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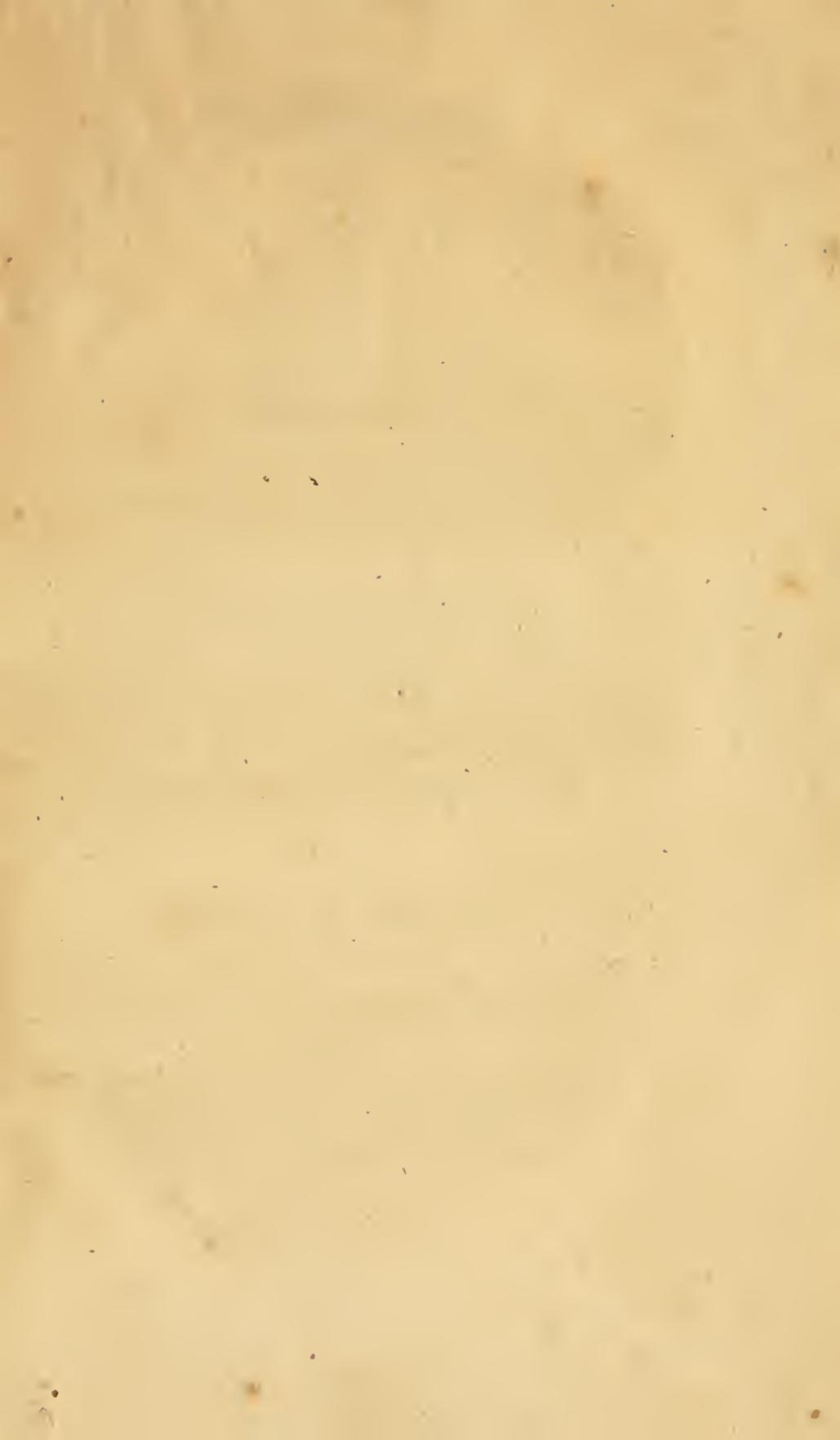
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PRACTICAL
S E R M O N S,

ON

SEVERAL
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES,

BY THE REV,
THEOPHILUS ST. JOHN, LL. B.

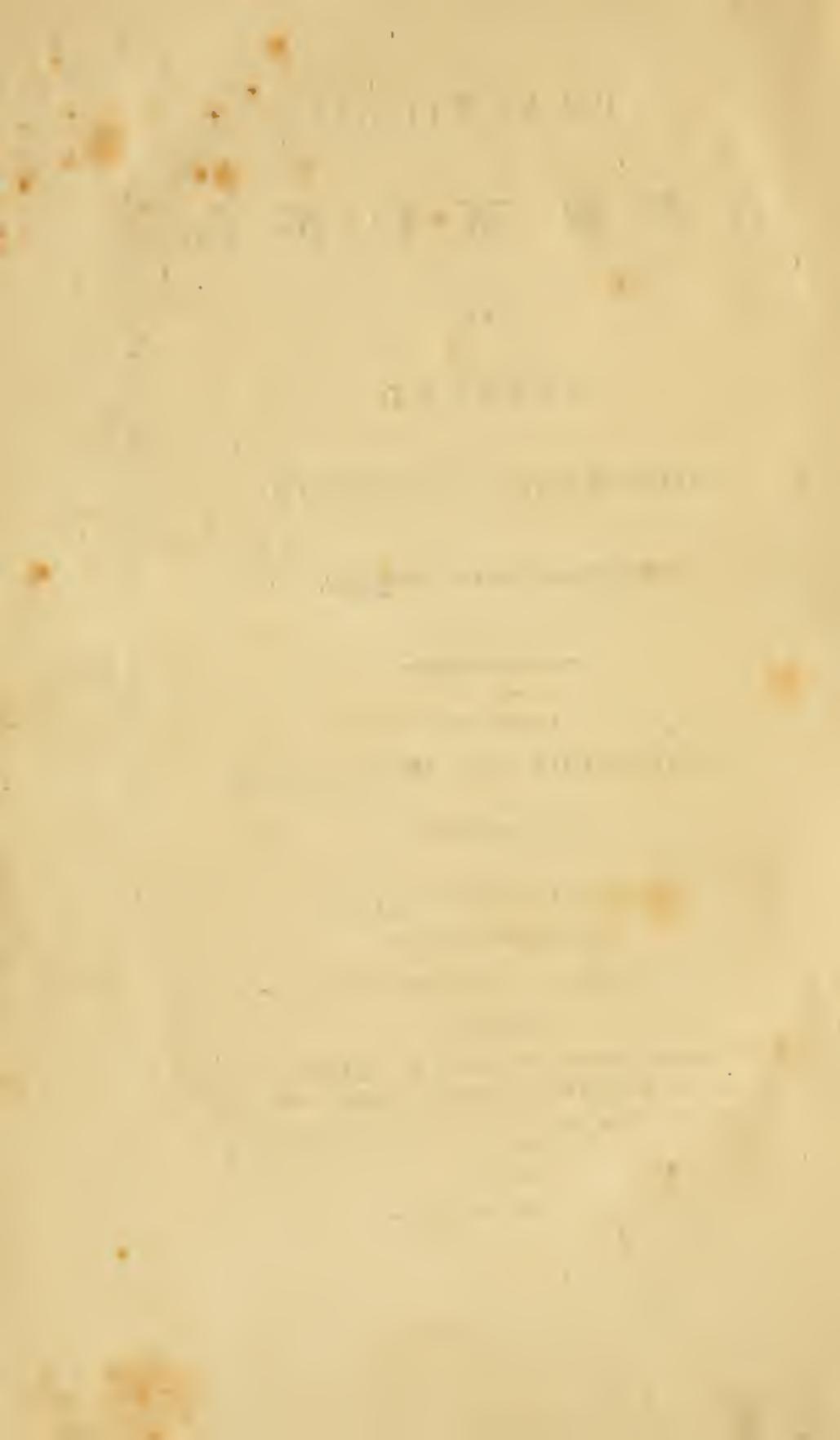
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE reader is entreated to consider these sermons as entirely calculated for a popular auditory, such as a clergyman, ardently desirous of doing good, would write for the use of his congregation, without an intention of their being ever read; and which, when they have been preached, are to be deposited in his study. This is the author's apology, for offering to the world a volume of discourses containing very little reasoning; for he never knew a deep reasoner an useful preacher, but he knows some deep, and very excellent, reasoners, who often preach to very small, and sometimes very inattentive, congregations. A clergyman may read the sermons of Clarke and Sherlock with great improvement to himself, but would deliver them, from the pulpit, with little edification to tradesmen, and their wives, and children; to farmers, mechanics, servants, and laborers. To

such an auditory, abstract reasoning, and profound argument will, generally, be unintelligible. It is not meant, however, to recommend flimsy declamation, which may, indeed, please the ear, but generally fails to impress the mind. A sermon, in the judgment of every critic, should unite, according to its subject, a certain portion of plain argument, with a pathetic appeal, and forcible address to the hearers. The author, having no motive but utility in the publication of the following sermons, deprecates the severity, and solicits the candor of his readers.

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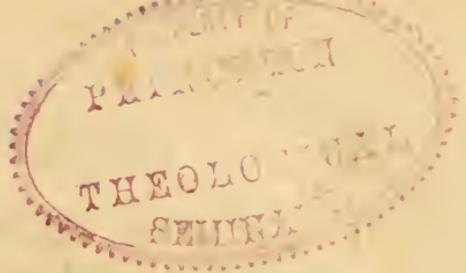
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ERRATA.

Page	12	line	19.	<i>for them read him.</i>
	69	—	5.	<i>for lifelessness read listlessness.</i>
	217	—	2.	<i>for second read first.</i>
	253	—	6.	<i>for and read to.</i>
	265	—	<i>ult.</i>	<i>for faraid read afraid.</i>
	214	—	10.	<i>for all of read of all</i>



PRACTICAL SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.

1 CORINTHIANS, iv. 2.

It is required in Stewards that a man be found faithful.

SERVICE implies fidelity; and the circumspection and diligence required are proportionate to the importance of the delegated commission. Of a steward to whose care and management is entrusted the property of his master, or who is deputed to attend to a particular business, extreme fidelity and minute attention are indispensable qualities; for, if the property be not carefully secured, or the business be not well conducted, a considerable

B

share

share of blame will consequently fall on him who was appointed to improve the one, or to superintend the other.

Between the character of a steward, as also some others mentioned in Scripture, and the ministers of the Gospel, there is a striking analogy. They are the overseers of the Church, they are shepherds of the flock of Christ, and it is their duty not only to preserve the flock "from the thief who cometh," with the diabolical design "to steal, to kill, and to destroy;" not merely to preserve them from harm, but also "to feed them in a good pasture, and to bring them into a good fold; to seek that which was lost; to bring again that which was driven away; to bind up that which was broken, and to strengthen that which was sick."

It may be of some use to state the nature and office of a Christian minister; for we may then easily perceive whether the effects are produced which may be expected from a divine appointment; and if they are not, we surely shall be led, both the pastor and the flock, each to "judge ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord."

I. The commission, which our Divine Master

Master gave to his disciples, when he sent them abroad to propagate Christianity, was expressed in these terms: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And of us, the successors of the first preachers, the same duty, under certain restrictions, is required: we are "to dispense the word of life; and, as ambassadors of the author of Christianity, to beseech men, in his place and stead, to be reconciled to God:" we are to deliver to the people committed to our charge the principles of the Faith "as they were once delivered to the saints;" and as they now stand recorded in holy Scripture. As the servants of Christ, we are "to rebuke vice; and if we know a man to be overtaken in a fault, we are to endeavor to restore him in the spirit of meekness"—either by our private, or public ministrations—"that we may not suffer sin upon our brother. Our heart's desire and prayer to God," for our people in particular, and the whole world in general, "is to be, that they may be saved. We are not to have men's persons in admiration, but we are to teach and preach, and that without ceasing, the Gospel of Jesus Christ," applying

B 2

ing

ing it to the several cases and circumstances of our hearers as they severally require. As stewards of the mysteries of God, we are to be so faithful as to instruct the people, of whose salvation we have sworn to be careful, in all things that may conduce to the welfare of their souls; that they, being acquainted with every part of their Christian duty, may at length “be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” We are to utter no preconceived, no favorite doctrine of our own; “but that which the Lord hath written, that, and that only are we to speak.”

But to preach with effect; to prevail with the drunkard to be sober, which is the great end of preaching; with the swearer to “bless and curse not;” with the sabbath-breaker to “worship the Lord in the great congregation;” with them that stole, to steal no more;” to do this effectually, implies that we are personally acquainted with our hearers. For unless we know their several dispositions and characters, it is impossible we should adapt with judgment, and apply with power, our discourses to their circumstances; and then, however excellent they may be, if they are not calculated
for

for the wants of the hearers, they are like the best seed sown at an improper season, or in an unprepared soil. As the physician observes the several stages of the disorder of his patient, and varies his medicines, according to its progress or decline; so will the faithful servant of God administer "milk to babes, and strong meat to those of riper years," consulting, with watchful care, how he can, with probable success, and without offensive personality, apply to each of his hearers, the words of Nathan to David, "thou art the man."

Entrusted with the care of the Church "of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, we are to give the most earnest heed, that we be found faithful in all his house, and approve ourselves unto our master which is in heaven," by making it the great and principal end, the continual aim and purpose of our lives, to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of men.

Besides the many, and strict obligations, by which we are engaged to live, and act, as becomes the disciples of Jesus Christ, by a punctual observance of all those evangelical rules which are bound upon us, in common with

other Christians; there are likewise several very momentous duties we are obliged to practise in the daily exercise of our sacred function, if we ever hope, or expect, to “make full proof of our ministry;” which can be done no otherwise, than by a full and conscientious discharge of *every part* of our ministerial vocation. Our employment is compared to that of husbandmen, and of laborers in the time of harvest, when “the hills and vallies, standing thick with corn,” invite the reapers to “put in their sickles, because the harvest is ripe.” Hence we are to understand, that our indispensable duty is, to prepare the soil, to sow the seed, to destroy the tares; “to be instant in season, and out of season,” to labor with indefatigable diligence, in order to render our flock, “a people prepared for the Lord.”

Sometimes, in the language of Holy Scripture, we are emphatically stiled watchmen, which plainly indicates, that we are bound to be continually on our guard, and to warn the people entrusted to us, upon the approach of danger, that they may be prepared to receive their spiritual enemies, and that having “put on the whole armor of God, they may be
“able

“able to stand in the evil day, and to quench
“all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Nay, the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to admonish us of the unwearied labor and assiduous watchfulness of our calling, by giving us the title of shepherds; a title derived from our great Lord and Master, who is, in the most eminent degree, “the great Shepherd and
“Bishop of our souls.” Now, by this appellation, we cannot but be convinced, that we are to take special heed to the flock committed to our charge, by carefully seeking for all such as are lost, “those who are committing iniquity with greediness;” and bringing back to the fold those that are gone astray, those who have departed from the simplicity of the faith of the Gospel; “if haply, by seeking the
“Lord, they may feel after him and find him.”

We lament, with heart-felt concern, that, in the discharge of our duty, so many stumbling blocks should be thrown in the way, to hinder the effect of the Gospel, by the scoffs of the scorner, the impiety of the profane, the indifference of the lukewarm, and the clamors of the enthusiast. Some people are as solicitous to advance the empire of Satan, as

though “ he could give them all the kingdoms
“ of the world, and the glory thereof,” for
their pains; and, lest God should derive too
much honor from the worship of his creatures,
they seem eager to make the well-disposed,
and the wavering, “ as much the children of
“ hell as themselves.” And they have too
much reason, God knows, to exult in their suc-
cess. If then, in attempting to counteract
this malice of infidelity, to stem this torrent
of licentiousness, we seem to “ stretch out our-
“ selves beyond our measure;” if we “ re-
“ prove, rebuke, exhort” with all the earnest-
ness the importance of the case demands; if
we set before your eyes the danger to which
you are exposed, and conjure you, as ye dread
the eternal displeasure of God, to deprecate it;
should we utter truths harsh to fastidious ears,
and offensive to licentious prejudices, “ forgive
“ us this wrong:” we have solemnly sworn that,
“ whether men will hear, or whether they will
“ forbear,” we, for our part, will not fail to
“ declare unto them the whole counsel of
“ God. To bring many sons unto glory” is
the object of our appointment; and if, by not
attending to the work of the ministry, we give
the

the enemy an opportunity “to sow his tares
“whilst we sleep; instead of doing the work
“of an evangelist,” we afford men but too
just occasion “to despise the offerings of the
“Lord, and cause the name of God to be blas-
“phemed.”

May God grant that our ministry may be
effectual to the saving of men’s souls, and that
every pastor of the flock may approve himself
a faithful dispenser of God’s holy word!

Besides preaching the word of God faith-
fully, every minister of a parish is to visit his
congregation, and administer consolation to
those oppressed with sickness, or bowed down
with infirmity. Agreeably to the seventy-sixth
canon—“When any person is dangerously sick
“in any parish, the minister or curate, having
“knowledge thereof, shall resort unto him, or
“her, to instruct and comfort them in their
“distress.” Believe me, Christians, to visit the
sick is the most affecting, the most awful, part
of a clergyman’s duty. Can you conceive the
agony of our minds, when we visit any of our
flock struck with sickness, and discover them
totally ignorant of Religion, and, from a review
of the tenor of their lives, dreadfully, and
justly,

justly, alarmed about their salvation? The first thought which instinctively occurs to us is, can the ignorance of this poor wretch be attributed to his want of religious instruction? Is it owing to my neglect, that he knows so little the state of his soul? And should his sickness end in death, when we are assembled to perform the last sad office, and to deposit his ashes in the silent grave, this awful question forces itself upon our consciences; when I shall meet, at the tribunal of God, the soul, which lately inhabited that breathless body, shall I meet it with confidence, or with dismay? If it be received to happiness, am I the blessed instrument of its happiness? If it be doomed to misery, can its misery, either through wilful neglect, or guilty inattention, be laid to my charge? For this soul I know I am to answer; can I appeal to God that, if it has perished, it has perished through its own fault?

We have seen what is required of every minister of the Gospel: let us, in the next place, observe what is required of the people, to give power to his word, and efficacy to his ministry.

II. What

II. What is delivered is to be received as the word of God. The preacher is not to be considered as having any view in what he preaches, but an unutterable concern for the present, and the future welfare of his hearers. "He speaks as to wise men; ye are to judge for yourselves of the truth of what he says." The hearers of the word, therefore, are to "receive with meekness" the doctrines propounded, and to judge of them with impartiality, "whether they be of God, or not:" they are to attend to the exhortations made to them, whether of reproof, "to depart from iniquity;" or of persuasion, "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" and, if what he delivers be just, and reasonable, and agreeable to the revealed will of God, "it is indispensably required of them to observe it." Their salvation is the end and aim of preaching the Gospel: it is not designed as a trial of skill, or an exercise of ingenuity, but "to convert sinners from the error of their ways."

When the day appointed for the celebration of public worship returns, it would be well, if all men would remember that God himself requires them to worship him in his own house,

house, and to meet together, as one family, “as the household of God:” it would be well, therefore, if they would suffer neither senseless indolence, nor trifling engagements to prevent their attendance. Yet we observe with unspeakable concern, that what often hinders many from attending the church, does not hinder them from attending the market, and going to a greater distance, “to buy and sell, and get gain.” May we, as we profess to be Christians, rather be disposed to “come to his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.”

