because their disease, that of leprosy, was so filthy, so infectious, and so dangerous, that none would let them come near them. They were obliged to live by themselves; to eat and drink by themselves; and, by the law of Moses, a leper was required to stand, and cry aloud, "unclean, unclean," that none might touch him unawares. It was from this complaint that Naaman suffered; a complaint dreadful and disfiguring, and not to be cured by any power of man. What could Naaman's greatness or riches do for him? The world heaped its favours and its glory upon him, "but he was a leper."

My brethren, what a lesson is here to envy no one! Would you change places with Naaman? Would you who covet riches, desire to have Naaman's wealth, but to be a leper? Would you

who wish to be higher than you are, take Naaman's place among the noblest and the greatest of the land, if you must also be a leper? Would the poorest among us give up his health and strength to abound in everything, but withal to be a leper?

These are no idle questions. We look on others; we see them possessed of what we have not; there seems to be nothing which they cannot command; the world smiles upon them; we think them happy; we compare our lot with theirs, and are tempted to murmur and repine; but, if we could come nearer, if we could lift up the veil and read the history of the heart, should we find no drawback, no sorrow, no secret alloy? O believe it, no happiness that comes of this world is perfect. Lights and shades, joys and sorrows, are ever mingled. God, in His great mercy, has made our lots more equal than we are apt to think. It is as foolish as it is wicked to envy the lot of any one. We only see the outside of a man; all that inner world of thought and feeling which each carries about with him is hidden from us, and man is only happy as he is happy there, in the heart. Does not Naaman's case give us a lesson of contentment? Does it not teach us, that, though we may see men prosperous and fortunate in this world, we know not what their secret trials may be: and that it is far better humbly to bear whatever crosses God may lay upon us, than to

wish to exchange our lot with any one? The rich man seems enviable to the poor man; he has that which the other wants; he needs not labour with his hands for his daily bread. But can the poor man know the rich man's anxieties? Is he sure that the mind of the man he envies is at peace? and, if not, can money cure the heart-ache? Or, if it please God to afflict the rich man with pain and sickness, can money always drive that pain away? If death take off a beloved wife, or an only child, the darling hope of father and mother, can the husband or the parent then find comfort in looking round on earthly riches, on a splendid house, on costly furniture? O, what a mockery to bid such a mourner look upon his worldly possessions and be comforted! Do they not rather double the grief, because the object of affection who once shared all, and gave value to all, is gone for ever?

It is not only wisdom, then, but it is the highest happiness to be able to say, with the Apostle Paul, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." And how did he learn this? Not of himself, but from the Holy Spirit of God—from the grace of Jesus Christ his Saviour. Christ was in his heart, and, having Him, the Apostle knew both how to be full and to be hungry, how to want and to abound. My brethren, the throne of grace is open to you also. Christ is ready to come and take up His abode with you by His Holy Spirit, to make

your hearts His dwelling-place. He stands at the door and knocks; invite Him in by earnest prayer. Give yourselves up to His service, and you will be able to say from your own experience, in the words of the poet:—

“Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor;  
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.”

But let us look at Naaman again. He was a leper; and for this sad disease no skill of man could find a cure. But it happened that in one of their incursions into the land of the Israelites, the Syrians had taken captive “a little maid,”—a young girl of Israel, who had become an attendant on Naaman’s wife. This maiden, whose thoughts were continually carried back to her native land; who, in that land, had learnt to know that there is a God who ruleth over all, and had heard what miracles had been done by His holy prophets—this maiden declared her full persuasion that Elisha, the prophet of the Lord, could heal the leper. “Would God,” she said, “my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy.” Naaman, eagerly catching at any measure that promised him relief, sought out the prophet, followed his directions, and was healed.

See, my brethren, what good a very humble instrument may do! A captive maiden and a servant is one means, under God, of Naaman’s recovery. She was far from home and friends,

but she carried with her the remembrance of her God, and she was made a blessing. I would that the young, when they go out to service, would think of this little maid, and remember, that, if they love God and serve Him, their example and their words may become a blessing to many around them.

But how was Naaman healed? What was the remedy—the means by which the prophet Elisha proposed to recover him from his leprosy? “Go,” he said to him, “and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.” This direction seemed to Naaman strange and unreasonable:—what good could the dipping in water do him? And if such means must be used at all, why wash in the Jordan? “Are not,” he said, “Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.”

But the servants of Naaman, full of zeal and compassion for him, venture in the most respectful and affectionate manner to reason with him. “My father,” they said, “if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?” Their well-timed remonstrance took effect. Though Naaman’s pride was hurt because the prophet told him to do so simple a

thing, yet he was wise enough not to throw away the chance of his recovery:—"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Now, if Naaman had indeed refused to use the appointed remedy—if he had turned altogether away, would he have found the benefit? He would have remained a leper.

My beloved brethren, in one sense we are all lepers. We have the foul leprosy of sin upon us, and within us; we bring it into the world with us—even a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, out of which proceed evil thoughts and all uncleanness. Sin is with us in childhood, in youth, in manhood. It makes God angry with us, and, while we love sin and do its bidding, God's curse is hanging over us. We are filthy in His sight, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. O wretched men that we are! Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Is there a physician? Is there a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness? There is: Jesus Christ bids you wash in the fountain of His blood. And shall Naaman have faith in the prophet Elisha? And will not you have faith in the Lord of that prophet? Shall Christ tell you that His blood cleanseth from all sin, and yet will you turn away? Might not the minister of Christ say to you, as the servants of

Naaman said to their master, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he said to thee, Wash and be clean?" The same feeling which had almost induced Naaman to turn away uncured, leads many now to despise God's way of salvation. What! believe in a crucified Saviour—in Jesus of Nazareth; believe that His blood can make me clean? Yes, brethren, for God has so ordained, and nothing can save you but faith in that blood. In like manner men despise the means of grace: What good, says one, in going to church? can I not read my Bible, and employ myself in a proper manner as well at home? I answer, No, and for this plain reason, that God has appointed public worship, and the preaching of His word, as means by which He is pleased to work upon men's souls; and those who stay at home miss the promised blessing.

It is so, too, with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. How many of you turn away from it, and utterly neglect it, as if it could do you no good! You seem to think scorn of it; take heed what you are despising: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" Do the elements of bread and wine seem to you poor and trifling things? Yet think what they are the sign of; and remember that the same

God who made the waters of Jordan effectual to heal the leper, can convey in this sacrament to the humble believer the blessings of salvation.

May God teach us from the history of Naaman, among other lessons the following. 1st. In whatsoever state we are, therein to be content. 2ndly. That God chooses weak instruments to bring about His purposes; and that the humblest and the lowest in station may, like the captive maid of Israel, do good to others. A word spoken for God in season, who can say how much it may effect? 3rdly. May we learn to value aright, and humbly and diligently use, the means of grace which God has promised to bless; more especially such as:—prayer, reading His word, attending in His house, receiving His holy sacrament. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIII.

### THE DEMONIAK HEALED.

LUKE viii. 35.

“Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.”