After having heard the word, they, to whom it is addressed, are expected to meditate upon it. Being the word of God, it is intitled to this mark of respect—being intended for their salvation, they ought to reflect upon what they hear with seriousness, and apply it with fidelity, to their own cases and circumstances. Let us then respectively ask ourselves, whether the preaching of the word has produced in us those “fruits of good living,” which might, with justice, be expected from a divine ordinance; whether we have made that progress “in righteousness and true holiness” which
will,

will, through the merits of our Redeemer, ensure our salvation; and whether we clearly understand the nature, and uniformly fulfil the obligations, of the Covenant into which we have entered with God?

In preaching the word, offences, alas! must necessarily come. Many have "itching ears," they will not endure sound doctrine," but say unto their ministers—"prophecy not unto us right things, but prophecy smooth things, prophecy deceit." One man, when we exhort him to adorn his profession by a peaceable carriage, and a quiet demeanor; when we urge him to hallow the Sabbath, to attend the Church, to receive the Sacrament, complains, that we feed him only with husks, when he requires we should give him "the sincere milk of the word, and by and by he is offended;" he, therefore, either absents himself from the Church, or, if he continues to attend it, with a heart full of bitterness and of all uncharitableness, he represents its ministers as "dumb dogs that cannot bark, and as blind leaders of the blind;" and, with the most shocking presumption, arrogates to himself the property of Omniscience, impiously affirming, "that
" both

“ both will one day fall into the ditch ; that, as
 “ it is with the people, so it is with the priest ;”
 and that, ere long, we shall be mutually accus-
 ing each other, in the regions of woe, of horror,
 and of despair. Another, when we urge him
 “ to set his affections on things above, and to
 “ be transformed by the renewing of his
 “ mind,” is offended with the severity of the
 doctrine : he attends public worship ; he dis-
 charges the debts he contracts ; he wrongs no
 man ; and so far all is well : but when we say,
 “ one thing thou lackest ; if thou wouldst
 “ enter into life, thou must love the Lord thy
 “ God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind,
 “ and strength ;” thy very heart must be
 changed, and, to promote God’s glory must
 be the end of all thy actions : “ thou must
 “ call upon him by devout and diligent prayer”
 both in thy closet, and in thy family ; though
 the doctrine be confessedly the doctrine of the
 Gospel, because it is repugnant to his nature,
 he rejects, with contempt and abhorrence, the
 preacher and the doctrine together. But let
 no man take offence when he hears the Gos-
 pel delivered with plainness ; “ it is better, if
 “ thy right hand offend thee, to cut it off and
 “ cast

“ cast it from thee, than that thy whole body
“ should be cast into hell:” it is better that
men should hear the truths of the Gospel now,
though they should make their ears to tingle,
even if the consequence should be that the mi-
nister, who thus delivers it, should incur their
displeasure, rather than that they should be
“ tormented in the fire that never goes out.”

Some are of opinion, that the Gospel is
feldom delivered in its genuine purity in the
Church, and therefore, instead of attending
its worship and service, go to other commu-
nions, where they receive, or fancy they re-
ceive, more edification. If by deserting the
Church they are made better men than by
attending it; if they become better husbands,
better fathers, better neighbors, better Chris-
tians,—for, to become such I suppose to be
their motive—“ go, and the Lord be with
“ you!” But give me leave to add, if the teachers
you follow should be mistaken: if they should
“ deliver for doctrines the traditions of men;”
if they should teach you to trust on a broken
reed; if they should mislead you in so impor-
tant a point as salvation; how will you blame
your obstinacy, your folly, your infatuation,
for

for having believed their doctrines, without having strictly examined their truth, and fairly weighed their tendency? “ Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits,” with impartiality, “ whether they be of God.”

As to those who seldom attend the Church, and those who absent themselves entirely from it; if, after they have been admonished of their sinfulness, and surely it is the duty of a minister to admonish them, they continue, “ like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ears,” to disregard his admonitions; such men can hardly be reckoned amongst those for whom, at the great day of retribution, he shall give account. Happy, inexpressibly happy, will be the lot of that minister, who, when such a variety of opinions prevails throughout the land, can address the Redeemer of the world, in nearly his own words, “ Lord! of those committed to my care, not one is lost!” On the contrary, how deplorable will be his situation, how inconceivably wretched will he be, if the Almighty should apply to him the language of the Prophet, “ son of man, I set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel! When I said unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt

“ shalt surely die ; thou didst not speak to
“ warn the wicked from his way, and that
“ wicked man has died in his iniquity; but his
“ blood will I require at thine hand !” It behoves
us both, my brethren, to consider very seriously,
whether the Gospel be preached, on our part,
with fidelity, and received, on yours, with
effect. For imagination cannot conceive how
solemn and awful will be our meeting, at the
grand Tribunal. God grant it may be with
confidence and joy ! We, the ministers of
the Gospel, are to give a strict account of every
discourse we have delivered, and of its ten-
dency to forward the immortal happiness of
our hearers : it will then be published before
men and angels, whether, with vigilance of
attention, and solicitude of mind, we have
labored and prayed to promote the salvation
of our respective flocks : and, if we have been
negligent in a matter of such vast concern ;
if we have been regardless of the very thing
which demands our utmost care ; however we
may have been employed in works of fancy,
genius, or learning ; however we may have
been engaged in the traffic of gain, or have
slept on the bed of sloth ; as we can make no

atonement for the souls we have suffered to perish, so we can plead nothing in justification of such strange, such unaccountable, such unpardonable neglect. And, on the other hand, when the people committed to our care shall be called to account for the improvement of their several talents; when neither the distinctions of the great, the knowlege of the learned, nor the ignorance of the poor, shall be admitted as a sufficient excuse for their several vices; then, my brethren, on whom, do you believe, can the blame be justly cast? on your minister, or on yourselves? “If you hear the
“ sound of the trumpet and take not warning,
“ and the sword come and take you away, your
“ blood shall be on your own head. You heard
“ the sound of the trumpet, and took not warn-
“ ing, your blood shall be upon you.” But should the watchman not blow the trumpet, and not
“ warn the people, if the sword come and take
“ any person from among them, that person
“ is taken away in his iniquity, but his
“ blood will God require at the watchman’s
“ hand.” Ask yourselves, for God’s sake, before this interesting scrutiny be made, whether you have not done despite to the Spirit of
Grace

Grace, whether you have not mocked God by “ beseeching him to incline your hearts to “ keep his laws,” when you have continued perversely, and wilfully, to break them? How will the drunkard wish he had attended to exhortations to sobriety? How will the swearer lament his curses and imprecations? How will the profane abhor himself for his profaneness, when the word of God is delivering its testimony against all the ungodly? If an human Judicature impress us with solemnity, what will be our misgivings of mind, and anxiety of heart, when we stand before the Throne of God, every one to answer for his improvement under the dispensation of the Gospel? God Almighty give us all Grace to prepare for its approach, that we may be received, through the merits of Jesus Christ, into his eternal kingdom!

S E R M O N II.

HEBREWS XII. 15.

*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the Grace
of God.*

BY the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross, an atonement was made to God for the sins of the whole world. Our first parents, having forfeited his favor, involved us in guilt, and rendered us liable to punishment. But their posterity, not having actually sinned, God was pleased to find out an expedient by which his displeasure might be removed, his justice be satisfied, and his mercy might triumph. He, in the union of the human, with the Divine nature, completed our redemption. "Having then made a way for his anger to "escape," and intending to deal with us as moral agents, he acquainted us with the glorious salvation purchased for us, and enjoined us, in the observance of it, to "walk worthy "of the vocation wherewith we are called." The ever-blessed Gospel, therefore, was re-
C 3 vealed

vealed to confirm our faith, to enlarge our hopes, and to animate our endeavors. And if, either “by an evil heart of unbelief,” an obstinate refusal of mercy, or a wilful transgression of its laws, we defeat its design, and abuse its purpose, “there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation.” This being the relative situation between God and man, I shall lay before you some of the motives to induce us to obey the Gospel :

After which I shall earnestly exhort you all, “to follow after the things which make for your everlasting peace; looking diligently lest any man fail of the Grace of God,”

(1) So irretrievably were we lost by the transgression of our first parents, that there appeared to the eye of Omniscience no other way of restoring us to a state of favor and happiness, than by his uniting in the person of Jesus Christ, our human, to his divine, nature. To save man, God himself becomes man. Hence we see of what value we are in his estimation: though but “sinful dust and ashes,” we are thought worthy of redemption by him who “breathed into us the breath of life.”

(2) But

(2) But having purchased us to himself, that we might not frustrate his purpose, and disappoint his hopes, no sooner do we come on the threshold of life than he enlists us into his service; he adopts us into his family by “the regeneration of baptism;” and through the several successive periods of our being, “he visits us and dwells in us,” by the agency of his Holy Spirit. “We are made “temples of God, and habitations for him to “dwell in.” When we fall, he is at hand to succor us; when we despond, he invigorates us by his influence on our souls. To encourage us “to do well,” he suggests, “shalt thou not be accepted?” To deter us from doing ill, he threatens, that “sin lieth at the “door.” He sometimes “visits us with consolations from above;” he sometimes “takes “his Holy Spirit from us,” that we may know ourselves, and feel our dependence equally on his Grace, for the support of the spiritual, as on his Providence, for the preservation of the natural, life.

(3) To this his fatherly concern, let me add his forbearance, when our sins call aloud for vengeance.

A Being, who is so solicitous about our welfare, who watches over us when we think not of Him, and who, upon our amendment, is always ready to forgive, it is the very extreme of ingratitude wantonly to insult, deliberately to offend, and wilfully to provoke. But against this merciful Being we multiply offences with unremitting haste, and with peculiar presumption, We contemn his ordinances, we transgress his laws, we renounce his authority. God, notwithstanding our manifold provocations, when we discover signs of remorse, and dispositions of amendment, “is slow to anger, “and of great mercy. He waits to be gracious,” and not only gives us time to reform, but throws occasions in our way, “to lead us to “repentance.”

(4) Another motive to induce us to “look “diligently lest we fail of the Grace of God,” is the irretrievable ruin in which we shall one day be involved. Now it is agreeable to the eternal laws of justice, by which God governs the world, that the punishment inflicted should be in proportion to the blessing we reject. And the Scriptures, in the most explicit manner, assure us, that eternal punishment awaits those,

those, who refuse to obey the Gospel. Our Blessed Saviour, who never mentions punishment, but with the merciful design of persuading us to avoid it, declares, that theirs will be the most severe, who, having received the truths, neglect to improve the advantages, of the Gospel. The sacred writings convey the idea of punishment not by negative happiness, nor indirect allusions, nor faint descriptions. No! By “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; by the fire that never goes out, and the worm that never dies; by a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” These, it may be said, are figurative expressions; a God of mercy will never shew such severity of wrath, against his offending creatures. But, on this subject, let us speak with caution; let us even think with reverence. It is the language of Scripture, Scripture is the word of God, and God cannot lye. Leave we this to him who punishes unwillingly, and forgives with joy. As “by failing of the Grace of God, by neglecting so great salvation,” we involve our souls in everlasting ruin; may the awakening thought excite us to diligence in the study, and obedience in the practice, of our holy Religion!

(5) A further motive to animate us to improve under the dispensation of the Gospel, is the greatness of the reward. It is greater, than "hath even entered into the heart of man "to conceive." God thought it not sufficient to redeem us from everlasting misery, but he hath opened to us the prospect of ineffable bliss. He hath not revealed to us a glimpse of glory, which, like the horizon that bounds our view, as we approach nearer to it, recedes from us. No. We have a foretaste of it on this side the grave, "by becoming holy as he is holy." He has created heaven for our habitation, where we shall dwell for ever in his own presence. The Scriptures give us the most magnificent descriptions of its beauty and delight. And if we are determined, notwithstanding its allurements, notwithstanding it is the only refuge from misery, and security of happiness, not to enter in, we must dwell with those accursed spirits, who are already doomed to eternal punishments. Can a stronger motive be proposed to a rational creature, to prevail with him to obey the Gospel?

I now proceed, in the second place, to expostulate with those unthinking men who are
uninfluenced

uninfluenced by the Gospel, and, by the blessing of God, to persuade them, to “ look diligently “ lest they finally fail of the Grace of God” —lest, instead of becoming, as its divine author intended it, “ a favor of life unto life,” it should be, dreadful misapplication! “ a favor “ of death unto death.”

“ The Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching “ us that denying ungodliness and worldly “ lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and “ godly, in this present world, looking for that “ blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of “ the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus “ Christ.” By the Grace of God here, as in the text, is unquestionably meant the Gospel, revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And is the Gospel, revealed immediately from heaven, and “ confirmed by signs and wonders, “and mighty deeds,” to be received, or rejected, as suits best with our capricious humor, or depraved mind? Is the Gospel, the rule appointed by Almighty Wisdom for the regulation of our conduct, to be treated with an indifference we should be ashamed of shewing to the intimation of a superior, or the request of a friend?

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But we object perhaps to the unreasonableness of its precepts, or find fault, it may be, with the severity of its injunctions. They proceed both from Divine wisdom. Neither *our* judgment, nor temper, nor constitution, is consulted, but only *our good*. But it is notorious, that very, very many live in the open neglect of its duties both social, moral, and religious. It is notorious, that many live in the open commission of those vices it prohibits under the heaviest denunciations. Surely, when men deliberately destroy the peace and comfort of their neighbors; when they designedly trample on the property of others; when they not only refuse to “worship God in spirit and in truth,” but even commit the most atrocious acts of wickedness, they overlook the most distinguishing doctrine of the Gospel, that, “for all these things God will one day bring them into judgment.” Sin, we know, cannot be innocent in the estimation of him, who, to his divine, joined our human nature, for the very purpose of redeeming us from the guilt of it. And “shall man, that is a worm,” dare to defeat the purpose of his Maker? To transgress the laws God has prescribed
for

for the regulation of our conduct, is, to set the Almighty at defiance; it is to contemn the atonement of our Redeemer, and spurn at the overtures made to us, by the Blessed Sanctifier of our souls. Will it be sufficient to say to him, “ who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” that you preferred a life free from the restraints of virtue and the fetters of piety, to a life of undisturbed peace on earth, and an assurance of future blessedness for ever—when your conscience now resists, with abhorrence, the deceitful opiate? With what astonishment will the sinner behold the forbearance, and long-suffering of an offended God? With what indignation will he look upon the wounds of his crucified Saviour—wounds inflicted and endured for his salvation? With what agony of mind will he contemplate the intercessions of Jesus Christ, to turn away his Father’s wrath? With what distraction of soul will he observe the many, very many times, in which our gracious Redeemer hath interposed between his crying sins, and an avenging Deity—in which he hath warded off the blow, directed by justice, at the head of daring, and presumptuous

presumptuous guilt? Would to God I could prevail with the sinner to “be reconciled to God to-day, whilst it is called to-day!” Instead of complying with the sollicitation of every lust, and of being born away by the impulse of every passion—would to God I could prevail with him to retire, a little while, from the pursuits and pleasures of life, and to enter into his own conscience, and examine carefully what just grounds of hope he can have, whilst he lives at variance with his conscience, and with his God! But he cannot, alas! bestow any time on so trifling a concern as salvation. As Jesus Christ died for all, he doubts not but he shall be comprehended in the effects of his death, and then, *all will be well.*—Deceitful expectation! When he comes to lie on the bed of sickness, and “is even hard at death’s door;” when the road he is to travel is within his view, he will be anxious to know whether the reception, to which, at the end of it, he will be entitled, is the reward of obedience, or the chastisement of neglect. The advice contained in my text, is, “to look diligently lest we any of us fail of the Grace of God;” that is, to examine ourselves with scrupulous exactness,

ness, lest we render a revelation from heaven ineffectual to our salvation, and “receive the “ Grace of God in vain.” The motives to obey the Gospel we have seen to be cogent, and interesting; let us weigh, in the opposite scale, the pleasures and advantages derived from disobedience to the heavenly laws—*pleasures and advantages*, which, I pray God may never be ours! the reproaches of our conscience, and the displeasure of “ Him who has threatened, “ if we incur it, to destroy both body and “ soul in hell.” Is the edict of a sovereign, or the admonition of a magistrate, studied with accuracy, and received with attention? And shall the ever blessed Gospel, the law “ of the “ King of kings,” of him “ who is higher than “ the highest,” be treated with disrespect, and rejected with disdain? The punishment of an earthly sovereign compared with the vengeance of God, is as a drop of water to the ocean, or as time to eternity. Thou that livest in a state of known sin art every moment obnoxious to this punishment—ask thyself, therefore, how thou canst dwell with everlasting “ burnings?” It is one of the blessings of the
Gospel

Gospel that we can judge in what state we are—whether the friends, or the enemies of God? whether liable to his wrath, or entitled to his mercy? Let us then apply this happy, this peculiar privilege. Let each of us put this important question to himself—does my life warrant the assurance of my being in a state of salvation? One man, on a little enquiry, will find, that, by his entire neglect of every religious duty, he is amongst those who dread the second coming of his Saviour, the time when he will come to judgment. The exercises of serious meditation, of devout prayer, of holy communion—to these, alas! he is an utter stranger; and if they are to be his advocates at the throne of God, he cannot appear there without the apprehension of having incurred the eternal displeasure of his Judge. Another, when he is “to give account of all the deeds done in the body,” may expect to meet the complaints of the injured, the cries of the fatherless, and the lamentations of the widow: his own heart *now* turns evidence against him; and accusing, and convicting him here—what has he to expect but exemplary punishment hereafter? A third, instead
“of

“ of living in the faith and fear of God,” will discover that “ God has hardly been in all his “ thoughts.” Oaths and imprecations he vents without regard to their impiety, or dread of their punishment. Will such men dare to say that “ they look diligently, lest they fail of “ the Grace of God?” Let me persuade you to consider your danger. A state of suspense, where we have much at issue, is a pitiable situation. But words cannot express, fancy cannot paint the deplorable situation of that man, who lives at enmity with God. And every man is at enmity with God, whose conscience, examined according to the Gospel, does not assure him of his reconciliation. That there is no satisfaction of mind in the prosecution of vicious courses, is a truth the sinner can neither evade by argument, nor controvert by experience. For how shall he, who treadeth in the steps of wickedness, “ know peace,” when he is perpetually subject to the instigations of conscience, and the vengeance of heaven? He may, indeed, sometimes lull his soul to sleep with the deceitful cry of “ peace, peace;” but no sooner is the slumber over, no sooner does he awake to the visitations of remorse, and the

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persecutions

persecutions of iniquity, than *a something* within him—whose voice, neither the pleasures of sense, the accumulation of riches, nor the gratification of ambition, can silence—proclaims, “what hast thou to do with peace, whilst thine “iniquities separate between thee, and thy God?” Let us make the appeal then to our hearts; let us give ourselves no rest, till we know of a truth that “we have received Christ Jesus “the Lord, and walk in Him;” in other words, till the discharge of every social, moral, and religious duty affords us comfort and consolation. What would we give—what would we not give—to feel this comfort and consolation, in the time of sickness, and at the hour of death? Then is the sinner, when smitten with the pangs of guilt, horribly afraid that “God will forget to be gracious, and that He will “shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure.” When the king of all the earth shall come “to “take vengeance on his enemies,” may we be protected by the shield of Christianity! When the Gospel is delivering its testimony against those who renounced its authority, may we have a just, and legal claim, to its promises, and rewards! When the day arrives in which
every

every man will receive according to his works, then, O Lord, let our sins be washed out in the precious blood of thy dear Son. Thou Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! Thou that takest away the sins of the world, in that awful day, have mercy upon us! Thou that takest away the sins of the world, grant us the remission of our sins, and all other benefits of thy passion!

S E R M O N III.

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

IF there be any thing for which parents can be supposed to be peculiarly anxious, it is the welfare of their children: but, to obtain this end, they very often pursue it by means which disappoint their expectations, and defeat their purposes. Their children's welfare consists, some men think, in splendor of appearance, or the accumulation of wealth; others, in dexterity of cunning, and the arts of deceit. Few, alas! are attentive to the cultivation of the moral temper, to eradicate the malignant passions, which either flame out in acts of violence, or glow in the fullness of resentment. Few consider it worth while to devote their leisure, and apply their knowledge towards rendering their children docile in their minds, and amiable in their manners. And fewer still, to sow the seeds of

piety, and nurture the shoots of religion. It is incumbent on every parent, whatever be his situation, to cultivate in the minds of his Children, integrity, meekness, civility, kindness towards man; reverence, love, piety, devotion, towards God. Let these be the first impressions on their infant minds, and, in every successive period of their lives, they will be influenced by them; they will live happy in the consciousness of discharging the duties of their station; they will be esteemed by society as its most amiable, and valuable members; and, when they receive the summons to give an account of themselves to God, they will die in his favor, be accepted by his mercy, and rewarded by his goodness.

Let me then beg your earnest attention, whilst I urge upon you the care, the instruction, the welfare—the paternal care, the religious instruction, the immortal welfare of your children: for though we may be unconcerned about ourselves; though we may be so desperate as to venture on the passage of life, with a stormy sea, or an unskilful pilot, can we be so merciless, so unnatural, as to expose our innocent offspring to the same danger? Can we,
with

with unfeeling hearts, launch them on the ocean of life, only that they may be swallowed by its quicksands, or dashed on its rocks?

I. Every parent, who neglects to acquaint his child with the principles of Christianity, commits him to the captivity of sin, and the power of the devil; a master who pays his servants in pangs and sorrows, and who compels them, with harsh severity, to work out their own destruction.

Children, it is to be considered, have a natural demand on their parents for both moral and religious instruction. And that the parent may be stimulated to the conscientious discharge of *his* duty, he perceives in his children a thirst after knowledge, in the gratification of which, they, generally, appear to feel the most sensible pleasure.

Besides, if you neglect to instil principles of integrity and religion, the pernicious weeds of profligacy and vice will soon overrun the mind. Into what follies may not the thoughtless youth be betrayed, when he is fortified neither by the sense of right, nor the fear of God? His natural propensity to ill, seduced by allurements, and encouraged by example,

leads him far from the path of duty; and his passions, bridled by no restraint, plunge him into excesses, out of which he knows not how to get extricated. Having broken the fetters of apprehension and “cast away the cords of duty from him,” he pursues his destructive course, till either the sword of Justice, or the rod of the Almighty stop his mad career. After a life, which hath been a burden to himself, and a pest to the community, he goes down to the grave, either insensible to the misery of his situation, or hardened with guilt, or distracted with terror. So great is the necessity of “training up a child in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it.”

Let us now see the advantages arising from a careful, and religious, education.

II. A dutiful and virtuous child, through his ready help, and affectionate interposition, will remove many difficulties which might pierce with their sharpness, or oppress with their weight. He will shew his parents, when weakened by age, or bowed down with infirmities, many expressions of kindness, dictated by nature, refined by education, and enforced by duty. He will cheerfully seize every oppor-

tunity of contributing to the ease, and comfort, of his revered parents; and will acknowledge, by every testimony of gratitude, and demonstration of honor, the vast debt, which, since his first entrance on the stage of life, hath been perpetually increasing. The splendor of the great, the possessions of the wealthy, the knowledge of the learned—all these enviable distinctions united—are not to be compared with the solid pleasure, the pure delight, the transporting rapture of the happy parent. But, on the other hand, what relief, or comfort, or honor, can be expected from a perverse, and uninstructed child? The natural fruits of his barbarous temper will be neglect, contempt, and upbraiding. Instead of those little attentions which their years may require, and their excessive indulgence of him hath a right to demand, his behavior is strongly marked by unnatural insolence, and extreme brutality. Instead of being a comfort to their declining age, he contemplates their sorrows with indifference, and hears their lamentations with disdain. The reflection, that his savage manners are owing chiefly to themselves, to their misplaced indulgence, and unpardonable neglect,

lect, pierces them through with many sorrows. They long looked forward to the time of harvest, when they might reap the full vintage of their anxious hopes, "but when they look for grapes, behold! only wild grapes." Their care had been expressed, not so much in preparing the mind for right principles, and implanting, and nurturing them, as in protecting what were cast by the hand of accident, or by the subtilty of the enemy.

It may be asked, perhaps, in what manner are we to train up our children, in order that both the parent and the child may reap the advantage of a good, and right education? Children are to be taught that they are members of a community, and that, on the good conduct of the individuals which compose it, depend the happiness and prosperity of both society, and themselves. The principles of justice, integrity, submission, respect, charity, tenderness, forbearance, and all the virtues which adorn the human mind, are to be early impressed. The characters they are likely to sustain; the comforts they are to feel within themselves, resulting from propriety of behavior, and eminence of merit; the esteem derived from
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the world by the exercise of kindness and humanity ; by these arguments, and arguments like these, every parent should incessantly urge his child to the highest degrees of excellence.

But it is incumbent on the Christian parent to acquaint his children with the nature and design of Christianity, how it conduces to both our present, and future interests ; and, on the contrary, if it be not both believed, and practised, the severe punishment awaiting incredulity of mind, and impiety of life. To inculcate this more effectually, he will naturally teach them to offer up their prayers, and praises to Almighty God, with solemnity and devotion ; he will bring them early “ to the “ Courts of the Lord’s house, to worship the “ Lord in the great congregation ;” he will teach them the respect due to the solemn day dedicated to the Lord ; how it should be religiously dedicated to *his* service, and not sacrilegiously appropriated to their own. To enforce with more efficacy these religious duties, he will instruct his children as well in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as in the knowledge of God the Father ; “ for this is life eternal to “ know

“ know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ
“ whom thou hast sent.” On all parents this is
indispensably incumbent. Shall the Almighty
be disarmed of his vengeance; shall our grand
adversary, the devil, be deprived of his mali-
cious power to work our ruin; shall the gates
of life and immortality be opened to us through
the propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God;
shall these blessings be conferred on us sinful
men, and we keep our children in ignorance
of them; shall it not rather, as it is our
bounden duty, be our chief delight, to give
them clear and distinct conceptions concerning
them? Observe the treatment of an infant
heir to large possessions: no sooner do the first
dawnings of his mind appear, than he is made
acquainted with the consequence, and distinc-
tions, he is one day to possess; he is taught all
the accomplishments education can bestow,
in order to give dignity to his sentiments, and
refinement to his manners. Our life is only
“ like a tale that is told, or as a vapor which
“ appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth
“ away.”—And if so short a life claim such
wonderful attention; what ought to be shewed
towards the heir of immortality—and such is
every

every son and daughter of Adam—to him, who is to live at his departure hence, in a state of eternal happiness, or eternal misery; in a state, which is never to cease, never to have an end? Let every parent seriously ask himself, whether he has paid the studious attention to the welfare of his children, which its importance demands of him? Has he taught them their duty to God, and man? Has he instructed them in the knowledge of Christianity with the same earnestness of endeavor, and application of mind, he has taught them the several callings by which they are to earn their bread, or assisted them to cultivate the several accomplishments by which they are to adorn their station? Few parents, I fear, can lay their hands on their hearts, and say, that they have done their children this common justice. Would to God I could prevail with every one who hears me to take this into his most frequent, and serious consideration! Would to God I could prevail with you “diligently to instruct your children in the Holy Scriptures—“to speak of them when you sit in the house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up!”
Christianity,

Christianity, cordially embraced, and clearly understood, would shine with meridian lustre ; “ your sons,” instructed in its doctrines, “ would “ grow up as the young plants; and your “ daughters,” educated in its precepts, “ as the “ polished corners of the temple.”

But whilst you inculcate the doctrines, you will not be inattentive to the evidences, of the Gospel. You will lay a foundation sure and stable, on which may be erected a superstructure, not to be undermined by the floods of temptation, nor shaken by the tempests of ridicule. “ Every Christian should be enabled “ to give to every one, that asketh him, a rea- “ son of the hope that is in him.” Would not a man be justly ashamed of knowing so little of his trade, by which he supports his family, as to be unable to answer the several questions which curiosity might propose, or ingenuity suggest ? And shall a Christian be so ignorant of his charter of Salvation, as not to be able to evince its truth, and demonstrate its original ?

If there be any man who is not yet convinced of the necessity, or is not yet prevailed with to give his children a really religious education,
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with such an one, allow me to expostulate freely. If he be rich how can he reconcile two things so contradictory in their nature, as to be solicitous to make them wealthy, or great in this life, which, at best, is short, and always uncertain; and so barbarous as to neglect providing for a future life, which continues for ever? Let him look upon his children with the eye of parental fondness; let all his tenderness, his sensibility, his understanding be exercised on the occasion; then let him ask himself, if his opinions about religion should prove erroneous, and his children, through the influence of his opinions, should be deprived of the blessings, to which the practice of it entitles us, what will honor, and wealth, and success avail? It is not about a bargain, a title, or an estate we are disputing—No! it is whether your children, through your attention or neglect, through your laudable solicitude, or guilty prejudice, shall be happy, or miserable, for ever and ever?

If, on the contrary, you are incapable of supporting your children with comfort here, will you not naturally strive to bequeath them an inheritance in another life, which will so
amply

amply compensate for the want of one in this? Have the satisfaction, I beseech you, of reflecting, that after all the troubles your poverty may entail on them here, they will be happy, through your means, hereafter.

In the midst of abundance a man may be poor and miserable—guard the fortune you leave him with the utmost security of law—though, in some cases, you preserve it to your family, you cannot make your child prosperous and happy. But give him a religious education; instil principles of integrity and piety, in his early days, and when he goes out into the world, he will, in general, be actuated by them. Or, if he should unhappily deviate from his duty, if “he should walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and stand in the way of sinners,” he will, unless he should be cut off in the midst of his iniquities, amend his life, and will, again, adorn the profession he has so shamefully disgraced. For such is the power of Religion on the soul, when its impressions are made in the early part of life, it is not possible entirely to efface them. Religion *will* have her intervals of reflection; reflection produces pious resolutions; and pious resolutions beget

beget amendment. So true is the observation of Solomon, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

III. Let me, in conclusion, just observe, that success, in every family, will depend on the religious conduct of both the Parents: let them be just and honest in all their actions; let them shew the utmost reverence for the truth; let them avoid, not merely the commission, but the approbation, of all profaneness and impiety; let them be regular in offering up their family, and private devotions; let them devoutly observe the day dedicated to the Lord; let them attend the most solemn of all Ordinances—the Commemoration of the death of our Redeemer in the holy Sacrament; these duties, exemplified in their own conduct, attended with innocent cheerfulness, and recommended by patience, tenderness, and encouragement, will enforce their instructions: the parents will communicate the influence of religion insensibly to their children, and excite in them an instinctive emulation of imitating themselves, “in what-

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“report.

“ report. Those things which their child
“ have learned, and received, and seen in their
“ parents, they will do.” The duty of the pa-
rents, and the obedience of the children will
receive one and the same reward, “ the God
“ of peace will be with them” both.

‘ That all Parents may feel this real, this un-
‘ equivocal-affection towards their children ;
‘ and all children, in consequence, be trained
‘ up in the way wherein they should go, do,
‘ thou, Holy Jesus, shed upon us all the in-
‘ fluences of thy Grace, and heavenly Benedic-
‘ tion. May the seed sown, the religious in-
‘ struction of all masters, parents, and teachers,
‘ produce sixty, and an hundred fold; that
‘ when the harvest, the day of Judgment, shall
‘ come ; and the reapers, the Angels of God,
‘ shall be employed to separate the wheat from
‘ the tares, the righteous from the wicked,
‘ every parent may thus thankfully address
‘ himself to God, Lo ! here I am, and the
‘ children which thou hast given me ; and
‘ their offspring re-echo in joyful acclamations,
“ Blessed be he that begat ; and her that bare
“ me, and blessed be the Lord for ever, Amen
“ and Amen !”

SERMON

S E R M O N I V .

ISAIAH LVIII. 13, 14.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words :

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

THAT the day, which Almighty wisdom hath set apart for the commemoration of the wonderful works of his creation and providence, as well as of his mercy and love, in the redemption of our souls, should be regarded as a day of indolence or amusement, of business or dissipation, which it confessedly is, by a great part of, even the Christian, world, is a circumstance we cannot too deeply lament, nor

labor too urgently to correct. If the design of the Lord's Day is, to impress on our minds our own weakness and insufficiency, our dependence upon God for every blessing of both this life and another; if it be to wean our affections gently from this earthly scene, and to prepare us for an eternal abode, to celebrate an everlasting sabbath, shall we frustrate its merciful design, by "doing our own ways, by "finding our own pleasure, or speaking our "own words," prostituting it to trifling amusements, unnecessary visits, or servile occupations? No. "Remember," says the Commandment, "whose writing is the writing "of God, remember the sabbath day to keep "it holy."

My purpose in this discourse is, to consider in what manner the Sunday ought to be kept, together with the advantages arising from the institution; after which I shall earnestly exhort you to the devout, and religious observance of it.

I. Now "to keep holy the sabbath," or in the words of the text, to "call the sabbath a "delight, the holy of the Lord," it is not sufficient merely to attend public worship, and
then

then to think the business of the day over. No. To "call the sabbath a delight, the "holy of the Lord," is to put our souls into a heavenly frame and temper; to meditate on the dreadful state of man without a Redeemer, and on the stupendous method by which our Redemption was accomplished; to return our devout thanksgivings to Almighty God for his superabundant love expressed towards us; to make our wants known unto him, both temporal and spiritual; to beseech him to be always with us to protect us, and bless us; to devote some part of the day to the serious perusal of the Holy Scriptures, that we may know, and understand, and feel, in how peculiar a manner we Christians are the objects of his love, and may thereby endeavor, more and more, to please him. This is to be done in our closet, and our family. But to keep holy the sabbath day, we are likewise to attend the public worship of God, in the congregation. There we are to divest ourselves of every thought which would withdraw our affections from spiritual objects, and prevent, in any degree, our "worshipping
E 3 " God

“ God in spirit and in truth.” If any man object to this universal sanctity, on the sabbath day, I appeal to that man’s heart in the presence of God, who knows every thought of it, whether his objection does not arise from his aversion to religious, and spiritual exercises? I appeal to his conscience, whether he does not feel more pleasure in the exercise of his business, the improvement of his wealth, the gratification of his appetites, or the bent of his mind, whatever it be, than in the worship of God, and the celebration of Religion. The Lord’s Day is designed as an emblem of Heaven. If the felicity of Heaven consist in a pure and spiritual worship, in “ singing day “ and night to Him that was, and is, and is to “ come, to the Lamb that was slain but liveth “ for ever;” ought we not to consider the Lord’s Day as an excellent preparative for that divine employment? For if we nauseate the foretaste of Heaven, which God, by this holy institution, has given us here, eternity, in whatever light we view it, presents but a melancholy, and comfortless prospect. The devout observance of the Lord’s Day will evangelise .

gelise our minds, will raise them, from things below, to things above, will qualify us to participate the joys reserved for those who are thought worthy to celebrate an eternal sabbath in Heaven.

The institution of the Lord's Day is peculiarly calculated to celebrate our Redemption from sin, and deliverance from death, by the merits of Jesus Christ. That day God the Father blessed; God the Son rose on that day from the dead; on that day God the Holy Ghost descended from Heaven, to complete the work of our salvation. And can we be Christians, and not delight in that blessed day, in which the wonderful love of God to his creatures is so conspicuously displayed? Can we be Christians, and not rejoice in the return of that holy day, in which we celebrate our Redemption from misery; in which we behold, by faith, the happiness to be enjoyed by those who love God, and obey his will? Can we be Christians, and not rejoice to commemorate that distinguished day, which, though instituted for His honor, was instituted, at the same time, for our good? a good, which surpasses every human tongue to recount, every human thought to conceive.

The advantages resulting from this divine institution will easily appear, by taking the slightest view of the polished nations of antiquity, and the savage tribes of the present times, who were never blessed with a knowledge of that sacred day. St. Paul delineates the character of the former; and from every account given us by those who have visited the latter, there is, God knows, too striking a resemblance. “Being filled with all un-
 “righteousness, fornication, wickedness, co-
 “vetousness, maliciousness, full of envy,
 “murder, deceit, malignity, backbiters, haters
 “of God, inventors of evil things, disobedient
 “to parents, covenant breakers, without natu-
 “ral affection, implacable, unmerciful.” And I shall not be thought uncharitable in saying, that they who, in a Christian country, are notorious for the profanation of the sabbath, are guilty, in an eminent degree, of many of their vices. This indeed is easy to be accounted for. When men never hear the denunciations of God against vice, and have been brought up with scarce a sense of God on their minds; when they never hear incitements to virtue, and exhortations to religion; when they
 live

live without worshipping God in private, and never join in any act of religious worship with their fellow creatures; can it be a matter of surprize, that, as they openly violate the commands of God, they should advance with a progressive and rapid motion, neither “to fear God nor regard man?”

It is perhaps to the institution of the sabbath, that Religion is preserved alive in the world. For by having a fixed time to worship God, those who would bestow their leisure to estimate the value, and devote their lives to entitle themselves to the blessings, of Religion, have, in every age of Christianity, assembled to perform their public devotions, and communicated the influence of them to their children, and to their families. By which means, Religion, though disregarded by the great, despised by the vulgar, ridiculed by the licentious, and evil-intreated by the profane, has not only withstood their several attacks, but triumphed over their united hostilities.

II. I now come to expostulate with those who, notwithstanding the advantages derived from the sabbath, live in the profanation of it.

To

To know that God has commanded the sabbath to be kept sacred to himself, would be sufficient, one might imagine, to prevail with every human being, to whom the knowledge is imparted, religiously to observe it. Would to God experience coincided with this reasonable expectation! How those men, "who do their own pleasure on God's holy day," intend to justify their insolent conduct, their declared rebellion towards their Maker, is not easily to be conceived. Would to God I could prevail with them to consider, ere it be too late, how they will stand like criminals, self-accused, and self-convicted, before the Great Tribunal, without one single argument to urge in their excuse! Would to God I could prevail with them to consider, ere it be too late, the benevolent design of the Almighty in instituting the sabbath day, that it is for their unspeakable advantage, both present and future! Now, when God purposely offers an advantage to man, what can be said in vindication of him, who spurns the gracious offer? With what black ingratitude, with what presumptuous disobedience, with what daring provocations does that man stand chargeable?

chargeable? There must surely be a *wonderful pleasure* in spending the Lord's Day in idleness, intemperance, and debauchery, when it is considered, that "they who do such things," are wantonly violating the sacred laws of God, and bringing down upon their own heads, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." The day God hath distinguished, by commanding, not only a cessation from labor, but an actual celebration of religious worship, to devote to idleness, business, or pleasure, what is it but a *personal indignity*? What is it but saying, we would not, could we choose for ourselves, "have God to reign over us?" And what it is to put ourselves without the sphere of divine protection; what it is to make God Almighty our enemy, ye, who profane the sabbath, reconcile the thought, if ye can, with the pleasure arising from the profanation of it.