THERE is no subject more delightful or more useful to dwell upon, than the power and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the chapter before us we read how, at His command, the stormy wind ceased, and the raging sea was still; so that His disciples, saved from a watery grave, cried out in wonder, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” But may not that which is spoken of in the text, still more lead us to ask, What manner of man was this, that even the powers of darkness—the hosts of hell obeyed Him?—Him who by a word could compel the evil spirit to leave his victim, and give back to the miserable man reason instead of madness, light and peace and joy for darkness and horror and despair? Was not this the Christ, the Son of the living God? Is not this He, who

had said long before by the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek, He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound . . . . to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah lxi. 1, 3.) Let us remember that whatsoever things are written in the Scriptures, are written for our learning; and let us endeavour, by God's grace and the teaching of His Spirit, to draw instruction from this miracle of mercy wrought by Jesus Christ.

We will consider, I. The circumstances of it.  
II. Its application to our own spiritual good.

I. It appears plainly from the Gospels, that, at the time our Saviour was on earth, evil spirits were, in God's unsearchable wisdom, permitted to take possession of men; to afflict their bodies with disease, and their minds with madness. Perhaps one reason why it was permitted was, that Jesus Christ might show His power in casting them out, so that others might believe Him to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. One of these unhappy men there was in the country of the Gadarenes, which bordered on the lake of Gennesaret. It seems that his was a very terrible affliction:—his madness was

of the most violent kind; and it had lasted a long time; perhaps he had been many years deprived of his reason. Clothing he had little or none: he had either torn it to pieces in his wanderings, or had thrown it off in his phrensy. He had no home, for he would not endure confinement; nor would any have dared to receive him into their houses; but he abode in the tombs—places hollowed out, it would appear, in the rock, where the dead were laid—a dark and dismal shelter for the living. No man, St. Mark tells us, could tame him. He had been often bound, not with cords, but with chains and fetters of iron; and such was his strength and fury, that even these he had snapt asunder, and escaped; and, by the power of the evil spirit upon him, he was driven into wild and desert places, far from the dwellings of men. So he wandered a wretched outcast, feared and avoided by all; except, perhaps, that some, more charitable and compassionate than others, supplied food for his necessity.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. He who numbers the hairs of our heads, and without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground—His eye saw and pitied. One was near, able and willing to give relief. A boat has crossed the lake, and Jesus steps on shore. We do not read anywhere in the Gospels, that the Lord ever again visited the country of the Gadarenes. They rejected Him, and desired

Him to leave them altogether. It is likely, therefore, that He went now on purpose to do this one act of mercy; to heal this wretched man; to heal his body, and to save his soul. Brethren, what a mercy it is, that the Lord Jesus goes after the wandering sheep to bring them back! God seeks the sinner, or the sinner would never seek God.

Yet now, strange to say, no sooner did the man, in whom the evil spirits were, see Jesus, than he came to meet Him. Why was this? Should we not have expected, that Satan would have fled from the Saviour's presence? Could he desire to lose his prey? Or, was it that he might make men believe that Christ and he were in league together? Rather, it was that the power of God was strong upon him, and he must obey. Even devils believe and tremble: how many are there, of those whom Christ came to save, who neither tremble nor believe!

And now the poor madman falls down at the feet of Jesus; but his words are not his own; it is the evil spirit who speaks:—"What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not."

Awful words! brethren. God has declared that His Son Jesus shall be glorified; that at His name "every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God

the Father.” Angels and devils, the lost and saved among men, must one day own Him Lord of lords, and King of kings; the one to their eternal joy, the other to their everlasting despair. O that you, that I, may now give up our hearts to Him, believe in Him for righteousness, and obey Him in love.

We next learn the name of the evil spirit—“Legion.” Now the legion was a part of a Roman army containing several thousand men; and the name was used here, we are told, “because many devils were entered into him.” See, brethren, how terrible are the powers of darkness! If Satan, their prince, could spare such a number to go and trouble this one poor Gadarene, what a multitude must be at his command! What need, then, have we of seeking God’s protection! What madness it is for any to make a mock of the devil’s name and power!

Lastly, we see the mighty power of the word and command of Jesus. He said, “Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.” And was He obeyed? Yes: as the winds and waves heard His voice, so must the spirits of hell; for He is Lord of all. But first they make what seems a strange request: the devils beseech Him not to send them out into the deep—into that bottomless pit of eternal torment, prepared for the judgment of the last day; but to suffer them to go into a herd of swine that were

feeding on the neighbouring hill. And He suffered them; and instantly the swine rushed into the water, and were drowned.

The report soon spread; the people came out in crowds. And what a sight was there! One that should have touched their hearts. The man, out of whom the devils had departed—him who a little before had been howling among the tombs, cutting himself with stones, a naked, outcast, abandoned wretch,—him they see now “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.”

And did not the Gadarenes worship Jesus too? No: they loved their swine better than their souls; and thought more of the loss of their worldly substance than of the miracle that had been done. And so they besought Jesus to depart from them. And He took them at their word, and came no more. Very different was the spirit of the man that had been healed. He clung to his deliverer, and would gladly have gone with Him. But the Lord had other work for him to do. “Return,” He said, “to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee.” This is the account of the miracle.

II. Let us by God’s grace endeavour to find a practical use in it for ourselves.

First, let us observe that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him; full of

mercy and compassion. It was His errand on earth to destroy the works of the devil, to bruise the serpent's head, and to deliver from the power of the evil one as many as believe on the name of Jesus. And nothing but the Spirit of Jesus can set us free from sin. The man of whom we have spoken had been often bound with chains, even iron fetters. Men had done their utmost to tame him; but all in vain. And so are all men's endeavours vain in themselves, to change one sinner's heart. No entreaties, no warnings, no restraints of man, can keep those who love ungodliness from doing it. Nay, the sinner cannot turn himself;—he cannot change his own heart. There have been many, who, desiring to break off their sins, have fasted, and wept, and prayed, and striven, yet have seemed no holier, but rather worse; because they strove in their own strength, and looked not first to Jesus Christ for pardon, and for strength to go and sin no more. If Christ set us free, then are we free indeed.

Let us observe, again, for our warning, the devil's power and enmity against us. He is not permitted now, as then, to possess men's bodies; but he can still tempt us to evil, suggesting wicked thoughts, and stirring up in us an enmity to good. Therefore it is, that we have these cautions given us in Scripture:—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "Give not place to the devil." "Be sober, be vigilant; because

your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." And how shall we resist him? What is our strength, or watching, against this mighty and cunning enemy? Let Scripture teach us again:—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." (Ephes. vi. 10—18.) These are our directions: and the humble Christian may draw much comfort from the account we are considering; for we see here, that, though Satan be strong, there is one stronger than he:—"God is faithful, who will

not suffer you," if you look to Him, "to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

But why, it may be asked, did our Lord suffer the devils to enter into the swine, and cause their death? Why did the kind and gracious Saviour do the owners this injury? It might be designed to show, that even the evil spirits were obedient to His word. It might be, also, because He knew that the hearts of the Gadarenes were set on their worldly goods, and cared for nothing beyond: and He was pleased thus to visit them with judgment. But there might be another reason still:—to teach us, that when any to whom God has given understanding, level themselves with the swine by indulging unclean and filthy lusts and appetites, making their belly their God, rioting in drunkenness, or going after fornication and whoredom, they render themselves, their souls and bodies, fit habitations, not for the Holy Spirit of God, but for the spirits of evil and of darkness.