Let me appeal to the man who sometimes attends the service of the Church, and ask him, whether there is not more satisfaction in publicly confessing his sins, and begging pardon for them—though he may not, and such an one cannot, feel a real vital spirit of piety—
than

than in remaining at home in indolence, or wandering abroad “ seeking rest and finding “ none,” or partaking of pleasure which is attended with painfulness in the pursuit, with disappointment in the possession, and with remorse in the reflection? Let me appeal to the man, “ who careth not for God, neither “ hath God in all his thoughts,” and ask him, when millions of creatures throughout the Christian world are prostrating themselves at the throne of mercy, and glorifying God, as it were, with one voice and one heart, supplicating forgiveness, favor, support, whether he has not the same need of the pardon of his sins, of the protection of God, of the influences of Grace? Let me appeal to the man, who “ keeps not the sabbath from polluting “ it,” and ask him, if the Lord’s Day be an emblem of Heaven, if it be designed to prepare him for the celebration of an everlasting sabbath, what pleasure he is to expect in the regions of bliss, who cannot bestow a few hours, on the return of every seventh day, upon his Maker and Redeemer? Or if he hath so much the appearance of Religion as to attend public worship, yet cannot devote
any

any part of the remainder of the day to serious meditation, private prayer, and the acquisition of "that knowledge which will make him wise unto salvation," but spends it in lifelessness and indolence, or in the fatigues of business, or the amusements of company? Could it be supposed, that such a man had received an express command from God, to "esteem the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and to honor it by refraining to do his own ways, to find his own pleasure, or to speak his own words?" Could it be supposed, that such an one put in a claim to the happiness of serving God for ever, and ever? It is a melancholy consideration, that the smallest pretence of indisposition, the very apprehension of unfavorable weather, the most trifling engagements, or the least call of business, will prevent many, very many, from appearing at "the house of God, and joining with the multitude in praise, and thanksgiving." How natural it seems, that, on the return of every seventh day, the poor should assemble at the house of God to beg his blessing and protection, to deplore their offences and transgressions, and to return thanks
for

for the health, and strength, and employment afforded them, by which they are enabled to support themselves and their families! that the remaining part of the day should be employed in reflecting on their condition, and preparing for that state, where virtue will be triumphant, and piety ennobled; for that state, where all distinctions, but the blessed distinctions of Religion, cease for ever! How natural that the rich should testify their sense of God's goodness, by assembling with those, to whom Providence hath denied so large a share of worldly comforts, and that they should not suffer their attendance on public worship, to be interrupted, as we too frequently see, by an excursion of pleasure, an engagement of business, or a visit of ceremony! Their example to society, and gratitude to God demand of them, a very different observance of the Lord's Day. He who instituted it for his honor, and our benefit, he it is to whom they are indebted, for the means of pleasure, the avocations of business, the distinctions of ceremony—and ought engagements, such as these, to take place of his honor, and to supersede his worship? "Do ye thus requite the Lord?"

How

How natural that the opportunities of happiness, which are so kindly put into your hands, should be improved to your eternal salvation!

Let us all be persuaded, my brethren, henceforth, to "hallow the sabbath," to cease on that day from "doing our own ways, seeking our own pleasure, or speaking our own words;" but let us delight ourselves in the worship, and service of God; let us, on that day particularly, "call our ways to remembrance," examining, with strict impartiality, and severe attention, whether the day, which was intended to promote, above all others, our future welfare, hath not often been converted to the purposes of torpid indolence, or licentious pleasure. Let the many fatal examples of those whose career in wickedness was commenced by profaning the sabbath, and terminated by an untimely death, warn every father, and every master of a family, lest the unhappy end of his children, or of any part of his household, should rack him with the reflection, that, either seduced by his example, or encouraged by his connivance to profane the Lord's Day, the guilt they incur, the punishment they may suffer, should

should be owing to himself. And let us often anticipate the awful hour when we shall lie on the bed of death, an inhabitant, as it were, of both worlds; whether we shall be distracted with terror, warning, beseeching, conjuring our assembled family, not to spend the sabbath in the manner we have spent it; or whether, looking upon death without affright and amazement, we can exhort them, as we have done, to “do likewise;” expressing humble hopes, that, after having passed our sabbaths in the congregations of men on earth, we shall soon be admitted, through the merits and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, to celebrate an eternal sabbath with saints and angels in Heaven.

S E R M O N V.

LUKE XIV. 18.

They all with one consent began to make excuse.

IN the parable from which these words are taken, the dispensation of the Gospel, offered to the Jews, is aptly represented under the similitude of an entertainment, to partake of which, chosen guests were invited, and when it was prepared, and their company expected, they sent in their several excuses. At the time they should have attended, they were employed in very different pursuits. In consequence of their refusal, those were bidden, who were more likely to embrace the offer, “the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the “blind.” Because the Jews, to whom the blessings of the Gospel were first tendered, “thought themselves unworthy of everlasting “life,” lo! says the author of the apostolic acts, “we turn to the Gentiles,” signifying that

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the Gentiles, all the other nations upon earth, should be admitted to a participation of them.

And great indeed are the blessings of that Gospel our blessed Redeemer came into the world to promulge! Great indeed are the blessings offered to all, who are oppressed with the burden of sin, and terrified with the apprehension of punishment! Yet though the Gospel alone can remove the load, and avert the apprehension, how many totally reject it! how many refuse the taking of its easy yoke upon themselves! My design is, to shew the nature and end of its most distinguishing Ordinance, the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—infering from thence the indispensable obligation all who embrace Christianity are under, to a frequent participation of it—to expose the weakness and insufficiency of some of the excuses offered for a neglect of it—and in conclusion, earnestly to exhort you “all, to eat, with one consent, “of that bread, which is the life of the world; “and to drink of that cup,” the cup of the new Covenant, which is the “Blood of “Christ, shed for the remission of our sins.”

And

And no subject, surely, can more usefully engage our attention, especially previous to the administration of the Sacrament, when it is considered, that of the great numbers who regularly attend the service of the Church, so few, in comparison, commemorate the death of their Redeemer. When such men have their excuses removed, if they still continue deaf to the invitation, let them consider, when they shall stand under the arrest of death, what comfort they can give themselves, what consolation they can receive from others: with Joseph's brethren they will say, "we are verily guilty concerning this thing," "in that it was intended for our benefit, and though we were convinced of its necessity, and conjured to receive it, in order to "our souls' health," we have deferred it so long, that if we receive it not, we perish; and if we do receive it, "we are guilty, perhaps, of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour."

I. The primary design of the institution, was "the continual remembrance of the death and passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Do this," says he, "in remembrance of me." Lest we should be so strangely incon-

considerate as to forget the inestimable blessings derived from his sufferings and death, this Rite, he, in his wisdom, instituted, to render them the objects of perpetual contemplation.

And what could be better adapted to promote this pious design? When we see the bread broken, and the wine poured out, we behold by faith, the body of our blessed Redeemer, hung, pierced, and nailed for our sakes to the cross; his blood shed for the “ washing, sanctifying, saving, all, who draw near “ with faith, and are meet partakers of those “ holy mysteries.”

(2dly.) We are to frequent the holy Sacrament, not merely to call to mind our Saviour's death and passion, but to apply the benefits of them to ourselves. We, who profess to be Christians, are in commemoration of our privilege, to assemble together, all adorned with the same dress, the righteousness of our Redeemer; all endowed with the same temper, the meekness of the Gospel; all supplicating the same blessing, the salvation of our souls. This blessing, the Atonement of our Saviour hath procured, and the Sacrament is a principal channel through which it is conveyed.

conveyed. If, my brethren, this be the path in which we are to walk, if this be the gate through which we are to pass, what obligations, do we think, we are under, out of gratitude to our Saviour, out of regard to ourselves, to accept his invitation, and thereby make his merits, ours? An obligation of such a nature, so universally binding, so clearly indispensable, that, I hope in God, no one who now hears me, will, upon any pretence whatever, refuse to fulfil it.

(3dly.) Another reason, why we should celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is, that during our progress through life, we shall receive the assistance of God's holy Spirit; and this reason surely deserves our most serious attention. If after what Jesus Christ hath done and suffered for us, our salvation is still, if we might dare to say it, incomplete; if it be necessary, that the third person of the everblessed Trinity should be employed on the same errand—not merely at the first promulgation of the Gospel—but to the “very end of the world;” how much does it behove us to invoke his assistance, and to obtain it by whatever means are proposed to us? We

must be lost indeed, to all sense of happiness, we must be totally unconcerned about what will become of us hereafter; if, when God offers us his assistance, we reject it, “and will “none of his comforts.”

A fourth reason, why we should celebrate the Lord's Supper, is, the positive command of our blessed Saviour, “Do this in remembrance of me. This do ye as oft as ye drink “it in remembrance of me.” This celebration of the Communion he commanded the night in which he suffered; a few hours only, before he submitted, “for us men, and for our “salvation,” to be hung upon the cross. Were a dying friend, one who was going to lay down his life for our sakes, strictly to enjoin us, in remembrance of what he was about to do for us, to comply with such or such an injunction; and that we might not be tempted to forget it, to consider it as his dying request—as the token of his kindness, and the expression of our gratitude—could we be so base, so unnatural, as to disregard, as absolutely to refuse to comply with such injunction? And yet, so scandalously ungrateful are those, who absent themselves from the Lord's Table. One thing yet is to be taken into the account,
you

you are to answer for this unaccountable neglect, this monstrous ingratitude, before the throne of God.

II. The excuses men offer in their justification, I now proceed to remove.

The first excuse men usually offer is, that they are so engaged with the business, and employed in the cares, of life, they really have not time to prepare themselves, as they could wish, for this most solemn Ordinance. A very plausible, specious excuse it is. But what? The seventh day is their own; on that day they can attend the Church; they can devote some part of it to the reading of the scriptures; and they can *every evening at least*, of their lives, spare a few minutes to thank God, with their families, for all his blessings. They can refrain from swearing, drinking, and from every other excess. They can keep a "conscience void of offence towards their neighbor," by paying what is strictly due, by demanding, and receiving no more than what, in justice, they ought. Will the observance of these duties encroach upon your time? will the observance of these duties prevent you from making a necessary provision for yourselves,

and for your families? You are convinced that it will not; the conscience of every one tells him that it will not. Let your conscience then be obeyed. The excuse is removed. Convince the world—and what is of more consequence—convince yourselves, that Religion is of too venerable a presence to admit either insult, or neglect. Let neither “the buying
“a piece of ground, the proving a yoke of
“oxen, nor the marrying a wife;” in other words, let no worldly business whatever hinder your attendance at the Altar of the Lord, “For how will you escape, if you neglect so
“great” a mean of “salvation?”

Another excuse with many is, that they are so engaged in a course of sin, and have so exceedingly provoked the Almighty, they are afraid to commemorate that great sacrifice offered for their sins. And such are all those, who live, in every respect, as though they had neither a God to worship, nor a soul to save; who spend days, weeks, months, and years, it may be, without ever retiring to their closet to thank God “for their creation, preservation,
“and redemption.” Well may such men say that they are afraid of receiving the sacrament!

But

But who, in his senses, would continue to run that race of vice, which renders him liable to the just judgment of God? If you are indeed such sinners, “sin no more.” “Wash ye, make you clean:” appear at the Altar with a real contrition for your sins past, and an hearty resolution, a fervent desire, to please God for the time to come. God will approve, accept, confirm your resolution. He will convey his Grace in the holy Sacrament to enable you to keep it: with your change of life you will perceive a change of disposition: however small it may be at first; however exposed to the chilling frost, or the scorching heat, it will still take root; you will have the satisfaction to see it bud, blossom, and bring forth fruit, a large increase. That single plant, a resolution to lead a new life, cherished and fostered by a frequent participation of the holy communion, will become a nursery for all the other duties of Religion.

There is a third excuse, for not frequenting the Sacrament, often urged by men of a very different complexion; by men who lead honest, moral lives, regularly attend the Church, and are not very remiss in other religious duties; which

which is, that an unworthy receiving will expose them to eternal damnation. The original word, signifies only judgment, or condemnation; and in this place, in a temporal sense, and so it ought to be rendered. It was first made use of to deter the people of Corinth from the excess, which, at the celebration of that holy feast, they usually run into. But were the danger ever so great, the consequences ever so dreadful, we are expressly commanded by its divine author to “do this in remembrance of him.” Let not then, a false tenderness of conscience prevent any one from commemorating the love of his great Redeemer. The Saviour of the world never could enjoin what, in its nature, or its consequences, would render us liable to that wrath, from which to redeem us, he vouchsafed to die.

The last excuse I shall mention, which is indeed the parent of every other, is, that should men relapse into sin, after having communicated, instead of expiating, they are aggravating their guilt. This excuse will vanish whenever you frequent the Lord's Table, with a suitable disposition. Know once what it is to receive the Sacrament with “a lively faith in
“ Christ,

“ Christ, a thankful remembrance of his death,
“ and in perfect charity with all men;” and
“ the commandments will appear no longer
“ grievous, the yoke of Christ will insensibly
“ become easy, and the burden of Religion
“ imperceptibly grow light.” Compare, for a
moment, a course of wickedness and vice, a
heart you are afraid to look into, a dread of
God’s avenging wrath, with a life uniformly
regulated by the maxims of the Gospel; “ a
“ conscience void of offence,” and an humble
assurance of eternal felicity; and you will not
absent yourselves from the Lord’s Table,
through an apprehension of thereby multi-
plying your sins. The Communion being the
most solemn part of the Christian Religion,
the design of a frequent participation of it, is
to invigorate our souls, and secure them from
the most insidious attempts of temptation.

Having shewed the nature and design of
the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord’s
Supper; the obligations every Christian is under
to a frequent participation of it; and removed
the excuses some men make for their neglect;
in order that what is delivered may awaken
the thoughtless, alarm the impenitent, en-
courage

courage the desponding, confirm the believer—the design of all discourses from this place, being solely the salvation, not the entertainment, of those who hear them—I will presume a little longer on your patience, whilst I earnestly exhort you “all, to celebrate, with one consent,” the death of your Redeemer at his holy table.

III. It is a no less melancholy, than just observation, that many men spend their whole lives, without once making the expected return of gratitude to God for his superabundant kindness, without once presenting themselves at his table; though “they are bid in the name of God; though they are called in Christ’s behalf, though they are exhorted as they love their own salvation;” though Almighty God himself, in the person of our Redeemer, has commanded it; they live as if they were without churches, without ministers, without sacraments, and “all, with one consent, begin to make excuse.” Excuse! From what? Why, from commemorating their Redemption from sin; from commemorating their Redemption from what the Scripture, in the most awful and emphatic language Inspiration ever dictated,

dictated, stiles “ the damnation of hell.” To such, if such there be here, I am now to address myself. You will consider that, though you are called Christians, you have no right to the name; it is a title that does not belong to you. But as you live in a Christian country, and are therefore bound, as the citizens of a Christian state, to conform to the laws of the religious compact; be persuaded to ask yourselves this natural, yet important question: ‘ It not my intention before I leave this world, before I am summoned by my Almighty Creator into the regions of death, and the abyfs of eternity, to receive the holy Sacrament? And your own reason will answer, In such a situation, when you are oppressed with sickness, distracted with pain, stung with guilt, agonized with death, the Sacrament can have no efficacy, convey no blessing, since not gratitude and duty, but dread and terror make you desirous of receiving it.’ If the Christian Religion afford succor in our distress, comfort in our troubles, satisfaction to our desires; these consolations are assuredly to be found, in a worthy observance of this its distinguishing Ordinance. Plead, therefore,
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in the celebration of the Lord's Supper—you, of all men, have the greatest occasion—for the pardon of your sins, the acceptance of your persons, the sanctification of your hearts, the salvation of your souls. The young and old, the master and the servant, the rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant are, on this important subject, alike concerned. Let us, then, all, unanimously, “with one consent,” like the grateful children of an indulgent parent, or, like “the snow and hail which fulfil his word,” do what he enjoins, and let us, in this act of our obedience, “shew the Lord's death till he “come”—till he come the second time to judgment. It is not, believe me, in the power of genius, or within the sphere of learning to invent an excuse that will stand the test of examination. Let me, if ye fear God, if you value your souls, and nothing deserves valuing in comparison with them; let me, for God's sake, for the sake of your souls, let me prevail with you. What sight can there be so awfully pleasing, as an entire congregation; the highest and the lowest, the wealthy master, the dependent servant, the needy laborer, confessing at the altar of God, their joint dependence
upon

upon him, and praising him “for his ineffable love in the Redemption of the world?” This we believe to constitute the happiness of Heaven. Let us exhibit the resemblance of a heavenly society on earth. To use the symbolical language of Scripture; “Come, for all things will be ready.” It is your Saviour, your God, who gives you the invitation. “Oh! come then to the gates of his Altar with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; pay your vows,” your vows of obedience, “in the presence of all his people,” lest he be wroth with you, and give you up a prey to the error of your ways, and to the vicēs of your hearts; “but if ye seek him he will be found of you.” “Oh! consider this, ye that forget God,” ye, who seldom, or never, appear at the Altar, “lest he pluck you away and there be none to deliver you.”

S E R M O N VI.

HEBREWS XII. 2.*

Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

WHOSOEVER considers the great expence at which Salvation was purchased, the invaluable Sacrifice that was offered to appease an incensed Deity, contemplating the misery he may escape, and the happiness to which he is entitled, will, with a heart overflowing with thankfulness and admiration, exclaim, in the devout rapture of the Psalmist, "Lord! what
" is man that thou art thus mindful of him,
" and the Son of man that thou so regardest
" him!"

When our first parents had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and renounced the pro-

* Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament.

tection of infinite goodness; when, by their disingenuous revolt from the lenient command of their Creator, they had brought sin into the world, and communicated its effects to all their posterity, death; when the whole world was in wickedness, and alienated from God by wicked works; then it was, when there appeared no way to escape, that the Justice of Heaven required satisfaction, and a Sacrifice was demanded to free us from eternal death: Christ voluntarily became that Sacrifice for all the fallen rebellious race of Adam, and, by offering up himself immaculate—"without spot or blemish"—reconciled a world of sinners to his offended Father.

He died for us, that we, by his death, might have peace, and reconciliation with God; that, by embracing his Gospel, and answering the end of its promulgation, we might enjoy the felicity of Heaven, and sit with himself for ever, at the right hand of God. Amidst the temptations then of this world, the engagements of business, the allurements of pleasure, the prevalence of dissipation, what abundant reason, what persuasive motives have we to
"run with patience the race that is set before
" us,

“ us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame ?”

In order to convince us of the necessity, and excite us to the practice, of treading in our Master's steps, let every Christian, every one who wishes his Saviour not to have died for him in vain, every one, who is, this day, to commemorate his death in the holy Sacrament, apply to himself this awful consolation ; for me ‘ it was, that he lived, suffered, died : to expiate my sins he left the bosom of his Father : to reconcile me to God, he was betrayed, condemned, crucified.’

Reflections, like these, will animate us with vigor to embrace the glorious truths, with resolution to maintain the saving doctrines, with steadiness to practise the salutary precepts, of the Evangelical dispensation.