And, O how fearful is the state of one who has yielded himself up to be led captive by the devil at his will; who has cast off fear, and silenced conscience, and sins greedily and without restraint! O you who are young! you who have not yet gone far in the ways of iniquity! take heed how you follow the broad paths of sin. Stifle not the voice of God within you; take not

the first step in the downward road; for it will lead to another, and another. Conscience at first will struggle and reprove you; but every repeated act of sin will deaden conscience. You will go further and further from God; and who can say that you will ever return? Better were the madness of the poor Gadarene, than such a state.

But let us turn from this. Let us rather behold him that was possessed by the devils, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind. See here a lively picture of the true penitent; of a sinner brought back from the error of his way; of one that was dead and is alive, that was lost and is found.

When the prodigal son, in a foreign land, in poverty and misery, began to see his folly and his wickedness, it is said, "he came to himself." When any one who has thought little or nothing about his soul, who has lived without God, without prayer, begins to ask in serious and sober earnest, what he must do to be saved, he is coming to a right mind. When the wicked man considers his ways, and thinks that the wages of sin is death, and earnestly desires to flee from the wrath to come, he is returning to a right mind. When our Saviour Jesus Christ, whom once we despised, begins to be precious to us, and we are willing to count all else of little value, compared with the knowledge of His salvation; when we give

up all trust in ourselves, and rest only upon Him; then are we, from being fools, becoming wise.

Brethren, it is written, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) Do you know anything of such a change? Can you say, 'Once I was blind, walking after the devices and desires of my own evil heart, making this world my all; but now God hath opened my eyes, I see that I have been very foolish, and exceedingly sinful: once I had no desire for the grace of God, but now I count it more precious than gold: once I had no hope, but now I hope that in Christ I am accepted, pardoned, justified?' If it be thus with you, where should be your place? Sitting at Jesus' feet—there, where Mary sat—to hear His word; to be taught and led by Him; not as though you were to quit your station and give yourself up to idleness; but, making diligent use of all the means of grace, to work out your salvation.

And, if the Lord has indeed visited your soul in mercy; if, after you had been held in the bondage of sin, He has set you free; if He has caused the light of His gospel to shine in upon your heart, and brought you out from the mire of sin, and set your feet upon a rock, and ordered your goings; then He expects of you to declare to others what great things God has done

for your soul. Then you should strive to lead others to Jesus; for you can tell them of His love and His power—you can say, “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” O christian brethren, try to bring, if it be but one soul, to Christ. You know not what a word spoken in faith and prayer may do. Did each persuade a neighbour to come with him to the house of God, what good might be effected? Did we all truly and affectionately seek the salvation of those around us, surely the Church of God would be awakened through His grace and blessing, to the life and power of godliness.

Finally, my brethren, how are we about to leave God’s house to-day? Are we, like the people of Gadara, afraid of Christ, afraid that He will require us to give up our sins, and our love of this world? and so do we in truth desire Him to depart from us? Had any rather grovel in the tombs—in their own hearts’ lusts, than come to Jesus to be healed and delivered from sin? O foolish thought! If He leave us to ourselves, we must perish for ever. “Awake,” then, “thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Come unto Him who is mighty to save. Come unto Him who says, “Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.” Come to Christ by prayer. Come as you are, like the man of Gadara, naked and in misery; and He will

forgive you, and love you freely; He will clothe you in His own righteousness, in the garments of salvation; He will give you a new heart, and make you meet for heaven. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIV.

### THE SLEEP OF SIN.

ROMANS xiii. 11.

“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”

THE Church has now again brought round the beginning of her year. Again she lifts her solemn voice, and proclaims to us the advent, the coming of our Lord. She reminds us of His first coming in great humility, in His lowly incarnation, made man for us; and she leads on our thoughts to His second advent, when He shall come in power and great glory to judge the quick and dead.

The gospel trumpet sounds on high; God sets His watchmen on the tower to cry aloud, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken.” Christ shall come again, seated on the clouds of heaven, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;” but “to be glorified in His saints, and

to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 8, 10.)

Year after year rolls on; and each as it goes brings that day more near. This world is not to last always. Sin is not for ever to prevail. The patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever. God will not always be mocked, nor His saints be always suffering, nor ungodliness for ever stalk through the earth. The heavens have now received Jesus Christ; He waits in silent but wakeful majesty, till "the times of restitution of all things" shall arrive, and then He, who makes all things new, shall bid a new heaven and new earth appear.

But how do men regard these things? What is the actual state of most of those who are called Christians? They are asleep—asleep to the realities of the world to come. Hence the Apostle's rousing words, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep."

May He who alone can rouse the slumbering, who alone can quicken the soul when dead in trespasses and sins, and who can enable the believer to gird up his loins, to watch and pray; may He this day be with us in power and in love.

I. Let us inquire what that sleep is which is spoken of in the text. It is sleep, not of the body, but of the soul.

1. Have you ever watched the sleep of one labouring under disease—of one who is delirious

with a raging fever? Have you seen how wild it is, how restless, uneasy, distempered? The sick man starts, and tosses, and sometimes raves in unmeaning words. It is a grievous sleep. Likethis is the state of the unwilling slave of sin—the drunkard, or the quarreller, or the revengeful, or the dishonest, or any worker of ungodliness. They are asleep as to all that concerns the world to come, to eternal realities: they believe them not. Heaven with its pure and holy joys, hell with its eternity of unspeakable torments, are to them as an idle tale, the subject of profane mockery, or mad derision. Warnings, threatenings, calls of mercy, are alike in vain. They sleep the sleep of death, and will not be awakened. But there is no calmness in that sleep. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.” To the momentary pleasures of sin succeed the bitterness of disappointment and gnawings of remorse. They carry hell within them, and even now have a foretaste of its misery—the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.

2. Again, have you ever seen the sleep of one who has taken some powerful drug, some medicine producing slumber? What a deep and heavy sleep is there! How entirely is all sense and feeling overcome! There is no sound—no motion. Like this is the state of those to whom this present world is all in all, whose hearts are engrossed with its cares, its business, its pursuits, its possessions. To buy and sell, to make

gain, to plant and build, to eat, drink, and be merry: for this end they live—live little above the brutes. If any glimmering of holier light, if any whispering of a better mind, arise within them, it speedily sinks, overwhelmed and quenched beneath the load of worldly-mindedness. Their soul cleaveth to the dust; they have their portion in this life; here is their treasure.

O, if such be here, think, was it for this God breathed into you the breath of life, and made you a living soul? Was it for this He gave you an understanding above the brutes,—gave you reason, and bade you gaze on heaven? Was the divine Spirit infused into you, that you might bury it beneath the mire and thick clay of this earth's concerns; that, like the churl Nabal, you might have your heart among your flocks and your feasting? while to you it had been the same had Jesus of Nazareth never lived nor died; if God had never given His only-begotten Son; if Calvary had never shown to men and angels the spectacle of a crucified Redeemer—God incarnate, dying for the sins of the world.

3. Once more: you know what it is to be dreaming in your sleep. What wild fancies pass before us! We think that we are following something; but, just as we reach it, it is gone. We imagine ourselves hungry, and that food is before us; but, when we stretch the hand to seize it, it proves a shadow. So it is with us,

when we are seeking happiness from any thing earthly; when we think that we will lay up goods for many years, when things go well with us, and we say, How shall I enjoy myself and be at rest? O brethren, if we look not to a higher end than this; if God is not in all our thoughts; if we think not of our souls and of eternity; then are we but in a dream. Now a man who is asleep in the day-time, and dreaming of a thousand vanities, knows nothing of what is doing around him, though people may be passing to and fro, and all the realities of life be going on. So we may be asleep as to another world, and dreaming about this: but the things we thus forget are still real and true. God is on His eternal throne in heaven; Jesus, our Redeemer and Mediator, sits at His right hand; angels are singing His praise, or passing on errands of mercy to this lower world; years are rolling on; the judgment-day is approaching;—all this is real, but men are dreaming on of a home and happiness on earth, as if we were to live here for ever.

4. And there is a state between sleeping and waking. The man is not sound asleep, and yet not broad awake. He sees a little, but not clearly; he hears sounds, but not distinctly; if any danger came, he would not be quite insensible to its approach, but he could hardly defend himself. Such is the state of many, even real Christians. They are but half awake to

those truths which ought to have our most serious, our whole attention. They believe the gospel, but their faith is weak and dim. Is it not so, brethren? Do we feel as we ought and might, what the word of God tells us, the great and wondrous things therein revealed? Are we not dull of hearing? Is not our heart stony and dead? Which makes most impression on us, the things of this world or the things of the world to come? As some help to self-examination on this point, let us look at the year that is now gone. The Church has brought before us in successive seasons, at Christmas, on Good Friday, at Easter, and on Holy Thursday, the birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At Whitsuntide she drew our thoughts to the coming down of the Holy Ghost; on Trinity Sunday we were led to meditate on that high mystery, the union of three Persons in one Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And since then, in all her services, by the collects, epistles, and gospels, the Church has laboured to build us up in the faith, and to make us fruitful in every good word and work. Her voice, speaking by that of her ministers, sabbath after sabbath, has bidden us awake from our careless sleep, has called on us to be more diligent in working out our salvation. And have we obeyed the call? Have we been impressed by the things which we have heard?

Are we wiser, holier, better? Are we nearer God? Have we gained any mastery over sin? Are we more in love with heavenly joys? Alas! my brethren, I fear we may join in the last words of a good and pious minister, who, on his dying bed, exclaimed, "We are but half awake." Eternity was then rising upon him; he saw and felt its unutterable importance; earth and all its concerns were fast sinking; he began to awake in earnest. Why are we so little awake to what concerns us most? Because the things that are temporal are seen by us, are around us; the things that are eternal are not seen. To be awake to religion implies constant prayer, watchfulness over ourselves, meditation on God's word, communing with our own hearts, a daily dying to sin: and to all this the world, the flesh, and the devil, are opposed.

II. But what is it to awake out of sleep? It is, surely, to come to ourselves, to our right mind, to the full and clear possession of our senses. A man, when he awakes in the morning, scarcely knows at first where he is, or what he has been doing; but by degrees he recovers his consciousness and his understanding, and prepares for his daily work. So it is with the awakening sinner.

1. We must awake to the knowledge of what we are,—immortal beings, who have a soul capable of everlasting joy or misery; a body that after death shall rise again, and dwell with the

soul in heaven or in hell. Now we may think that we have known this; but, if we have been going on for years acting, speaking, and thinking just as if this life were all, we have indeed been no better than asleep. Awake, then, thou that sleepest! Let us think of eternity; let us think that we must be happy or miserable for ever; and let us inquire in sober earnestness, each for himself, What must I do to be saved?

2. We must awake, too, to a sense of our lost condition as sinners;—in danger, except we be in Christ, of God's eternal anger. We must know that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Many confess with their lips that they are sinners, but do not feel it. David thus awoke, when at the word of the prophet Nathan he exclaimed, "I have sinned against the Lord." So awoke the prodigal, when, in his misery, he came to himself, and resolved to arise and go to his father, and say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." So, brethren, if conscience in any of you tells you of sins not repented of, awake, and go this day to God, and pray to Him for Christ's sake graciously to pardon your sin. What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not.

And we must awake to the knowledge of God, to know Him experimentally as our Go-

vernor, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. True it is that none but the Holy Spirit can teach us to know God aright; but then that teaching is given to them that ask for it. And O, how blessed is the knowledge which He gives! It is no bare repeating of the creed, brethren; it is no mere outside and formal worship; it is not simply crying, Lord, Lord; but it is to have our hearts drawn to love God, because He first loved us, and gave His Son to die for our sins. It is not a knowledge which a man need be a great scholar to have. No, it is revealed to babes,—to the very humblest, who really seek it. The way to it is as plain as the day: “Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find.” “The meek will God guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way.” To know God as our Governor, is to think of Him as the Searcher of hearts; as the Knower of all secrets; as a Judge, righteous, holy, just, who soon will call us to account. To know Him as our Redeemer, is to believe that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us, to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell: it is to live day by day by faith in Jesus Christ, receiving out of His fulness all spiritual blessings—pardon, grace, the hope of glory. To know God as our Sanctifier, is to depend continually on His Holy Spirit to strengthen us for all that is good, and to keep us from all that is evil. O, brethren, that I and you may awake thus to know God? What a knowledge is this!

better than all other learning; more precious than gold and rubies. And why? It is the beginning of everlasting life in heaven: for "this," saith our Lord, "is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Yet it is a knowledge which too many miss, though brought up in the bosom of a true and apostolic Church.

Is there one here who says, I would that I were indeed awake, but how shall I be awakened? Begin to think; begin to pray. Go aside a little from company, go into your closet; there ask yourself solemnly, What am I? whither am I going? There read your Bible; there kneel in prayer. Attend constantly at church. And, as surely as you use these means honestly and sincerely, so surely will the Lord guide you into all saving truth, and make you wise unto salvation.

And you who, by God's mercy, are not wholly asleep; you who have been led to think that you have a soul to save;—even you are prone to slumber. We read that all the ten virgins, wise as well as foolish, slumbered and slept. Awake, then, to more watchfulness against sin; to a deeper study of your own hearts; to closer communion with God; and remember that the chief means to this is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Examine, then, yourselves, and so draw near that holy table. And awake, in the strength of Christ your Saviour, to a more diligent practice of all godliness, of

all Christian graces. Put on the armour of light. Walk honestly as in the day. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another." Strive in every temper, word, and deed, to be more like Jesus Christ. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.

III. For now, beloved brethren, it is high time to awake out of sleep. It is time, it is high time; for,

1. Many calls have been given you. In this Christian land you cannot plead that no warnings have been sent you. Every time you have heard the word of God, it has been a call to you. Every sermon has been a call to you. Every time the Lord's table has been spread, it has been a call to you. And have you had no other warnings? Has God spoken to none of you by sickness? by trouble and affliction? by the death of friends or relatives? Has conscience never raised her voice within you? Has it not in many ways been proclaimed in your ears, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not?" "Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light"?

2. Again, you must consider that every delay will deepen your slumber, and make you less willing to awake. Every hour you put off repentance and seeking God will make the work more painful. Pharaoh, often warned by awful

judgments, slept on, till at length God hardened his heart for ever.

3. And remember, brethren, that however now we may put away the thought of judgment and eternity, and quench our conscience by turning to the world, there will be a time when we can sleep no longer. The rich man who slept out his life clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, awoke; but he awoke in hell—he lift up his eyes, being in torments. O ye that so often hear God's word, but hearing hear it not,—with sealed hearts, sealed in slumber which you will not break; O think that the archangel's trumpet must break your sleep. They that are in the graves shall awake. The Judge, the Searcher of all hearts, shall come. Then conscience will do her part; there will be no escape. O awake now to true repentance, lest then you awake to realities too terrible to think of—to the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.