Of a Christian, something more is naturally, and justly, required, than mere morality. We are to raise our minds to the source of all good ; we are to consider ourselves the brethren of the Redeemer of the world, the sons and daughters, by adoption, of Him, by whom the heavens and

the earth were made. If we rest in a mere cultivation of the moral temper, we are like blossoms without fruit, and, by promising, so fairly, we shall but aggravate the disappointment.

“We are to walk,” in all respects, “worthy the vocation wherewith we are called.” “The times of” Jewish ignorance, and Gentile idolatry, “God,” in compassion, “winked at; but now,” in this land of light, illuminated by the glorious display of the Gospel, “he hath commanded”—and woe be unto those who disobey his commands!—“all men every where to repent.” The Gospel is given us “as a light to our feet, and a lantern to our paths,” to instruct us in the knowledge of our duty, and incite us to the practice of it. “If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin.” The Religion into which we are baptized, is eminently distinguished, by the purity of its doctrines, by the justness of its precepts, the greatness of its promises, the awfulness of its threats, the certainty of its rewards, the severity of its punishments.

Amiable and excellent Religion! which
makes

makes our greatest interest our duty, which raises, improves, ennobles our nature, qualifies us for the happiness of another life, and disposes our souls for the true enjoyment of it!

“What manner of persons, in all holy conversation and godliness,” this Religion requires “us to be,” how serene in our tempers, how exemplary in our conduct, how devout in our affections, as it ought to be the object of our most serious enquiry, so to be really such, will assuredly be an inexpressible support, and consolation, in our most trying circumstances.

To those who live under its influence, who are actuated by the spirit, and enlivened by the comfort, of Religion; to those who, this day, demonstrate their obedience to the commands, and assert their claim to the blessings, of Christianity, by partaking of its most distinguishing Ordinance; to you I appeal, whether the yoke of Religion is not to be preferred to the freedom of unrestrained licentiousness: whether there is not more solid satisfaction, in meditating on the stupendous means by which your salvation was accomplished, than in the indulgence of your desires, in the possession of wealth, or the distinctions of vanity?

To view the last scenes of the life of the Son of God, the proper subject of this day's meditation, let us approach, not with the confidence of children, but with the humility of servants; though he is "the Lord of all lords," whilst, in the character of a Son, in the assumption of the human nature, we acknowledge his Divinity, and adore his Godhead, we shall be instructed by his example.

When the life, which was commenced in indigence, and continued in obscurity, was to be closed with "the shedding of innocent blood;" that we might know for our comfort he "was such a high priest as, indeed, became us, was suitable to the state of such sinners, was touched with the feelings of our infirmities; his soul became exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:" He prayed, therefore, with the most profound humility, that he might, by the exertion of Omnipotence, escape the piercing misery which visibly awaited him; "Abba Father, all things are possible unto thee, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Lord of mercies! didst thou subject thyself to such alarming apprehensions for rebellious, for apostate man! Though thy life

had been never sullied by transgression, though thy conscience never felt the agonizing pangs of guilt, did thy soul, innocent as it was, shudder at the thoughts of what an iniquitous tribunal was about to inflict on thee !

To avert, or at least to suspend the bitterness of malice, the fury of zeal, the impetuosity of revenge, the holy Jesus, the great exemplar of all goodness, appeals to the innocency of his life, and the tenor of his behavior, and then, without an effort of resistance, or an indication of resentment, resigns himself with this mild acquiescence, “ this is your hour and the “ power of darkness.” How literally was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah ? “ Surely he “ hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, “ yet we did esteem him stricken” for his own offences, “ smitten of God, and afflicted” for his own sins. “ But he was wounded for our “ transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon “ him, and by his stripes we are healed. He “ was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he “ opened not his mouth ; he is brought as a “ lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep

“ before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth
“ not his mouth.”

His behavior before Pilate, amidst the insults of a desperate, and enraged populace, indicated the same meekness, and humility. When he was brought into the Judgment-hall, “ the chief Priests, and Scribes, vehemently accused him.” They proceeded farther; they suborned “ false witnesses; but,” as is usually the case, where perjury is to be the basis of success, “ their testimony agreed “ not together.” So great was the confusion, that nothing could be heard, but “ away with “ him, crucify him, crucify him.” Infatuated men! to prefer a malefactor to the eternal Son of God!

After having recourse to every expedient which malice could devise, or ingenuity supply, the august assembly who sat in judgment upon him, attempted, like the Herodians on another occasion, by an insidious question, to entangle “ him in his talk. Art thou the “ Christ?” His only reply was, “ thou sayest “ that I am.” And was that, Pilate, was that ground sufficient, on which thou mightest
crucify

crucify an innocent person! if thou must oblige the chief priests, would it not be enough "to scourge him and let him go?" Happy would it have been for thee, had thy conscience, which acknowledged him righteous, enforced by thy wife's admonition, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man," suggested to thee to oppose with boldness their clamors, and "to judge righteous judgment!" But, instead of yielding to her suggestions, he did not even restrain the insults of licentious fury; "they spit on him, covered his face, buffeted him, and cried, prophecy unto us "who it is that smote thee;" intending either to excite in him a spirit of impotent resentment, or, on the other hand, hoping, if he were indeed the Christ, that he would miraculously deliver himself out of their hands. Between two malefactors, men notorious for their atrocious deeds, they inhumanly crucified him, a death, of all others, the most painful and ignominious. There "behold, and see, if there be any sorrow, like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him!" Behold our high priest offering up the great sacrifice for the redemption of souls! pouring out his
own

own blood on the altar of his cross! and thereby making an atonement for the sins of the whole world! Behold thy Saviour in all the torments that malice can inflict, in all the agonies that nature can endure! Behold him pale and languid, bleeding on the cross; his head encircled with thorns, his hands pierced with nails, his feet all torn and mangled! When he had hung three hours, the sport of wantonness, the scoff of brutality, the victim of rage, unable any longer to bear such exquisite pain, he cried, "It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." In confirmation of what he had declared, that "he was the Son of God, there was darkness," though it was open day, "from the sixth to the ninth hour." The sun was ashamed, the moon refused her light: "The vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the earth did quake, the rocks rent, the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and appeared unto many." At such unheard-of prodigies, what amazement, what consternation must have fallen upon those who cried out, "crucify him, crucify him?" What fear
and

and trembling must have seized their hearts, when the confession was extorted from them; “truly this was the Son of God?”

What use shall we make of this instructive lesson? ‘Assured, Lord, of thy goodness, and
‘awed by thy majesty, we dedicate our lives
‘to thee. We are henceforward what thy
‘holy religion requires, and our own hearts
‘approve. We are willing to be, to do, to
‘suffer, whatever, in thy wisdom, thou shalt
‘ordain. What will promote thy glory, the
‘good of men, the salvation of our souls, That,
‘we embrace with cheerfulness, and pursue
‘with ardor. We approach thy table, Lord,
‘with the deepest humility, penetrated with
‘a sense of our unworthiness, and worthy
‘only through the merits of thy Blessed Son.
‘May the bread which came down from hea-
‘ven, “the body of our Lord Jesus Christ,”
‘nourish our souls unto eternal life, and may
‘the cup of the new covenant, the blood of
‘Jesus, refresh us with its vivifying powers!
‘May our conduct testify the conversion of
‘our hearts, and exhibit the practice of those
‘virtues of which the life of our Redeemer
‘was

‘ was composed here on earth, and which are
‘ the best of all oblations that are offered
‘ him now he is enthroned above all height !
‘ As thou hast cleansed us, Blessed Jesus, of the
‘ guilt derived from our first parents, do thou
‘ graciously be pleased to present us spotless,
‘ cloathed in thy righteousness only, to God
‘ the Lord and maker of all. May our names,
‘ through thy irresistible intercession with the
‘ Father, “ be written in the book of life,”
‘ that, “ when we have run the race set before
‘ us, and finished our course,” we may be
‘ blessed, for ever blessed, with the light of thy
‘ countenance !’

SERMON VII.

TITUS II. 8, LAST PART.

—Having no evil thing to say of you.

IT is peculiar to the Christian Religion, to require of all who profess it, the practice of every virtue, and the cultivation of every grace, both civil, social, moral, and religious. It enjoins the greatest care and circumspection, lest others should be infected by the contagion, or influenced by the prevalence, of bad example. And to preserve that care and circumspection alive in the mind, it represents us as living, continually, under the Providence, and accountable to the Justice, of Almighty God. That the yoke of Christianity, at the same time, might be easy, and the burden of Religion light, all its Ordinances are calculated to inspire us with ardent hope, and invigorate us with invincible perseverance. But there is one distinguishing Ordinance, the celebration of the Holy Sacrament, which has a powerful tendency to make us take such heed unto our ways that “no evil thing may, justly, be said
“ of

“of us.” And as we have so lately appeared at the Altar of God to renew our vows, and proclaim our obedience, let me beg your serious attention, whilst I endeavor to impress upon our minds the many and weighty obligations we are all of us under, to live, with such vigilant, and pious caution, that “no evil thing may, in future, be said of us.”

It was, indeed, with inconceivable satisfaction, I perceived “the willing mind,” which so evidently appeared amongst you, to declare your conviction of the truth, and express your hopes, in the promises, of the Gospel, by assembling, almost all, “with one consent,” around the holy Altar. Imagination cannot form an earthly scene more pleasing, than this house of God then exhibited. Though you may not all be possessed of the goods of fortune, or the acquisitions of knowledge, there are blessings in reserve for you, I trust, greater in value, than the empire of this world—“to sit “at the right hand, and at the left hand,” of your Redeemer, and your God. However mean and contemptible we may some of us appear, through the obscurity of our situation, poverty of circumstances, or deplorable ignorance, if

“we

“ we discharge our duty in the state of life
“ unto which it hath pleased God severally to
“ call us,” the time may be not far distant,
when the noble, the wealthy, and the learned,
lamenting the want of that knowlege, which
would have made them wise unto salvation,
may exclaim, with indignant disappointment,
“ we fools counted their lives madness, and
“ their end to be without honor ; but how are
“ they numbered amongst the children of God,
“ and their lot is amongst the saints !” But
then we are to consider, that it is not the mere
act of receiving the Sacrament which will re-
commend us to mercy, and entitle us to reward.

To strengthen our resolutions, to animate
our endeavors, and confirm our faith, let us re-
flect upon the declarations, and the promises
we made, before we approached the sacred
Altar. “ That we had truly and earnestly re-
“ pented of our sins, that we were in love and
“ charity with our neighbors, and that we in-
“ tended to lead a new life,” we declared in
the most solemn manner, in which creatures
could express themselves to their Creator. If
we relapse into our former habits, if the drunk-
ard again drown his faculties in intemperance,
if the swearer continue to utter his shocking
impre-

imprecations, if the unjust persist in his arts of deceit, if the slanderer restrain not his tongue from evil-speaking, we may say of each what Peter said to Ananias, "thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." "Did we not acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we, from time to time, had committed against the Divine Majesty of Heaven? Did we not declare them to be grievous unto us, and the burden of them to be intolerable?"—And can we wish to obliterate the remembrance of them, and render their burden lighter, and easier to be born, when we are repeating the same sins, and the same provocations? The necessity of an uniformly pious life does not, it is true, accord with the unaccountable ideas many people entertain concerning the Sacrament—that it is necessary it should be received at the three festivals, and other stated seasons, *as a good old custom that ought not to be broken.* No! let no man ever pollute the sacred bread and wine, with his unhallowed lips, who does not mean, henceforth, to become *a better man*—who does not mean, henceforth, to regulate his conduct by the precepts of the Gospel, and to practise every virtue it enjoins, and renounce every vice
it

it forbids: if he communicates from any other principle, if he does not repent of his sins, and amend his life, “ he is guilty of the body and “ blood of Christ our Saviour—he eats and “ drinks, dreadful denunciation ! his own con- “ demnation. Judge, therefore, yourselves, “ my brethren, that ye be not judged of the “ Lord.” Beseech Almighty God to “ create “ a clean heart, and renew a right spirit, with- “ in you,” to enable you to fulfil your pro- mises, and keep your vows. “ We offer and “ present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our “ souls, and bodies”—such was the language of our lips, and of our hearts, I trust,—“ to be “ a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto “ thee, humbly beseeching thee, that all we, “ who are partakers of this holy communion, “ may be filled with thy Grace, and heavenly “ benediction.” After having entered into so solemn an engagement, will you violate it through wantonness, or trample on it with contempt ; especially when you consider, that by so doing, you are “ provoking, most justly, “ God’s wrath and indignation against you ?” It behoves us, indeed, Christians, “ who desire “ to obtain, by the merits and death of Jesus

H

“ Christ,

“ Christ, and through faith in his blood, forgiveness of our sins, and all other benefits of “ his passion,” to act with peculiar caution, that “ no evil thing may be said of us.” Let every master of a family set an example to his household, “ shewing himself a pattern of good “ works,” by his piety, his regularity, his equity, and justice, in all his dealings and transactions: let him observe the Lord’s Day with the seriousness it demands, both attending public worship himself, and requiring his children, and servants, to do the same: let him on that day, more especially, acquaint himself with the revealed will of God, and instruct his family in the most useful of all learning, “ the “ knowlege of God unto salvation:” and, let him take care, that he does not exhort to virtues he neglects to practise, or find fault with the commission of vices to which he is himself addicted: let him shew, in his whole behavior, what constitutes a *good man*: whatever may be the prevalence of his disposition, and turn of mind, whether excessive passion, gloomy fullness, sordid avarice, whatever “ be the “ sin which easily besets him,” let him guard strictly against it: let him master the unruly inclination

inclination which may have made him a trouble, or a terror, to his family, unhappy in himself, and offensive to others: let him behave to his superiors with respect, to his equals with cheerfulness, to his inferiors with condescension: he will then be, what every one ought to be, a good man, and a true Christian: he will be instanced as a man who practises what he professes: his life will be an example to the good, and a reproof to the wicked: Religion will, through his conduct, suffer no diminution of excellence, severity of censure, or coldness of disdain: but, on the contrary, by producing in him such tranquility of mind, and simplicity of manners, will be recommended to the notice and observance of those, who had all along thought, "there was no beauty in it, that they should desire it."

Let servants, and those whose lot it is to be in the lower stations of life, consider well the obligations they laid themselves under, by celebrating the blessed Sacrament. "Exhort servants," says the Apostle, in the words following the text, by which he means all who depend on others for their subsistence, "to be obedient unto their own masters, and to

“ please them well in all things, not answering
“ again,” not rudely nor impertinently provok-
ing them ; “ not purloining,” not wronging
them of any thing, however safely they may
do it; “ but shewing all good fidelity,” behav-
ing themselves with scrupulous honesty, and
watchful care, that, by this uniformity of con-
duct, “ they may adorn the doctrine of God
“ our Saviour in all things :” let them consider,
were they in the situations of those to whom
they are indebted for their bread, what they
would naturally require of the people they em-
ployed : let them often reflect, that it is in
their power to occasion many vexatious disap-
pointments by perverseness, negligence, and
thoughtlessness : let them, as they may not
have had the advantages of education, endeavor
to restrain their tempers, and humanize their
minds : let them be resigned to their humble
lot, not murmuring, not repining, but “ let
“ them patiently tarry the Lord’s leisure :” let
them continually offer up their prayers to Al-
mighty God to endow them with those virtues
which become their station ; and let them
praise his name, that their condition is no worse.
Let the Sacrament produce these blessed, these
evangelical

evangelical effects—the effects it naturally ought to produce—and every master, whatever may be his own sentiments, or his own conduct, will devoutly wish for religious servants, and for every one he employs, in whatever capacity, to be religious.

And here, what shall I say, how shall I address myself to those, who refuse every invitation to receive the holy Sacrament? Say, after ye had departed from this house, dedicated to God, when you considered what blessings the people of **G**od were receiving, whom you had left behind, “did not your hearts burn within you?” When you considered the obligations you are under, out of gratitude to your Redeemer, out of regard to yourselves, to receive the blessed Sacrament, did you look on this act of careless negligence, or rather, of desperate defiance, without indignation, and without abhorrence? Did you think, after Jesus Christ had sent you an affectionate invitation, after he had given you a peremptory command, to eat and drink at his own table, you were justifiable in not accepting his invitation, in not paying obedience to his command? It is the invita-

tion of him, who, to reconcile you to God, shed his blood on the cross—it is the command of him, “who is able to destroy both “body and soul in hell.” For the neglect of this duty, no man’s conscience will, I believe, afford consolation: you may hear its remonstrances, at present, without concern; but when death draws nigh to execute his commission, you will then be overwhelmed with its reproaches, and distracted with its terrors. The season of death is awful, but death is only the prelude to judgment. At the bar of judgment your excuses are to be weighed in an even balance, and, you are conscious, “they will be “found light.” Were you enjoined the performance of certain duties by a human Legislature, and, in consequence of your neglect, were summoned before a court of judicature, if you could offer no stronger reasons in your justification, than you will be able to assign for refusing to receive the Sacrament, however subtilty might invent, ingenuity evade, or eloquence adorn, be your mode of trial what it might, you would, unquestionably, be pronounced guilty. And whether corporal punishment, or fine or imprisonment, or death,

in

in all its aggravation of horrors, is more to be dreaded than the irrevocable sentence—"De-part from me ye cursed into everlasting fire"—be yourselves the judges—but judge, for God's sake, before it be too late!

Suffer me, in conclusion, again to request those who received the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, to give all diligence to adorn their Christian profession. If you pretend to "set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," let it be your constant care to manifest a peaceable demeanor, upright conduct, and an holy life. If you run into the same excess of riot with other men, you furnish the enemies of Religion with the arms of truth, and they will not fail to wield them to advantage, both against you, and your high calling. But, revolve only in your mind the vows of obedience you made at the Altar, and you will preserve alive, in your breasts, the spirit of piety, which conducted you thither; and, "as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so will your souls long to eat again of the bread which came down from heaven. and to drink again of the fountain of life, which
H : " cleanseth

“cleanseth from all sin. Be afraid of being “overtaken” in the commission of any, the least, sin: for you would not only endanger your own souls, but cast a shameful reproach, an indelible stain, on that holy Religion, the truth of which Jesus Christ sealed with “his “most precious blood.” But you, who openly enlisted under the banners of Christ; you, who acknowledged him to be “the captain “of your salvation,” will never, I pray God, basely desert his standard. Anxious to have a claim to that state, “where the wicked “cease from troubling, and where the weary “are at rest,” as you have begun, continue, persevere unto the end, to walk in the path of duty; distinguish yourselves by the practice of every moral virtue, and the observance of every religious precept; rely with unshaken firmness, on the mercy of God, through the all-sufficient merits of your Redeemer, and you will assuredly obtain, without the chagrin of disappointment, and the risque of loss, the end of your cares, and the object of your hopes, salvation.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

*As for me and my house we will serve the
Lord.*

THE uncaſineſſes which are every day occaſioned in families, eſpecially in thoſe wherein the worſhip of God is neglected, either through the indifcretion, or profligacy, of the people who compoſe them, are often attended with ſuch inconvenience, diſgrace, and miſfortune, as to render every father and every maſter ſolicitous, one would think, to guard againſt whatever might endanger their innocence, or deſtroy their peace. If a child has ſtepped into the path of folly or vice, each individual participates the calamity; each, as he paſſes along, perceives the finger of ſcorn pointing towards him, or hears the tongue of malevolence inſulting his diſtreſs. If a ſervant has been betrayed by the artful, or ſeduced by the profligate into ſhame, and poverty,

poverty, and ruin; can those, under whose protection such servant lived, be unmoved with the misfortune? The unhappy being, whom perhaps they can no longer keep under their roof, may be without parents, without friends, without money, and, by one unfortunate step, may be reduced from a state of comfort, to all the poignancy of disgrace, the misery of want, or the severity of punishment—can the master of the family, in such a case, exculpate himself? It appears from observation, and is confirmed by Scripture, that there is no effectual way of preserving innocence, and engaging fidelity, but by instilling principles of piety and religion: “make the tree good, and its fruit will be good.” Would you then communicate religious principles? Assemble your family regularly to worship God. Should the blessing of God this day so far accompany the word as to prevail with you to adopt the resolution, and follow the example, of the author of my text, idleness, intemperance, dishonesty, profligacy, will, it may be hoped, progressively quit your habitations, and, in their stead, industry, sobriety, integrity, Religion, take up their abode with you.