4. It is time, then, to awake; for now is the accepted time, the day of grace and salvation. Now Jesus sits upon a throne of mercy, and will give the light of life to them that seek it. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." (Isa. lv. 6.)

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, now is your salvation nearer than when you first believed. The night is far spent, the night of this

evil world is passing away; the day, the day of eternal light, is at hand. Do we indeed look for that blessed hope, and the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ? Then let us strive, that we may be found of Him "without spot and blameless." Let us redeem the time that has been lost. God is to be glorified; Christ's doctrine to be adorned. How awful to be found unready, when death overtakes us; our loins ungirt, our lamps gone out, our hearts overcharged with cares of this life! How blessed to be prepared! Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find doing His work diligently; carefully employing the talents intrusted to him; fighting the good fight of faith. He shall enter into the joy of his Lord. Would we share that blessedness? Let us watch and pray.

## SERMON XXXV.

THE FIG TREE SPARED ANOTHER YEAR.

LUKE xiii. 6—9.

“He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”

WE read at the beginning of this chapter, that certain Jews came to our Saviour, and gave Him an account of some Galileans whom Pilate had killed while offering their sacrifices, and so had mingled their blood with their offerings: on which our Lord took occasion to warn the Jews, that, except they repented, they should all “likewise perish;”—that is, should themselves be slain by the Roman armies in a manner equally terrible. This came to pass accordingly about forty years after the death of Christ, when the

Roman armies, under Titus, besieged and took Jerusalem, and multitudes of the Jews perished by famine, by fire, and by the sword.

The first object of the parable which I have read, is, a prophetic warning of this destruction of the Jewish nation; showing that, if they continued to abuse their high privileges, and to harden themselves under the long-suffering forbearance of God, they would at last be utterly cut off by a fearful visitation.

But the parable has another meaning, and one closely belonging to ourselves. It sets forth the awful judgment of God upon all those, who, having a place in the visible Church of Christ, and enjoying abundant means of grace, continue to the end barren professors, bringing forth no fruit to God's glory, or not such as He will delight in and accept. Let us view it in this light. And do Thou, O Lord, bless Thy word to the awakening of the careless, and to the quickening of the sincere.

The owner of the vineyard, then, represents to us God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The vineyard is the Church, which He has enclosed from a world that lieth in wickedness, which He has "chosen to put His name there," which He has sanctified to His service and glory. The fig tree planted therein, is a professor in the Church of Christ; opportunities, ordinances, means of grace are given him; he holds a station among the people of God, and

the eye of man, perhaps, cannot distinguish him from them. But God comes to seek fruit—fruit answerable to the advantages bestowed; and, behold, He finds none. It is a barren tree;—the leaves of profession are there, but the fruit of good works is wanting. Justice cries aloud, “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?”—of what good is this unfruitful tree? why should it occupy room which may be better filled? away with it. So God might command; so man—so we should speak. But mercy pleads with justice. There is an Advocate with the Father—One who makes intercession for us, the Lord Jesus Christ; Him we may regard as the interposer here. “Let it alone,” He says, “this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:”—till I have tried yet further means, yet more special mercies, or more awakening judgments. Extend the sinner’s day of grace; spare him yet a little while. It may be he will yet bear fruit, and if so, it shall be well; he shall save his soul alive; he shall live to Thy glory. But if not; if he still harden his heart, still grieve and quench the Spirit of grace—if he prove barren still, then will even I plead no more; vengeance shall have place; grace, long resisted and abused, shall withdraw; the axe shall be laid to the root of the unfruitful tree. “Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

From this instructive and awakening parable, thus considered, we will observe,

I. That of those who have a place in the Church of Christ, some are but barren professors. It has ever been so. Among the twelve whom our Lord chose to be with Him, and whom He ordained to the ministry of the Gospel of life, one was a traitor and a devil. St. Paul, too, had cause to complain of "perils from false brethren." Nor should we be astonished, that false professors are now found amongst the true people of God. Christ foretold that so it would be; that the enemy should sow tares among the wheat; that the gospel-net should gather of all kinds, both good and bad. Of the ten virgins some were wise—their lamps were trimmed and ready for use; and some foolish—their lamps were found lacking oil in the hour of need. Among the guests invited to the marriage feast, one had entered who had not on a wedding garment.

The fig tree in the parable, then, more especially represents one who, by a profession of repentance and faith, has been admitted among the people of God; one who has the outward form of religion, fair and specious in the sight of man, but who is a hypocrite in the sight of God; a platter, of which the outside only is made clean; a whited sepulchre, beautiful to the eye, but within "full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." Such a one has a name to

live, but is dead. By the barren fig tree, however, is meant, not only the plausible hypocrite, but all merely nominal Christians;—all who, having the means of grace, do not improve them. Yes, my brethren, all of you are included, who, while you attend in this house of God; while you bend the knee before Him; while, sabbath after sabbath, you hear the gospel-sound, listen to its warnings, its invitations, its free and gracious promises; to whom, monthly, are offered the sacramental pledges of redeeming love:—still continue far from the kingdom of God; by your life and conversation show, that you are none the better for the opportunities you enjoy; still live in indulged sin, or at least, bring forth no fruit to the glory of God; are still careless, irreligious, worldly, vain; to whom may be applied the words of God to His prophet:—“They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.” (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.)

II. We observe, then, that the barren professor cannot escape the searching eye of God. God comes to see—He examines His vineyard. “The king came in to see his guests.” Thus St. John beheld one like unto the Son of man, whose “eyes were as a flame of fire,” walking in the midst of His churches.

Beloved brethren, whom God hath brought into His vineyard, who are privileged to come

into His courts, who join in His worship; do you remember that you have to do with a heart-searching God? Do you think of Him, as One who knows your down-sitting and uprising, and understandeth your thoughts long before; One to whose sight there is no creature that is not manifest; One who will not put up with lip-service; One that cannot, will not be mocked? He who knoweth them that are His, and numbereth every hair on the heads of His people—He whose fan is in His hand, and who will thoroughly purge His floor—He keeps a watchful eye over His vineyard and often comes to look what fruit we are bearing to Him.

III. Observe, thirdly, that God expects fruit from us;—from those who have been planted in His vineyard—the Church, and to whom the means of grace are given. Does not the husbandman look for fruit from a tree which has been rightly grafted, and planted in a fair spot, where it has received the dews, the rains, the sunshine of heaven? Is he not justly disappointed, if, year after year, at the proper season, he comes to it, and finds no fruit, but leaves only—a barren and useless show? And has not God reason to complain, if we, blessed as we are with manifold opportunities, with special mercies, with the knowledge of His will, continue like the ground which, though drinking of the frequent showers, bears only thorns and briars?

Yes, brethren, God expects fruit. He looks

beyond profession, He looks not to the words alone; He looks to the life. And what is the fruit which God expects from us? what is its nature? what should be its measure? It must be good. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. It must be, then, such as springs from faith in Jesus Christ; such as the Spirit of God produces—the fruits that follow after justification. We can do nothing pleasing to God, until we are justified by believing in Jesus Christ, until the Holy Ghost is shed abroad in our hearts, and renews our minds unto righteousness and true holiness. Then only will the blessed fruits of the Spirit appear:—"Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The fruit which God will accept, must be the work of God in the soul—must come from a heavenly principle of grace; and in those who profess to belong to Christ, who claim a place in His Church, God has a right to expect, to require this fruit.