It

It is intended, in this discourse, to shew the necessity, and advantages, of family worship; and then, earnestly to exhort you, to the regular observance of it.

I. "In God, we live and move, and have our being." The breath we draw, the food we eat, are the blessings of his Providence, and the overflowings of his goodness. Is it not incumbent on us then, to acknowledge our dependence, to proclaim his uncontrollable power, and inexhaustible mercy? To act otherwise, is to live as though we were independent of him.

When we consider our relation to God, as members of a family, the obligation to join in worshipping him becomes still greater. For if one member of a family suffer, all the members suffer, in some sort, with him. Their comfort and welfare are, in a certain degree, inseparable. And is not this consideration a strong and prevailing call upon every head of a family, to join with his household, in deprecating the displeasure, and supplicating the favor, of God? Does not every one, before he retires at night to rest, feel the indispensable necessity of beseeching God "to deliver him,
" and

“ and all his house, from lightning and tempest, from murder, and from sudden death ?”

But an obligation to the serious, and devout observance of family worship, arises from the profession of Christianity. Religion is such a blessing to mankind, it is incumbent on us to extend the knowledge, and enforce the practice of it, as far, and as powerfully, as we are able.

Now let any man, whose family consists chiefly of persons uneducated, consider how many amongst them live, without a sense of God and Religion, and he must be hard hearted indeed, if he refuse to “ make them,” when it is in his power, “ wise unto salvation.” If he thinks their souls worth saving, he will join with them in fervent prayers to God. To instruct their servants, and to be solicitous for their eternal welfare, may appear to some people unnecessary, perhaps, unbecoming their situation, and rank in life. But situation and rank are soon to cease. When we stand at the dread Tribunal, to behold one of our family, who, through our want of religious instruction, and domestic worship, has incurred the displeasure of God. will rack us with all the
 keenness

keenness of reproach, and the torture of condemnation.

There is another argument I would urge to recommend the necessity of family prayer, and it will not, I trust, be urged to considerate, and well-meaning, people in vain. The excellent institution of Sunday Schools, now established in several parts of this kingdom, whose end is to bring up the rising generation in the true faith, and fear of God, will be less useful, it is to be feared, by the general ignorance, and predominant profligacy, of the parents. The Clergy, the Magistrates, and those who employ the poor will, we trust in God, be enabled to convince them by arguments, to persuade them by entreaties, to engage them by kindnesses, to give their children the blessings that institution so humanely, and so religiously, offers. But from the manner in which the parents, and those who may soon become parents, are brought up; from their utter ignorance of the truths of Christianity, and the total want of principle which discovers itself in the conduct of a great part of the lower class of mankind, there is much reason to apprehend, that, in the present generation, so much good will
not

not be derived from such excellent establishments, as we are sanguine enough to expect. Would every master of a family, therefore, who is a well-wisher to them, give them his support, by religiously worshipping God with all his domestics, in his own house; it might, without presumption, be supposed, that the several members of his family would be actuated, in some measure, by religious principles; and that, when they had children of their own, they would bring them up with more decency, and piety, than if they had never lived in a house which worshipped God.—Such are the arguments I would urge to prevail with you to introduce family prayer into your houses.

II. I now proceed to shew the advantages resulting from the practice.

And the first I shall mention is, that it is the natural tendency of prayer, to render a family happy. For if the happiness of a family consist in each person's behaving with propriety, in his sphere of life; in cheerfully undertaking, and faithfully discharging, those duties which his station requires; in manifesting a quiet temper, tractable disposition, and
complacent

complacent mind, where are those amiable qualities so likely to be found as “in the dwellings of the righteous?” Can it be supposed, that such grievous complaints would be made of our servants, and domestics, of their want of attachment, and of fidelity, if we ourselves were careful to assemble them daily, in the more immediate presence of God Almighty? Every head of a family, who is regular in the discharge of domestic worship, takes the most likely means to have his business punctually done, to render his servants strictly honest, and to persuade them to be truly religious. For what can have so strong a tendency to inspire the drunkard, the swearer, the thief, the liar with an abhorrence of his vices, as to condemn him every night by his own prayers?

Now if family prayer be productive of such blessings, both temporal and spiritual, will not every one be solicitous to entail them upon his own family? Let him nourish then in himself, let him cultivate in others, religious affections. When he considers to what evils his children may be exposed, when they go out into the world, what innumerable snares will be laid in their way, will he not wish to have this consolation,

folation, that he has united with them his supplications to the throne of Grace, that the “ Almighty would never leave them, nor forsake them ?” But what is this life, in comparison of eternity ? What is their success here, to their happiness hereafter ? Now, can there be any thing so extremely absurd, so inconceivably inconsistent, as the acquainting our children that, on God we depend for happiness, and never joining with them to beg it of him ? Can they believe we are above all things desirous, that they should partake of “ the bliss “ at God’s right hand,” when we are never importunate with God to obtain it for them ? And with what face can we exhort them to worship God, if, either in the congregation, in our closet, or our family, we neglect worshipping him ourselves ? By offering up our prayers every day with our children, a real sense of God and religion will be impressed on their hearts ; and, happy parents, and thrice happy children ! “ they will grow in grace, and in “ the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus “ Christ ;” they will resemble, in their early days, those trees, which, in warmer climes, produce at once, both blossoms and fruit ; they will

practised the duty of family prayer, become exemplary in his conduct; he would be anxious for both the present, and the future welfare of his children; and would cultivate in his own mind all those qualities and dispositions he wishes to be exercised towards himself. For *he* would be ashamed of giving way to intemperance, who had afterwards to supplicate God to preserve him from it: *he* could not be detained, in loose and idle company, till his family had retired to rest, whose fixed and unalterable purpose it was, to join with them in worshipping God.

It may seem strange, that any objections should be made to a duty, in itself so reasonable; in its effects so beneficial; suggested by nature, enforced by revealed religion: objections, however, to the utter disgrace, I pray God it may not be, to the final condemnation, of Christians, are frequently urged. I have only time to take notice of one. It is said, that, where families are large, little good is derived from the celebration of domestic worship; that the family, almost individually, attend it with reluctance; and, that they do not consider, for what end they are called together.

gether. This objection to family prayer becomes the strongest argument, for the necessity of it. The man, who has such an household, cannot too soon, nor too earnestly, strive to reclaim them. Let him assemble them, not as he would confine a flock of sheep in a fold; but let him tell them he laments, that he has lived so long in the neglect of this important duty; that he will observe it during the remainder of his life; that the design of it is to give glory to God; to beg his blessing and protection, and to render both himself, and those committed to his care, happy to all eternity. This communication will be received, though not perhaps by all, yet certainly by some, with satisfaction, and pleasure. And what time is so proper, to communicate such intentions, as the evening of this day, when, if your children and domestics are now, as they ought to be, at church, their minds will be prepared for it?

III. I will beg leave to detain you a little longer, whilst I earnestly, I pray God I may effectually, exhort you, to the regular observance of this indispensable service.

It is a just reproach to the members of the established Church, that the duty, I am now

recommending, is more neglected by us than, I believe, by any other communion of Christians. And the reproach is aggravated, by considering that those “who go out from us,” when they join themselves to any other congregation, generally establish this duty in their families. Such of us as live in the neglect of it, may be said “to have not the knowledge of “God.” We live in the profession of the true Religion: the source is pure; the channels through which its refreshing streams are conveyed, are free, and unmixed; but they fall upon a soil, too often, alas! barren of improvement. Yet we do not, surely, make a profession of Religion by accident: we are initiated into it, not by custom, I trust, but by piety; we have embraced it, not by chance, I hope, but from principle. I exhort you, therefore, my brethren, in the name of God, to let your practice be correspondent to your profession. Are we members of a pure, and reformed, Church? Are we desirous of making our Religion productive of immortal happiness? Let us not then be so deceived, as to suppose that we can be saved, without a vital spirit of piety. And in whatever dwellings that vital spirit resides,

resides, there “ will be heard the voice of joy
“ and salvation.” Is the loving kindness of
God the theme of your thanksgivings; is his
mercy the subject of your supplications, in your
family? “ you are not far,” it may be pre-
sumed, “ from the kingdom of God.” But
you who live in the neglect of this duty; who
receive so many mercies, and blessings, from
the God of all goodness, without joining your
acknowledgements with those who partake of
them; shall I congratulate you on the security
of your situation? No! It is my duty to ex-
hort you, and it is your interest to attend to
the exhortation, “ to flee from the wrath to
“ come.” Is prayer in your family, a duty
you owe to God? And dare you live in the
neglect of that duty? Look around you; look
into the history of mankind; and see “ whe-
“ ther any hath hardened himself against God
“ and prospered?” And is it not hardening
yourselves against God, if, when ye are con-
vinced by reason, admonished by conscience,
and commanded by Revelation to join in de-
vout supplications, with your whole house, in
the worship of God, ye are either diverted by
amusements, or withheld by disinclination,

from the discharge of this reasonable, this important, this indispensable, service? Look forward to the awful period when you shall be struck by the hand of death; when you shall lie upon the bed from which you must arise by borrowed strength; and let me appeal to your hearts, whether you do not think the pangs of separation from your family would be rendered less violent, by the reflection of having uniformly, and devoutly, discharged the duty I am now recommending? Had God, in his anger, refused to hear your prayers; had he commanded you not to appear before the throne of Grace; though you might be surrounded with abundance; though you lived in the vigor of health; though you were beloved by your family, idolized by your friends, revered by the world; all these reflections, soothing as they are, “would avail you nothing;” you would envy the situation of those who daily “go to their work and to their labor “until the evening,” if he “who heareth “prayer,” accepted *their* petitions, and granted *their* requests. If then either fear can awaken, or interest can engage you, to begin this necessary duty; if affection for your families, if the
dread

dread of God's displeasure, if the hopes of immortal happiness impress your minds ; let me prevail with every master of a family here present, to consecrate his house *this very night* to God, to erect in it an Altar unto God, and to offer upon it " the sacrifice of praise and " thanksgiving. " Let me have the satisfaction, my brethren, of knowing that the Gospel has not this day, been preached unto you in vain. This night, and every succeeding one, assemble your families to beg the blessings of God, to acknowledge your sense of his mercies, and to beseech him, " that this life ended, " you may dwell with him in the life everlasting."

S E R M O N IX.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

IT pleased the All-wise Creator, after man had lost his innocency, that his bread should be earned by labor, and his wealth acquired by solicitude. It was ordered, likewise, by All-seeing wisdom, that disappointment should frequently accompany his toil, and frustrate his intentions; that uncertainty in the possession, and insecurity in the enjoyment should always await, with forbidding aspect, and discouraging intimations, not only the practice of fraud, but the dealings of integrity; teaching us hereby, that we should not be too anxiously careful, about many things in this life; but that we should have a principal regard to "the one thing needful," and exert our
every

every effort, to secure “that good part which shall not be taken away from us.”

But uncertainty and disappointment are not our only discouragements: be our success what it may, it is limited to a very short period: “the dust of which we are made returns to dust, and the spirit to God who gave it.” The soul hath originally impressed upon it the idea, that it is accountable to a Supreme Being for what it does in the body, and hath received—we Christians at least have received—a clear and an express declaration from God, that it shall be everlastingly rewarded or punished, together with the body, for what is done in this life, either with exquisite felicity, or unutterable torments.

We will consider what the soul of man is; its immense value; and its dreadful loss; and then what a man will be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.

First, The soul of man is that spiritual, and invisible part, created by God, and is capable of existing, when separate from the body. “God made man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul.” The soul then is immaterial. It was not made of matter,

ter, of the dust of the earth, as the body was, but by the breath of God. It has an immediate divine original, and a near resemblance to the purity, and spirituality, of the Divine Essence.

So that our souls, deriving their originality from the Divinity itself, are of an unperishable nature. Death is only a translation of the soul from its earthly tabernacle, a passage, through the vale of mortality, to the land of duration.

Secondly, When the whole human race, through the transgression of our first parents, lay under the sentence of condemnation, the Almighty was pleased to restore us to his favor, by assuming, in the person of Jesus Christ, the human nature. It appeared to Almighty wisdom, that the only expedient of saving man, was to become man himself. “For us men, “and for our salvation, he humbled himself “and became obedient unto death, even the “death of the cross.”

Thirdly, If then we could not be restored to the favor of God without this mighty effort of Omnipotence, our own reason, even if the Scriptures were silent, would suggest to us, that unless our condition had been deplorable, God
would

would not have put himself to such an expence of mercy. He wrought this stupendous miracle, to deliver us from eternal death, to rescue us from the power of Satan, and the torments of hell. And such is the wisdom of God, that, if we do not entitle ourselves to a state of happiness, “there remains only a fearful looking “for of judgment;” if we do not secure the felicity of heaven, we cannot escape the miseries of hell. Though we may be so infatuated with folly, so blinded by iniquity, as to reject God’s offer of mercy, yet we are not able to annihilate our souls: we may deprive them of immortal life, but then we plunge them into eternal misery: they cannot cease to be, but they will become miserable—which is infinitely worse than not to be at all.

Let us now consider what a man will be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.

Whatever be the object of our wishes, much time, and thought, and labor, are generally requisite, before we can attain it. If we covet wealth, we must rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness; our days will be consumed in toil, our nights passed in solicitude,
our

our minds harassed with cares, and I may add, I fear, our consciences distracted sometimes with the reflection, that, to procure it, we have imposed on the ignorant, trampled on the weak, defrauded the unwary. All this anxiety is suffered, and guilt incurred, and we have the mortification, not infrequently, to fail in our attempts; and all we obtain are an untimely grave, a reproachful memory, and an early damnation.

But allowing that we are not disappointed in our efforts; that every thing we do, succeeds abundantly beyond our expectations; and that, in a very little time, we are in possession of whatever our most sanguine wishes could desire—still we are uncertain how long we shall be permitted to possess it: and when we draw near our end, and cast up our accounts, we find nothing remaining but the piercing reflection, it may be, “of wrong and robbery,” and the dreadful expectation of God’s eternal displeasure. Thus is trouble undergone, our innocence forfeited, God’s vengeance brought upon us, through the expectation of gaining—not the whole world—not the principal, nay scarce the most inconsiderable, part—nothing more than what we call a competency—what will place us
above

above want, or secure us in independence—and the very object for which we are so earnestly striving, is attended with disappointment sometimes in the pursuit, with anxiety often in the enjoyment, with uncertainty always in the possession. What will it profit us, if we gain what we so earnestly desire, but by such means that we lose our souls? Or, if we are so earnest to gain it, that we neglect to discharge the duties of a Christian, and by preferring the goods of this world, to the salvation of the next, leave ourselves no hopes in the Divine mercy—what will it profit us?

If we could grasp whatever of both wealth, honor, and power, our imaginations can conceive, as we could enjoy them only during the term of our lives; and as we could not extend the term, a moment beyond its appointed limits; as we could not be secure from the attacks of sickness, nor the violence of pain, from the pangs of sorrow, nor the wounds of disappointment, even this state, however enviable, loses much of its value. To which we may add, that if, in the acquisition of wealth, the prosecution of honor, the attainment of power, the laws of God or man be violated,
we

we forfeit our immortal happiness. For a small share of the glories of this world, we make a bargain with the devil, to resign all pretensions to those of the next; the very worst bargain, that ever entered into the heart of man to make. Thus for a moment of time, we make an exchange, for an eternity of duration. We content ourselves with the chance of fugitive pleasures, for which we sacrifice the blessings of immortality. We pursue the object of our desires, under the consciousness that we are offending God, and “treasuring up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath.” All our time, our thoughts, and affections are devoted to the attainment of our wishes. And whether we shall lose our souls by their attainment, as it does not employ our consideration, so it does not interrupt our pursuits. But what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Let us suppose that we are not, in the end, disappointed—that fortune smiles propitious on our labors—and that we arrive at, what we esteem, the summit of happiness. Now if that, which constitutes our happiness, be acquired by means repugnant to human, and condemned by Divine, laws, we know that,

that, after our departure out of this life, which must be soon, we are to be judged by a Being, who, “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” that, as we have transgressed his laws which he hath given us as the rule of our conduct, and hath most pathetically urged us to a frequent perusal of them, the wealth we have acquired, the honor we have obtained, the power we have possessed, instead of being our defence, “will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us.” But what are acquisitions, when they are incompatible with God’s commandments? When, by the manner in which we have obtained them, we provoke his displeasure? When, against oppression, deceit, injustice, profaneness, the sentence, which “will make both the ears of those that hear it to tingle,” will be denounced, “go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?” When such a punishment awaits those, who for this world’s goods, provoke God’s wrath against them, shall we not despise all the profits, the honors, the pleasures of the world, nay the whole world itself?

What we would give in exchange for our
souls,

fouls, may be best understood, by considering of what value we should esteem riches and pleasures, if we knew that, after we had enjoyed them for a given time, as a day, a week, or a month, we must resign them and our life together. Ask the man who is in excruciating torture, whether, to receive riches and honors during the remaining part of his life, he would be content to have his torture lengthened for a year, nay for half the period? As the Apostle “esteemed all things but dross for the excellency of the knowlege of Christ Jesus his Lord”—so to obtain ease and relief, he would willingly sacrifice all that this world can give. What folly, what madness is it then, either by laying up treasures unjustly acquired—or, if they are not gotten by injustice, yet so alienate our minds from God, that we live in the continued neglect of our christian duty—what folly, what madness is it to endanger our souls—to leave ourselves without hopes in his mercy—to deprive ourselves of every other expectation, than to “dwell for ever in the devouring fire—than to dwell,” as the Prophet awfully expresses it, “in everlasting burnings?”

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I will

I will detain you a little longer, whilst I make an application from what has been said.