1. Ask yourselves, then, brethren, do you bear fruit answering to your profession of repentance? Have you indeed repented towards God? Has sin become your burden and your grief? Are you humbled for it in godly sorrow? Have you a broken and a contrite spirit? Have you sorrowed in such sort, that it has wrought in you carefulness, clearing of yourselves, indig-

nation at your own ingratitude, zeal for God's glory, revenge upon your own sins and corruptions? Are you risen from an unconverted state, and walking in newness of life?

2. Do you bear fruit answerable to your profession of faith? You profess to believe in Him who has bought you with His blood. Are you living no more to yourselves, but to Him who died for you? Do you pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ? Do you bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus? Is your faith such as overcomes the world; purifies the heart; works by love—love to God and love to man—active, self-denying, fervent, disinterested love?

3. Is the fruit you bear suitable to the opportunities and means of grace which you enjoy? Highly are you favoured, brethren; you are members of a pure Church; you assemble to a pure form of worship. The word of God, the sacraments are yours; to you is the Gospel preached. Light, bright and clear, shines on the narrow way that leads to eternal life. Christ's ministers are yours, to beseech you in Christ's stead, "be ye reconciled to God." Warnings and judgments have been yours. Sickness, affliction, the death of friends, the new-made grave, the funeral bell, have cried

to you with a voice that cannot be mistaken. May not God reason with you as with Israel of old:—"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah v. 3, 4.) Barren fig tree in God's vineyard! careless Christian! lukewarm professor! or, if such there be, indulger in known sin! might not the decree long since have justly gone forth for you, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Might not the Lord of the vineyard have laid the axe to the root? Might He not have hewn you down, and cast you into the fire? Why art thou not gone, when so many have been swept away by death? Why is it thou art here—yea, in the house of God, listening to His word, hearing the invitation of love—the door of mercy yet open for you? Why is this? Because God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways; because He is not like man, who can scarcely endure with patience one affront from his fellow-man. God is patient, "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

IV. Mark this set forth in the parable before us. See how in judgment God remembers mercy. See the arm of righteous vengeance awhile held

back. Behold One interceding at God's right hand. This is the voice of justice:—"These three years"—(how many more has it been with us?) "these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down." Of which of us might not God say this? Which of us bears fruit answerable to the care and the grace of our heavenly Husbandman? How little is there found upon us! And might not God find in some, instead of heavenly fruit, the works of the flesh still manifest:—anger, wrath, malice, envying, strife, hatred, or yet grosser sins than these? Well might justice say, "Cut it down." But there is an Advocate in heaven. Behold One interceding at God's right hand: "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well." Blessed be God, for us mercy hath rejoiced against judgment. We are yet spared; and to what end hath Christ Jesus been thus long-suffering? It is that He may show yet richer goodness; that He may try more abundant means; that He may knock yet more loudly at the door of our hearts, and see if we will hear His voice, and open to Him. "Let it alone, till I shall dig about it, and dung it." Thus He dealt with a wicked and rebellious world, when all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. "My Spirit," He said, "shall not always strive with man: yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." So long He waited for their

repentance; so long was Noah a preacher of righteousness, and the ark, as it was a preparing, a signal warning.

In two ways the Lord Jesus seeks to make the barren professor fruitful; two things, He intimates, may be the cause of his unfruitfulness.

His root may be earth-bound,—may cling too closely to earth. The love of the world,—the love of its riches, of its pleasures, of its vanity, may be wound too firmly about it; “for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Where, then, these bind the heart, how can it bring forth fruit to God? Covetousness ruined Judas; the love of this world drew Demas from the faith. These, then, must be cleared away. Hence the Lord Jesus digs round the barren soul; He strikes with affliction, with crosses, with disappointments; He lays bare the roots; He shows the emptiness of earthly stays; He plies His chastening hand, till the barren tree totters, and is ready to fall,—till the sinner is taught to forsake all else, and lean only on His almighty grace and love.

Or, the unfruitfulness of the nominal Christian may be supposed to arise from another cause. The tree may need greater warmth or more stimulating treatment. Christ may, therefore, bring the soul under a more faithful and

affectionate ministry: or, having tried the searching north wind, He may bid the gentle south to blow,—may seek to soften with undeserved, unlooked for mercies, the heart that has resisted His correcting rod. Thus does He continually deal with us, if by any means the stony heart may be broken, the barren plant become fruitful.

“And if it bear fruit, well.” All care and pains will have been well bestowed, if, after all, the sinner bear fruit to God. God’s mercy will be magnified; His grace exalted. Christ will see of the travail of His soul. It will be well, too for the penitent; then all that is past will not be remembered against him; his long provocations, his hardness of heart, his abuse of God’s long-suffering grace,—all, for Christ’s sake, shall be forgiven. “When I say unto the wicked, ‘Thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;’ if he “walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.” (Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15.)

V. And now, lastly, observe the sure doom of those who continue still unfruitful;—“If not,” (if the tree then bear no fruit,) “then after that thou shalt cut it down.” It is, then, possible to weary out the patience of God Himself. It is possible, by a hard and impenitent heart, to let the day of grace go by. There may, there will come a time, when mercy shall cease

to plead, and leave room for judgment only; when Christ Himself will give up His intercession. O, awful state! when the Saviour Himself withdraws; when His Spirit, grieved, resisted, quenched, finally quits the stony heart. Then follows death-like insensibility—a fearful apathy to all spiritual things, or, it may be, a daily growth in all iniquity, till at length the sinner's cup is full. The decree goes forth: he is cut down. And what remains? A fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. His end is, to be burned.

O, brethren, that each one of us may be warned, while yet the goodness of God leads us to repentance. Remember, we beseech you, that our gospel is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. You will leave this house of God to-day, either better or worse; better, if you go earnestly resolved to seek that grace which alone can make you fruitful, and truly sorrowing for past unfruitfulness; worse, if the word you have so often heard has been again in vain;—if it has fallen only on stony ground, or on a heart choked with the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of this present world. O, if any conviction, any misgiving has arisen, beware how you stifle it. It may be Christ is now digging around you. He may be now knocking at the door; refuse not to open; send Him not away, lest He leave you to final barrenness.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you who bear some fruit to God, have not you cause for sorrow and humiliation, that you do no more for Him, who has done so much for you? Are not you, too, barren in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? O, if you continue lukewarm, you must expect His fatherly hand to visit you with severe chastening, if you be indeed children of God. Arise, then, and, “giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. i. 5—8.)

Yet, think not that we urge you to bring forth fruit in your own strength. No; the fruits of righteousness can come only by One—the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit which He bestows. Without His grace all ordinances and means, nay, all afflictions and trials, are in vain. Wait, then, on the Lord in more constant, earnest, persevering prayer; and beseech Him, as the Apostle did, that you may “be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;” that ye may “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,

being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.”  
(Col. i. 9—11.)

## SERMON XXXVI.

### THE VALUE OF TIME.

JOHN vi. 12.