To make no provision against hereafter, to live totally regardless of what will become of our souls, is so generally prevalent, one might almost suppose we are convinced, that it is not possible our souls can be lost. What an insult is such conduct, to the wisdom of God? We undervalue a soul, which, he who created, and who would not willingly have lost, accounted a fit purchase to be made by the passion, and death, of the eternal Son of God. And yet we know that, after the separation of soul and body, there remains no more death but this second death, whose duration is eternal. Before we are subject to his empire, let us make an estimate of what we may gain, or lose; let us cast up the minutes, and years, and ages of eternity; let us consider what it is to live “in the blackness of darkness, to be “tormented in the fire that never goes out,” during the long, long period of for ever and ever? To be stript of all we esteem happiness here—to find nothing that can make us happy, but what we have obstinately refused, what we have no right to, and what we must never have;

have; to see such loss, and to think on it for ever, without any thing to amuse, or engage our thoughts, and to be suffering, without the smallest interval, the most exquisite punishment; I cannot find words strong enough to impress the awful thought upon your hearts. Did the Almighty speak to us in a language he has sometimes addressed to his servants, “set thine house in order, for thou shalt die “and not live,” with what consternation should we receive the message? Death and Judgment, a provoked Judge and a miserable Eternity, would then be, not as they sometimes are, subjects of sport, but reflections of terror. The little time we had remaining would be spent in fervent prayer, in deprecating the vengeance, and supplicating the mercy, of God. Let us bring the awful subject still nearer; let us suppose that we, who are here assembled, are the only people upon earth; that this temple is the seat of Judgment; that this day, I tremble whilst I make the supposition! is the great day, “in which God will judge the “world in righteousness;” that this is the last hour of our lives, and the consummation of all things; that the heavens are opening over

our heads, and that Jesus Christ is appearing in all his majesty, with Angels and Archangels—that the last trumpet is now giving the alarming summons; and that we are attending to receive either the sentence of approbation, or the doom of judgment: on what side should we each of us be placed? on the right hand, or on the left? amongst the sheep, or the goats? How many of us would be called to join the choir of heaven? How many condemned to weeping and wailing in hell? How many would cry, “come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?” How many more, I fear, would “call on the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them?” Represent frequently to yourselves this awful, this interesting scene, and you will feel the force of our Saviour’s question—“What is a man profited “if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his “own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

‘ Lord of heaven and earth, impress on
 ‘ our minds the awful scene, at which we are
 ‘ not to be unconcerned spectators. And grant,
 ‘ we beseech thee, gracious God, when the vi-
 ‘ vifying call of the last, most awful, solemnity,
 ‘ shall

‘ shall awaken us from the sleep of death ;
‘ when the trumpet of the Archangel shall
‘ summon the quick and dead of every nation,
‘ and age, and tongue, to give account of them-
‘ selves to God ; when we shall be caught up
‘ in the air, and placed before the Throne,
‘ that tremendous Throne, from which our
‘ final sentence will be pronounced, the voice
‘ of mercy, the gracious voice, which, in ago-
‘ nies unutterable, prayed for the authors of
‘ them, may acquit, approve, reward us with
‘ the bliss for which at thy right hand he is
‘ now interceding, that where he is there we
‘ may be also !’

S E R M O N X.

EZEKIEL, XXXIII. II.

As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: for why will ye die?

THAT the means of Salvation God has kindly put into our hands, frequently become, through our guilty inattention, the instruments of ruin; that the weapons, by which we are to withstand the enemies of our souls, are often, with malicious eagerness, turned against ourselves, and plunged, with deadly force, into our own bosoms, is a truth sanctioned by observation, and confirmed by experience. We believe Religion to be true, and the recompence of it, certain; and if we die in our sins, that we shall utterly perish: but we suppress the bitterness of the reflection,

by designing to repent “before we go hence;” so that the intention of repentance, strange as it may seem, encourages us in our sins: instead of forsaking them in heart and life, we continue in them without apprehension, and become hardened by habit; we suffer the imaginary privilege of a future repentance to supersede the present necessity of exemplary behavior, and devout affections, and thereby to invalidate the power of Religion, and the influences of Grace.

Impenitence, alas! suggests so many treacherous arguments for continuing in sin, that, though it is easy to obviate them, they generally take such firm hold of the mind, as to render it deaf to the voice of reason, and impregnable against the strength of Revelation. The grand enemy of our souls baits his deceitful hooks, with the lure of pleasure, and mingles his deadly potions, with the oblivion of remorse. We may indulge ourselves in sin, he insinuates, with security; we may repent hereafter, and then will satisfaction be made to God’s justice: when the appetite is satiated with gratification, and the passions are weakened by excess, self-denial will have lost
its

its mortifications, and repentance be deprived of its severity.

Such is the snare in which the thoughtless, and the profligate, are entangled! The time of repentance, God knows, seldom comes; it is scarce thought of, till it is too late; till sickness seizes, or death arrests us. Repentance consists in a change of disposition, and in amendment of life; and what change can be wrought, when we are enfeebled with a lingering disorder, or distracted with racking pain? what amendment can take place, when the term of life is expiring, and the season of death is at hand?

That a man may repent on a deathbed is, perhaps, true in itself, but, unquestionably, dangerous in its consequences. The Scriptures assure us for our comfort, that, “when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.” And is this to encourage us to delay our repentance? Because some were called at the eleventh hour, shall we presumptuously extend that instance to ourselves? God no sooner called, than they answered,

answered, saying with Samuel, “ speak, Lord, “ for thy servant heareth.” How often, on the contrary, hath he called us by the gracious whispers of his Spirit ; how often hath he commanded us, by the awful threatenings of his Justice, “ to repent and turn to him ?” He designed the privilege of repentance to be the means of bringing us to himself ; and shall we perversely frustrate his intention, by making it the means of alienating us the more from him ?

But the danger of delaying our repentance will appear still greater, by considering that death may interpose betwixt us, and the season we appoint for it. That we are subject to his empire we know, and we cannot but know, from our own constitutions, and the unceasing instances of mortality. But the time when he will exercise his power, God hath not thought fit to discover to us, that we might not have the shadow of pretence to live in the commission of sin. We see people around us called hence, without the least degree of warning, who have not so much time allowed, as once to implore God’s mercy, for the forgiveness of their offences. . From the number of
accidents

accidents to which we are liable, and the variety of distempers to which we are subject, every day of our lives ought to be an act of repentance; or, in the language of scripture, “we should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Many men intend to indulge themselves in sin, only for a certain season, and then they will repent. But, however short may be the time, we know not that we shall live till we have committed the intended sin, or however, till we have made our peace with God. But supposing that the time we have fixed for our amendment should arrive, do we suppose that sin will have lost its charms, or that we shall have stronger inclinations to cultivate, and establish within us, a principle of Religion, than we have at present? The longer any one continues in sin, the more hardened he will naturally become; and the less intercourse he has in acts of piety and devotion with his Creator and Redeemer, the less sensible he will be of religious impressions; till at last, he arrives at that state of impenitence as to live “without God in the world,” allied to him, neither by the interests of hope, nor the alarms
of

of fear. Let every man, who has persuaded himself he means to repent, consider, that if he find any difficulty now in forsaking his sins, the longer he continues to commit them, the greater, in proportion, will be the difficulty of forsaking them at last; and should the Almighty deny him the power of his Grace, and the readiness of his mercy, he goes down to the grave, overwhelmed with iniquity, and distracted with apprehension. Unless then you can shew a promise from God, that He will both allow you time, and likewise afford his Grace, to late repentance, never trust to so deceitful an intention. God himself declares, that “his Spirit shall not always strive with man.” Be afraid lest, by resisting the offers of God’s mercy, your impenitence shut up the bowels of his compassion. Even, if you should think of repenting at last, is it likely, after you have, as the Scripture expresses it, “committed iniquity with greediness,” that God should hear, when you are disposed, for the first time, to call seriously upon him? Justly, according to the Prophet, “may he number such to the sword, and bow them down to the slaughter; because when he called they
“ did

“ did not answer, when he spake, they did
“ not hear, but did evil before his eyes,
“ and did choose that wherein he delighted
“ not.”

But that a late repentance is most dangerous, and not to be depended on, will more fully appear, by considering in what repentance consists. If when we lie upon our last bed, to be exceedingly sorry we have led so profligate a life, and have so often set God Almighty at defiance—to sigh, and lament, and despair—to join in prayers with the minister of Christ, and to receive, with trembling hands, and a misgiving heart, the blessed Sacrament—if this were repentance, few would die impenitent. But be not deceived; with such ridiculous offerings God is only mocked. Repentance consists in a renewal of the heart and mind; “ in ceasing to do evil, in learning
“ to do well.” On a deathbed, indeed, a man may perform the first part of repentance, he may cease to do evil, having no longer the power; but how should he learn to do well, when he is ceasing to exist? Whether such an imperfect repentance be available, is known only to God: but, if you value the salvation
of

of your souls, purchased by the precious blood of Christ, let me, for God's sake, for the sake of your souls, let me prevail with you not to depend upon it.

I will trespass on your patience, and solicit your attention, whilst I earnestly exhort you to repent and live; "turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: for why will ye die?"

Let me then earnestly request all, and each of you, who are here present, to enter seriously into your own consciences, and enquire, with impartiality, whether, "you have made your peace with God?" whether you are in that state in which you would choose to appear before him? If you are not, let me persuade you to begin this day to forsake "the sins which so easily beset you?" Should you delay, you know not but you may add to the unhappy number of those, who have been cut off in the midst of their sins, who have been called to the great Tribunal, the very moment they have been perversely insulting, and impiously contemning, their Redeemer and their Judge. And can any consideration be so alarming, as the committing a sin one moment in this world, and being punished for it the very next, it
may

may be, in another? As our lives are held, all, by the same tenure, we are none of us certain but it may be our unhappy case. How many have died in a state of intoxication! How many with oaths and imprecations in their mouths! Tremble, lest your sins should meet with a like punishment! But you hope, you say, to live to repent. What is such a thought, but an insult of the blackest die you can offer, to the Majesty of Heaven? You hope to live to repent! What! you will continue in sin, either till you can continue no longer, or till you are afraid of your deserved punishment being inflicted; and then, wresting from the Almighty his attribute of Justice, you would make a bargain with him: by a few prayers, and sighs, and tears, you would deprive the devil, whom you have been serving all your life long, of his reasonable expectations. Consider, Christians, that, unless you are suddenly cut off, you are to lie on a deathbed; and, if you have lived in any known sin, if your heart be alienated from God, words cannot express the misery of your situation: one moment, you persuade yourselves, that your state is not quite desperate,

rate, and “you hope,” as the Apostle strongly expresses it, “even against hope:” the next, your sins are set in array before you, the means and opportunities, the calls and invitations to repentance, which you have either contemptuously despised, or obdurately resisted.

Could I set before your eyes the horrors of a death-bed repentance; could I present to you the melancholy prospect the sinner perceives of eternity; could I describe his forced prayers, his irresolute wishes, his distracted mind; could I shew you, whilst he is celebrating the blessed Sacrament—he, who seldom thought of “the agony and bloody sweat of his Redeemer,” before the king of terrors stared him in the face—how his soul is filled with all the horrors of conscious guilt, of anticipated punishment, of black despair, no one would suffer such a state to be his own; you would all, from this day, “turn from your wicked way and live.” In the discharge of our ministerial duty, we are sometimes, alas! witnesses to such a distressing situation; and when the unhappy being enquires, with anxious solicitude, whether the Gospel warrants him to
hope

hope that his sorrow will be accepted for repentance—then, how arduous is our situation? to flatter, is to betray: to deliver the truths of the Gospel, is to create a hell in his bosom, and to consign him to the torments of the damned, even whilst he is lingering on the brink of eternity. Lest you, my brethren, should be deprived of the benefits of a true repentance, and should have no other hopes of salvation, than in a few fruitless wishes, and ineffectual prayers in your last moments, let me conjure you, by the mercy and the justice of God; by your desire of happiness both here and hereafter, let me prevail with you to turn instantly from your ways, and live; then, when the dart of death is pointed at your bosom, when the pulse of life beats slow; when every object of delight has vanished; when “your ears are dull of hearing;” and your eyes can scarce discern your sorrowing friends; when you are taking the last embrace of those you esteem the dearest, and bidding them a long, long farewell, you may be able to address them in these words of consolation, “weep not for me, but for your-

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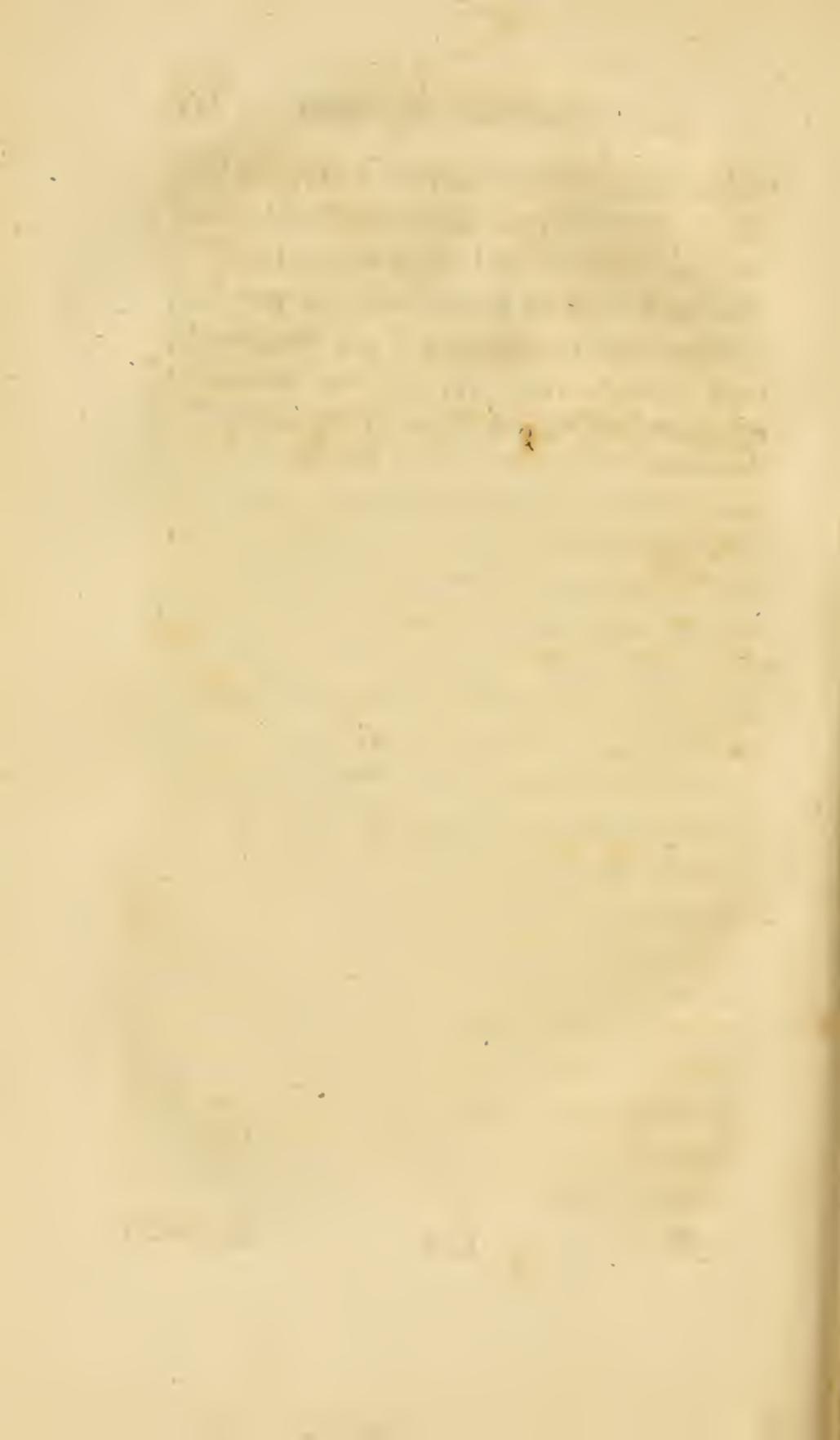
selves;

“ selves ; mine eyes have seen thy salvation ;
 “ come, Lord Jesus, come quickly !”

That such may be our departure, let us humbly offer up our petitions to the Almighty Being, “ in whose hand are the issues of life
 “ and death.”

‘ Almighty God, the fountain of wisdom,
 ‘ the source of mercy, we, thy unworthy
 ‘ creatures, prostrate ourselves before thy
 ‘ throne, with the utmost reverence, with
 ‘ the profoundest veneration, supplicating thy
 ‘ Grace in the renewal of our hearts, and the
 ‘ conversion of our souls ! Trembling with
 ‘ apprehension, lest we should be called in a
 ‘ state of unrepented sin into that presence,
 ‘ which no mortal eye can behold, and live,
 ‘ we do, from this moment, make an utter
 ‘ renunciation of every vice ; from this mo-
 ‘ ment we dedicate our lives to thy service.
 ‘ Impress, we implore thee, by the operations
 ‘ of thy Holy Spirit, the obligations we lay
 ‘ ourselves under of “ walking henceforth in
 ‘ “ newness of life.” ‘ Present, continually,
 ‘ to our minds, that awful period, when the
 ‘ soul shall leave this earthly tenement, and
 ‘ shall be called to “ give account of all the
 ‘ “ deeds

“ deeds done in the body.” ‘ May we live,
‘ as we shall wish we had always lived, when
‘ we are about to die! And when thou art
‘ pleased to take us hence, blot out our sins,
‘ pardon our transgressions, and receive us,
‘ we beseech thee, through the merits of
‘ Jesus Christ, into the arms of thy mercy.’



S E R M O N X I.

JOHN III. 3.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

NO passage perhaps in the sacred writings hath produced a greater diversity of opinions, than this uttered by our Blessed Saviour. It hath given rise to an infinity of interpretations, too many of them corresponding to the pre-conceived opinions of men, without ever considering to whom, and on what occasion, the words were addressed. The Evangelist describes the person in a very circumstantial manner by his name, profession, office, and descent; Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a Ruler, and a Jew. He had heard our Lord's miracles often talked of in Judea; perhaps he had seen some of them; and could he have reconciled the meanness of His appearance with the grandeur of His works, he would have concluded Him to be the Messiah. De-

firsous, therefore, of obtaining information whereby to direct his judgment, he applied in person to Jesus. "Rabbi," he introduces himself, "we know that thou art a teacher " come from God, for no man can do these " miracles that thou doest, except God be with " him." To which our Saviour answers, " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man " be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of " God." "The miracles that I do, prove my mission that I am sent from God: but I do greater miracles than any thou hast seen or heard of. Thou mayst have heard that I can restore sight to the blind, that I can give life to those that are dead. But I am come into the world to give eyes to those that already see, and a new life to those that already live: I am come to cause those that are already born, to be born again—a miracle that must be wrought in all who embrace my Religion—for my Gospel, which is "the kingdom of God" here below, requires such a change of heart, in both Jew and Gentile, that it may, with strict propriety, be termed a *new birth!*" And to shew both the importance of the doctrine, and the certainty of its truth, He confirms it by a
double

double asseveration, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Let me premise that, by the kingdom of God, in the text, we are not to understand the happiness of Heaven, but the state of the Gospel on earth: and the Gospel is given to us, that, by the observance of its precepts, we may become the children of God.

But as many people unfortunately have been taught to consider the expression, "the kingdom of God," in a different sense, as relating to the happiness of heaven; I will produce some parallel passages, which may convince you, that the kingdom of God can only mean the state of the Gospel on earth. "The kingdom of God," says our Saviour, "is come unto you." How? He was speaking in the land of Judea. But if you understand the kingdom of God, to mean the happiness of Heaven, our Saviour would have said that the kingdom of Judea is the happiness of Heaven, which is too ridiculous to suppose.

Again, "* a rich man shall hardly enter into

* This passage is beautifully illustrated by the Bishop of London, in his admirable "Lectures on St. Matthew."