“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

THUS spoke Jesus Christ to His disciples, when by His bounty and almighty power He had provided food for the hungry multitude, feeding with five loaves and two small fishes five thousand persons. Bountiful as He had been, He was equally careful that there should be no waste. “Gather up,” He said, “the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

Brethren, are we as careful not to waste any of God’s gifts—especially that most precious, yet most unheeded gift of time? Do we gather up the fragments—the days, the hours, the minutes, that we may use them for good? Such an inquiry is well suited to us now, when we are standing, as it were, at the close of one year, and about to step into another. Two more days, and this year will be numbered with those which are gone for ever; there is surely something solemn in that thought. We may value a friend

but little while he is with us; we may overlook his merits and usefulness, and dwell only on his faults. But if death calls him away, then we feel his worth; then we see how much more advantage we might have derived from his presence; we think of the voice we shall hear no more, the words and acts of kindness that can never be repeated, the counsel and the warning that fell on our ears and hearts unregarded. Regret and sorrow for his loss are mingled with shame at our own folly and misconduct; and fain, if we might, would we call back from the grave the parent, the brother, or the friend. Were he once more with us, we would grieve him, we think, no more. May there be no feeling like this towards the departed year? Did it not come to us as a friend, bringing with it many blessings and opportunities of good? And now that it is expiring—passing from us for ever—can we look back to no misuse of it? Has there been no ingratitude for its blessings? no wasteful squandering of its moments, more precious than gold? Might we not have turned it to better account? have employed it for higher ends? have stamped upon it, as it passed, what would bear, in the review, more reference to heaven and to God? Look back, my brethren; what does the last year witness to you? what does conscience answer from within? what tale does it tell? You are so much further on the journey of life:—what road have you been tread-

ing? the broad road of sin and folly, or the narrow one of holiness? Are you nearer God now than you were when the last December wind whistled through the naked trees? Or has each day widened the distance between your soul and your soul's Maker, Redeemer, Sanctifier? However you have used it, you cannot call back from its grave the buried year. But will there be no profit in reviewing it? May we not so number its days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom? If we have neglected the feast provided for us by the bounty of our heavenly Father, and all-gracious Redeemer, let us at least endeavour to gather up the fragments that remain, and let us seek by repentance, by turning unto God, by walking in newness of life, to "redeem the time."

For this purpose suffer me, brethren, to bring to your minds some of the opportunities and means of grace, some of the mercies and the warnings, which this year has presented to you.

1. Look, first, at God's holy day of rest. Two-and-fifty times has the sabbath returned,—the day which the Lord has chosen, blessed, and hallowed—the day which should give a character and colour to all the rest; which, if we would use it aright, comes to give a breathing-time from the labour and turmoil of the world, and to call men away from the thought of the things that are temporal to the thought of those which

are eternal. What has the sabbath been to you? Alas! how few seem to count it a delight,—the holy of the Lord, honourable! How very few appear to regard it as a gift from heaven; a merciful provision for our weakness; a means to win us back to God; a talent to be employed for His glory; the sowing-time for an everlasting harvest! How little, even in this Christian country, do men feel and act upon the spirit of that command:—“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy!” But let us look into our own bosoms; and let each ask himself, How have I hitherto used the Sunday? What ought it to be to me? Surely it should be a time of special communion with God; a time for self-examination and prayer; for loosening, through Divine grace, my affections from the things of this world, to which they are so apt to cling with overmuch eagerness and delight.

2. Think of the public worship of God. More than one hundred and thirty times in the year that is gone, have the church bells sounded their invitation to God’s house of prayer: have your hearts answered to them? has it been indeed to you a privilege and a joy to come up to the courts of the Lord? And can you honestly and truly say that nothing but unavoidable necessity has kept you away? And when here, have you striven to worship God in spirit and in truth? Have you followed the Church in its yearly round of service? Look back and reflect what high

and wondrous things, what rich and glorious blessings, have therein been brought before us.

We began with the Sundays in Advent, when, by the services that were read, we were called on to "awake out of sleep"—the sleep of sin and carelessness; to cast away the works of darkness, and to put on us the armour of light; to prepare ourselves in heart and affections to keep the festival of Christmas. What thoughts should have arisen within us of gratitude and love, of repentance and of shame, when we commemorated the birth of God's eternal Son into this sinful world; and while we followed Him in His circumcision, His early youth, His growth to manhood, His baptism in Jordan; thence to His preaching, His glorious miracles, His life and example of perfect holiness! These came before us in the Sundays after Epiphany and in Lent. Ash-Wednesday summoned us to repentance and humiliation; that with contrite hearts we might be prepared to keep Good Friday—the memorial of His death, who shed His blood a ransom for many. How, on that day, did the service of the Church proclaim aloud to us, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?" behold Him on the cross, and learn thence to hate sin, and to follow after righteousness? behold Him, and turn unto the Lord your God with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning!

Easter Sunday came and brought its glorious

tidings:—"Christ is risen from the dead, and dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Be ye therefore dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For as Jesus died and rose again, so should we also now, through His gracious power, die to sin and rise again unto righteousness." Nor was it long before, on Holy Thursday or Ascension Day, we were called to think of Him as leaving this world, which He had stooped to redeem; and going up on high, to the right hand of the Father, angels and principalities being made subject unto Him, and all power given to Him in heaven and in earth. And what was the lesson then taught us? That like as we do believe God's only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so should we also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, setting our affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

A few days more and Whit-Sunday followed. What was its meaning? It told us of the coming down of the Holy Spirit of God; when in the form of tongues of fire He fell on the disciples of the Lord assembled together at Jerusalem and filled them with holy courage to go forth and preach to every creature the Gospel of our salvation. So did Jesus Christ fulfil the promise He had given them, that He would send

them another Comforter to abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of truth. And so were we taught to plead with God that same gracious promise, and to pray that He would grant us by that Spirit "to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort." Now we are assured that God will "give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Last, in order of the Church's high festivals, came Trinity Sunday, when our thoughts were drawn upwards to God in His essential power, majesty, and glory—Three in One—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; far exalted, indeed, above our understanding; yet revealing Himself unto us as exactly suited to all our wants; our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being; to whom we may draw near in prayer, with confidence and hope, through the precious bloodshedding of Jesus Christ, by the help of His gracious Spirit; the Giver of all good, who, if we are believers in His Son, bids us cast upon Him every care, and promises to strengthen, guide, and keep us, to make us conquerors over sin and death, and to bring us for Jesus' sake to eternal glory. The services that followed through all the Sundays after Trinity,—the Collects, the portions of Scripture chosen, were intended to build us up in our most holy faith, to increase in us true religion, to nourish us in all goodness, that we might walk in all good works,

worthy of our high and heavenly calling, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Thus the Church has done her part to lead us onwards. Are we the better for her teaching? Has the word of God reached our hearts? Has it convinced us of our sin? Has it led us to the Saviour? Are we bearing any fruit? Or do we remain, like the barren fig tree, cumbering the ground in God's vineyard; and only spared because He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish?

3. Another and a most precious means of grace has been set before you, in the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ. Twelve times in the past year you have been invited; twelve times has the mercy of God bidden you to a feast, where angels might fall down and worship, and which is yet offered to sinful man; to which we are commanded to draw nigh, if only with penitent, humble, and thankful hearts, we are willing to receive the pledges of redeeming love. How many of you have turned a deaf or careless ear to the call! how many probably have never given it a thought! or have rested in willing ignorance of its meaning! or, though conscious that you were not prepared for that holy ordinance, yet never knelt in prayer to God, to give you the fitting state of heart and mind! Thus have these precious opportunities passed away; and will they leave nothing on record in the book of God?

And what have they been to us who have availed ourselves of them? Alas! have we not cause to humble ourselves before God? Has our growth in grace answered to our high privileges? Has our character become more formed? Have we laid aside one sin, or amended one fault? Ought we not to seek forgiveness even for our best services, and to mourn in unfeigned sorrow for our broken resolutions and manifold backslidings?

I have briefly reviewed our opportunities and means of grace. But,

4. Has God sent us no other mercies? What is life, with all its powers? What, health with all its capacities of enjoyment? What, our daily food, our home, our friends, the love and affection that strew with flowers our sometimes rugged path? What, peace and safety? What, liberty to go in and out, and none to make us afraid? Are they not all gifts of God's bounty? proofs of His tender care, of His watchful providence and never-ceasing goodness? What even is the condition of earning our bread by toil and labour? That is a mercy, too; a means to keep us from temptation and from sin; a source of contentment and cheerfulness:—"The sleep of a labouring man is sweet." (Eccl. v. 12.)

5. And God has given us warnings. Fifteen times during the past year the funeral bell has sounded. Fifteen persons have been called from

amongst us; some in infancy and childhood, some in ripe old age, and some in the very prime and flower of life; as if God would tell us death is at hand, and we know not the day nor the hour when it will come; as if He would say to all of us, "Boast not of the morrow; for ye know not what a day may bring forth." Who can tell how often the funeral bell may toll in the year that is now about to begin? Does not God seem to address each one of us, "Set thine house in order; for this year it may be that thou shalt die." Awake, ye careless ones; tremble, ye that are at ease in sin. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness; rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God,—even unto Him against whom you have sinned; for He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; He keepeth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.

My brethren, the Church's year is ended; the natural year will soon be gone. It may be the last year to any of us. Let us gather up the fragments that remain; let us strive to redeem the time. Does conscience witness against us? Does memory look sadly back to days, and months, and years, wasted or abused? Do our hearts sink within us at the thought of sins committed, and recoil in fear from judgment to come? What, then, shall we do?

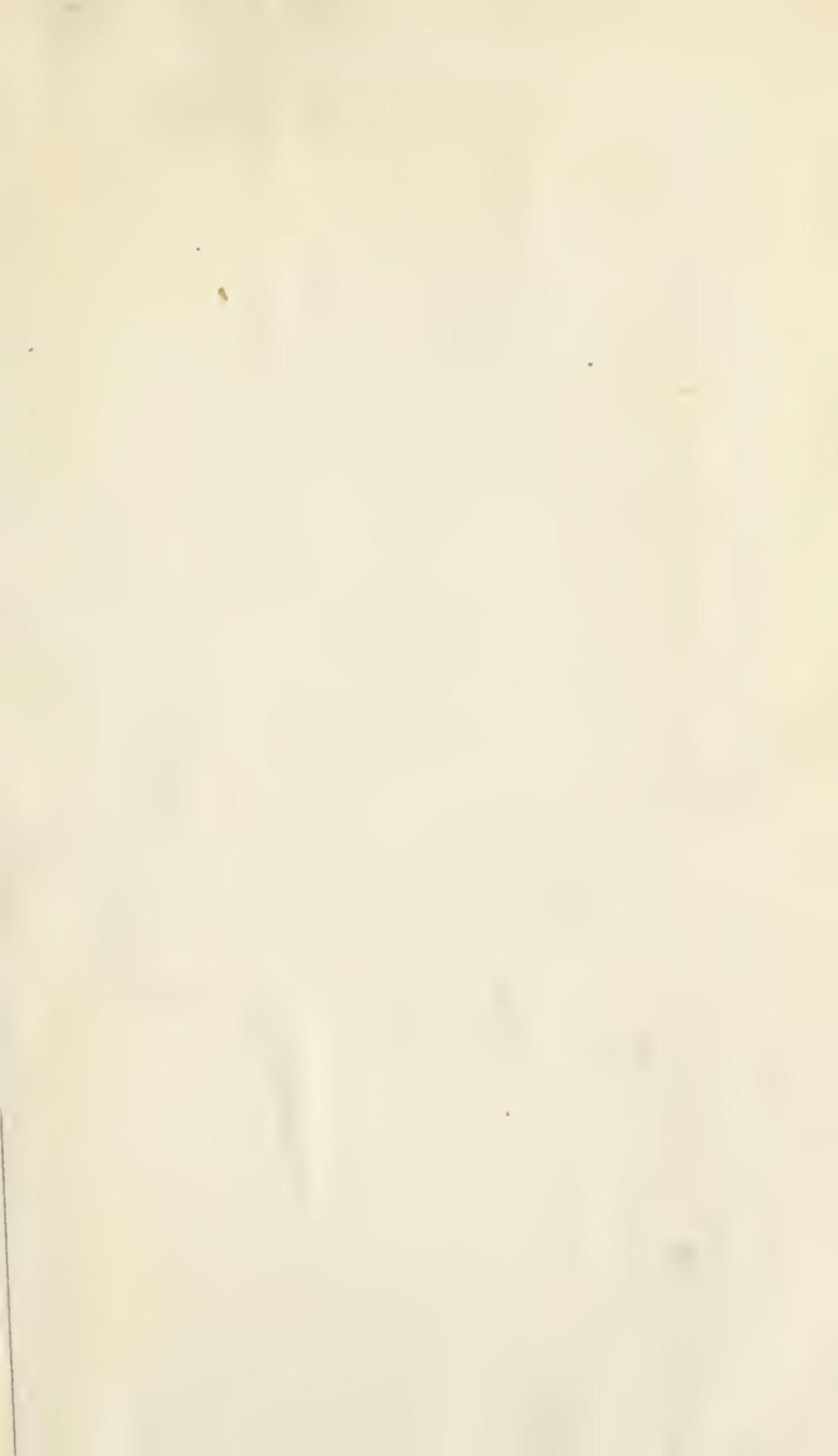
There is but one course to be pursued, but one way open. Let us even now apply our hearts to wisdom; let us arise and go to our heavenly Father. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost; yea, He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, that cast themselves wholly upon His mercy, and give themselves up to be guided by His Holy Spirit. O, brethren, let us seize the present moment. Let love to God be kindled in our hearts. Love can never be too late. Love to Him will make us loathe our sin. Let us look to Jesus, to His cross and suffering; for there it is we must learn to love. Though our sin aboundeth, grace doth there much more abound. Hope rises there; for Christ hath died, yea rather, hath risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Brethren;—you who are advanced in years, with whom the day of life is far spent, and the shadows of evening are stretching out, what special need have you to gather up the fragments that remain! Watch and pray. Your Lord cometh quickly. Hear His voice speaking to you yet in wondrous mercy:—“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” (Rev. iii. 20.)

Let it be the prayer and endeavour of us all

to live, for the time to come, more according to the will of God; to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and, for this purpose, to use more diligently and thankfully the ordinances of the Church, especially the public worship of God, and the holy sacrament of the Supper of the Lord. Let us be constant in private prayer; let us read and meditate on God's holy word. Conscious that in ourselves by nature dwelleth no good thing; feeling that if God uphold us not at every moment we shall fall; yet assured that we may be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, let us exercise faith in the promises of God; and, while we consider the shortness and uncertainty of life, let us, under a continual sense of it, pray to Him more earnestly to have our affections more weaned from earthly things, more fixed on Christ and heaven. So may we attain, through Divine grace, the assured hope of everlasting life! May we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his!

THE END.



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