“ the kingdom of Heaven.” Why ? “ God “ is no respecter of persons.” All the riches that are possessed, were given, and the enjoyment of them permitted, by God. And will the Judge of the World consign his creatures to everlasting misery, because they were in possession of what he himself gave, and gave too as a distinguished blessing ? We are all the children of his hand, and equally partake his love. What, then, is the meaning of the expression ? The Gospel requires humility, lowliness of mind, the preferring of others to ourselves ; virtues to which, riches, God knows, do not much dispose us : there is danger, therefore, lest riches should counteract the effect of the Gospel.

“ Verily I say unto you, that the publicans “ and the harlots go into the kingdom of God “ before you.” As though he had said, ye carry the appearance of piety in your faces ; ye abstain from things innocent ; ye make long prayers ; notwithstanding which, so much are ye set upon promoting your own interest, that the publicans and the harlots, who make no profession of religion, would not disgrace the Gospel, the kingdom of God, so much as you.

Having

Having shewn, from these expressions, that the kingdom of Heaven does not mean a future state of bliss, but the state of the Gospel on earth; I will beg your attention, whilst I attempt to shew the propriety of our Saviour's mode of speaking to Nicodemus, " Verily, " verily, I say unto thee, except a man be " born again, he cannot see the kingdom of " God."

When the Jews received a profelyte to their religion, he was required to forsake his father and mother, and all his connections, and to associate only with the people, whose religion he had embraced. He was then said, from his having renounced idolatry, and become a worshipper of the God of Abraham, to be newly born, or born again; for among the Jews, they alone, who, by birth, had the privilege of worshipping God, were conceived to live; and they, who were profelyted to such worship, were said to be born into a new state of existence. Our Lord, therefore, alluding to these opinions, assures Nicodemus that, if he would embrace Christianity, he, like the profelytes to the Jewish faith, must be born again. The ruler of the Synagogue was so
extremely

extremely surprized with this initiation into the Messiah's Religion, that he asks, in all the expressions of amazement—how can a man be born when he is old, as I now am? Nicodemus could not reconcile the idea of regeneration, or a new birth, in his own nation, which was by birth the people of God; because, as is before implied, he understood regeneration to consist in a conversion to Judaism—but our blessed Saviour spoke of a change of opinion, and temper, and conduct. In speaking to a Jew, there was a peculiar propriety in expressing this change, by the idea of regeneration; as it tended to shew, that their descent from Abraham was insufficient to procure them the blessings of the Gospel dispensation: the Gospel heartily embraced, and thoroughly understood, will communicate, or beget in them a new, and a better, that is, a moral, and a spiritual, nature.

We may conceive our Lord thus addressing himself to Nicodemus. “Art thou a master “in Israel, and knowest not these things?” Dost thou undertake to expound the Law, which is a type of the Gospel I am come into the world to promulge, and art ignorant, that
he

he who embraces it, and becomes my disciple, must have his mind purified, and renewed? What? Say not ye, “an eye for an eye, and “a tooth for a tooth?” Whereas the principle of my religion is, to “forgive, as ye hope “to have your offences forgiven at God’s “hand.” And if ye say to a Gentile whom you profelyte to Judaism—that he is regenerated and born again—I say with much greater propriety, that whoever becomes a follower of me, must be born again, must root out of his mind all those dispositions to vice and wickedness, which, in the profession of your religion, he encourages, and supports. “Ye devour “widows houses, and for a pretence make “long prayers”—but every one, who believes my doctrine, “must do to all men as he would “they should do unto him;” and when he prays, it must be, not “to be seen of men;” but “to his Father who seeth in secret.”

Our Lord, in the 23d of St. Matthew, cautions the multitude, and his disciples, against the gross errors, the scandalous impositions, the flagrant wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees. They sit, says he, in Moses’s seat—they are the received interpreters of his law—all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, agreeable

agrecable to this law, “ that obferve and do ;
 “ but do not ye after their works ; for they fay
 “ and do not ;” they are guilty of the unpar-
 donable impudence of impofing by precept,
 what they do not enforce by example.
 “ They bind heavy burdens and grievous to
 “ be born, and lay them on men’s fhoulders,
 “ but they themfelves will not move them
 “ with one of their fingers ;” alluding to thofe
 who, driving beafts of burden, when the roads
 are bad, fupport the loads, and keep them even
 and ftady. Our Lord, therefore, means, that
 they will not bear thefe loads themfelves, but
 that they rigoroufly, and feverely, impofe them
 on others. “ Woe unto you, Scribes and
 “ Pharifees, hypocrites, for ye fhut up the
 “ kingdom of Heaven againft men, for ye
 “ neither go in yourfelves, neither fuffer ye
 “ them, that are entering, to go in. Ye devour
 “ widows houfes, and for a pretence make
 “ long prayers. They fhut up the kingdom
 “ of heaven, by taking away,” as St. Luke
 in the parallel paffage explains it*, “ the key
 “ of knowlege, and making the word of God
 “ of none effect by their traditions:” under

* Chap. xi. ver. 52.

the cloke of religion, they concealed every vice that defiles human nature, is destructive of the peace, and comfort, and happiness of society, and dishonorable to Almighty God.

The infamy of their private practice coincided exactly, with the corruption of their public preaching. For external severities, as frequent fasting, and painful mortification, and standing in the corners of the streets, and in the market places, whilst they made long prayers, they were eminently conspicuous. But the religion which consists in subduing pride, rancor, malice, covetousness, they neither practised, nor even preached. They were careful to clean the outside of the cup and platter, but they took no care to cleanse their hearts from wicked affections. They allowed themselves to be transported, as they thought they lawfully might, into violent anger, and outrageous passion, contrary to the precepts of the Gospel, which enjoins us, “to be slow
“to anger, willing to forgive, and not to let
“the sun go down upon our wrath.”

Such being the traditional doctrines, and degenerate practice, of the Jews, our Saviour tells Nicodemus, that he must be born again—that all, who would be His disciples, must be
moulded

moulded anew—must no longer be implacable in their resentments, and depraved in their manners, but must be gentle, mild, and engaging, and demonstrate, in their whole conduct, their adoption into the family of God: they must make a sacrifice, as great as was required by the Jews, of all who became profelytes to *their* religion; only, that Christianity did not consist in appearances, but in reality. This change, which was the crucifying all his carnal, and depraved affections, our Saviour calls, the being born again. And surely, if there was a propriety in calling those men, who renounced idolatry to embrace Judaism, regenerate, and new born, there was a much greater propriety, in applying these terms to all who ceased to pursue the shadow, to possess the substance; who, instead of being hard-hearted, or giving alms, for the purpose of being seen of men, “were merciful as their Father in heaven is merciful, and loved their brethren, *because* God had loved them;” who, instead of washing their hands when they sat down to meat, and cleansing the cup and platter, cleansed their minds from pollution, and extirpated all “extortion and excesses.”

Now though *we* have in some degree the same

same vices to forsake, yet the state of a man, born, and educated a Christian, is so widely different from that of one profelyted to Christianity, that it will not, without a violation of propriety, admit the application of the same terms. If *we* say to *our hearers*, “ we “ must be born again,” we should speak more to your fancy, than to your judgment. For allowing, for a moment, that a Christian is regenerate and born again, in the sense some take the expression; and that he can feel, and distinguish the operations of God’s Spirit, which is no where asserted in Scripture; what end would be answered by it? We have seen, unhappily, one end answered from the supposition; the mistaking the ravings of the imagination for the operations of the Holy Spirit, and the dooming all to eternal perdition, who do not think, on some disputable points, exactly as themselves. Had it been intended, that we should distinguish the operations of God’s Spirit, from those of our own minds, we may presume, that our Blessed Saviour, when he promised the assistance of the Holy Ghost, would have drawn the lines of distinction. May we be careful, my brethren, not to arrogate

gate

gate to ourselves too much of God's especial favor! May it rather be the desire of our hearts, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk *humbly* with our God!"

And is this, it may be asked, all that is meant by being born again? To which we answer, yes, it is all: and we add, that it is devoutly to be wished, that every minister of the Gospel, instead of using such figurative expressions, would exhort his hearers in terms more plain and significant—for they are more significant, in a country; where we are baptized into the profession of Christianity—to forsake their sins, and to lead a new life. Such preaching, were it universal, would put an end to that "strife about words," which contaminates, distracts, destroys the purity, the unanimity, the efficacy of the Church of Christ.

Let me here observe, that, in the office of Baptism, our Church confines, with great justice, regeneration and new birth, to our being baptized, and admitted to the profession of Christianity. "We yield thee hearty thanks, "most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee, to regenerate this infant, with thy "Holy Spirit." And again—"this child is
" now,

“ now, by the laver, or washing of regenera-
 “ tion in baptism, received into the number of
 “ the children of God.” Which expressions
 seem to be taken from the exhortation to St.
 Paul, when he was miraculously converted
 from Judaism to Christianity ; “ arise, and be
 “ baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on
 “ the name of the Lord.” Every person, there-
 fore, who is admitted into the profession of
 Christianity, *is born again*, and regenerated
 with God’s Holy Spirit. And every person, who
 performs, according to his ability, what was
 promised, and vowed for him, in his baptism,
 “ shall be an inheritor of the kingdom of hea-
 “ ven.” Now as those, who lead wicked lives,
 derive little, or no advantage, from regeneration,
 whilst they live wickedly, so if “ they turn
 “ away from their wickedness, and do that
 “ which is lawful and right, they shall save
 “ their souls alive.” This renewed state is,
 very improperly, called by some people, a con-
 verted, or a regenerate state ; which applies
 only to the Gentiles in the infancy of the
 Gospel, when “ they turned from dead works
 “ to serve the living God ;” and to the Jews, who
 acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah, or as

the Scriptures express it, “ who believed in
“ him.”

The Clergy are very often, and I believe, in general, very unjustly, charged with delivering from the pulpit, doctrines different from those contained in the Prayer Book. Look, I beseech you, into the office of Baptism, and convince yourselves, whether our Church, by the new birth, does not mean our admission into the profession of Christianity? It is said, surely not in an evangelical spirit, that the Clergy, not having received the Holy Ghost, cannot judge rightly on the subject; whilst an ignorant mechanic, it should seem, is enabled, by the ministration of the Spirit, to deliver doctrines diametrically opposite to those revealed by our Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ. But do you think, that this Divine law-giver would have acted with the wisdom of a human legislator, if he had delivered a code of laws, and commanded us to read, in order to understand, them; when, at the same time, he had locked up our understandings so impenetrably, that they should be no better to us than a sealed book, unless he opened them with his Holy Spirit—a blessing not attending either severe study, or upright conduct,

conduct, but given, in a manner, equally whimsical and extravagant ?

But as we are said “ to be led by the Spirit, “ and that the Spirit of God dwells in our “ hearts by faith,” it may be thought, that something more is meant, than merely leading a new life: to which it may be answered, that every man, who desires the salvation of his soul, will receive the assistance of the Spirit of God, and will be disposed to qualify his heart, more and more, for the reception, and abiding of God’s Holy Spirit: he will pray, and his prayers will be heard, and granted, that “ God “ will put a new spirit within him; that he will “ take the stony heart out of his flesh, and will “ give him an heart of flesh, to the end that “ he may walk in God’s statutes, and keep His “ ordinances and do them, that he may be His “ child, and that God may be his God.” In descending into himself, if he find his disposition to be perverse, he immediately sets himself to correct it; if he be obstinate, peevish, sullen, censorious, malicious, passionate, covetous, inflexible, he has the assurance of the Gospel, that, whilst he indulges such a temper,

he cannot be a child of God, and that God cannot inhabit such a polluted breast. He, therefore, “brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, “goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Thus living under the influence of the Gospel, a new turn is given to the current of his thoughts, new affections are raised in his mind, and the passions of his heart are determined, and regulated, in another, and a better, manner. Call such an one, if you please, regenerate and born again, I only say, you use the terms improperly:—the Scriptures style Barnabas, who was “full of the Holy Ghost,” *a good man*. And, indeed, there is a strong objection against addressing either individuals, or assemblies, under the titles of believers, saints, regenerate, the called; such distinctions having a natural tendency to inspire human nature with rigor, singularity, uncharitableness, and spiritual pride—the very vices we are to renounce, before we can derive any benefits from the dispensation of the Gospel; or, in the words of the text, “before we can see the kingdom of God.” That you have the Spirit of God. give this evidence

—go on from one degree of excellence to another, and “die daily unto sin, and live unto “righteousness.”

Having shewn what our Saviour meant, when he said to Nicodemus, “except a man be born “again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” and that the words, literally understood, cannot be applied to us, who live under the dispensation of the Gospel—let me briefly exhort you to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well—words of the same awful import to us as were those addressed by our Blessed Lord to Nicodemus—“unless ye are born again, ye “cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Did our Saviour say to a Jew by birth, “ye “must be born again?” we say to you, “who “by baptism ARE regenerate, and born again, “if ye die in your sins ye will perish.” The Jews drew upon them the displeasure of God, by assuming much consequence and superiority; by indulging pride, rancor, and malice; by their extortion, and rapacity. They qualified indeed these “works of the devil,” by their long and frequent prayers, by their zeal in proselyting the Gentiles to the Jewish Faith,

by their regularity in “ paying tithe of mint, “ anise, and cummin, omitting the weightier “ matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith; “ thus straining at a gnat, and swallowing a “ camel.” The same vices will draw *on us* the displeasure of God. In vain shall we attempt to commute with heaven, by the observance of some easy virtues. Whatever a Christian does, it is to be done, “ as seeing him “ who is invisible”—as if God were visibly present to express his approbation, or manifest his displeasure. Whoever embraces Christianity, from the persuasion, that he is redeemed “ by the precious blood of Christ,” will endeavor to “ become holy, in all manner of conversation and godliness.” Do *we* live under this divine influence! Do *we* regulate our tempers, mortify our carnal inclinations, and avoid sin, in whatever shape it presents itself, to us? Do *we* cultivate, and nourish, religious affections? Do *we* delight ourselves in the worship and service of God, and pay *an equal obedience* to all his commandments? In a word, are we his people, and can we truly say, that he is our God? And were we now called to
give

give an account of our lives, in what manner could we appear before him, in whose presence no evil dwelleth? He requires us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; and if we disappoint his expectations, he has declared what the consequence of our conduct shall be—
“weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of
“teeth!”

The first part of the ...

The second part of the ...

The third part of the ...

The fourth part of the ...

The fifth part of the ...

The sixth part of the ...

The seventh part of the ...

The eighth part of the ...

The ninth part of the ...

The tenth part of the ...

The eleventh part of the ...

The twelfth part of the ...

The thirteenth part of the ...

The fourteenth part of the ...

The fifteenth part of the ...

The sixteenth part of the ...

The seventeenth part of the ...

The eighteenth part of the ...

The nineteenth part of the ...

The twentieth part of the ...

S E R M O N XII.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.

THE chapter, from which these words are taken, forces itself on our notice, as one of the most entertaining, instructive, and awful, of all which relate the propagation of Christianity.

St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, was sent down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, under a strong guard of horsemen and foot, to be tried before Felix, the Roman Deputy Governor of the Province, for a transgression of the law, of which he was accused, and a tumult of sedition his opinions had occasioned among the two discordant sects of the Jews, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

To

To silence, effectually, the Apostle in future, and, by his example, to deter others of his persuasion, from “preaching this new doctrine, “and bringing certain strange things to their ears;” to give solemnity to the trial, and efficacy to their proceedings, Ananias, the high priest, with the elders of the Sanhedrim, came down also to Cesarea, having retained a certain orator, named Tertullus, to manage their indictment, and be their advocate, or counsel. And he seems not ill qualified for the part he had undertaken: his speech is concise and conciliating, but full of bitter invective, and religious persecution: his charge he supports by the evidence of the Sanhedrim; for the sacred writer tells us “the Jews gave “their assent to the truth” of his assertions, “saying that these things were so.” St. Paul, having the liberty of speaking in his own justification, gives distinct answers to the several parts of the charge made against him; in the prosecution of which, he exhibits a specimen of his abilities, and a testimony of his innocence, so striking, as to excite astonishment and curiosity, and so interesting, as to awaken compassion and attachment.

Felix,

Felix, having heard his admirable defence, refused to make a final determination, before he had seen Claudius Lysias, the chief captain, who would relate with accuracy, and ascertain with precision, the alleged sedition and tumult, and commanded Paul to be kept, in the intervening time, under a guard. “And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla,” who was born and educated in the Jewish faith, “to Cesarea, the Governor sent for Paul to appear before them,” that he might hear what the Apostle could say concerning his religion—“concerning that way which the Jews called heresy,”—how he could support it by argument, illustrate it with observations, and adorn it with eloquence. The Apostle selects for the subject of his discourse two virtues, on the observance of which depend the comforts and happiness of civil, and domestic life, shewing the obligations Christianity lies on its professors inviolably to practise them—and enforces them by the most awful of all considerations—an impartial account all men must give of their actions at God’s tribunal, and be eternally punished or rewarded. But the Governor, in a
fit

fit of trembling, interrupts his prisoner, saying he would hear him further, at a more convenient season. And “as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

We will first consider the conduct, and manners of the man, whom the Apostle addresses in his discourse of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” where we shall see the strength of understanding, fervor of zeal, and boldness of reproof, by which he was so eminently distinguished in the delivery of a discourse, which made Felix tremble.

The Character of Felix, as given by historians* of unquestionable veracity, is, that during his government of Judea, under the Roman Emperor, Claudius Cesar, he indulged himself in every species of cruelty, and committed every kind of injustice—his power was displayed in acts of violence, and in the exercise of tyranny. A governor, of such a complexion, sheltered under the wings of impunity, must

* See Tacitus and Josephus.

have been exceedingly odious to those, who groaned beneath the weight of his despotic vengeance : but he became more detestable by the indulgence of his lusts, in the gratification of which, he broke down all the fences of continency, honor, and affection. The marrying Drusilla is a notorious instance. She was the wife of another man ; but Felix, having heard her celebrated for the charms of her beauty, seduced her from her husband, and, in contempt of right, and defiance of law, kept her for his own wife.

To his catalogue of vices we are to add, further, bribery and oppression, intimated by the sacred historian ; “ he sent for Paul the
“ oftener to talk with him, hoping that money
“ would have been given him by Paul.” And this he did, no doubt, because St. Paul had said in his defence, that “ he came up to Jeru-
“ salem to bring alms to his nation.” Disappointed in his avaricious hopes, he kept Paul a prisoner for two years ; and when he was recalled by Nero, the succeeding Emperor, on a charge of cruelty and oppression, he, meanly and maliciously, “ left Paul bound,” to induce the Jews to represent him to the Emperor with
less

less asperity of censure, and less vehemence of indignation.

Such is the character of Felix. Let us now see how wisely adapted, and suitably applied, was the subject of St. Paul's discourse; "he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

The design of the Apostle was, to shew the strong obligations the doctrines of Christianity lie on men, to observe the rules of justice and temperance; and, if on men, individually, how great on those in whom the administration of justice is vested? for it is not necessary that they should be irreproachable only in such administration, but uniformly exemplary in their conduct: they are "to shine as lights in the world," and to enforce the laws, as well by their moral practice, as by their delegated power. And, that the governor might not elude the strength of his arguments, by any evasions of sophistry, or artifices of deceit, he urges the severe, and impartial account, to be given in a judgment to come, where power can no longer oppress, authority protect, nor cunning conceal; a Tribunal where poverty and wealth will be on the same level, and submissive weakness have
equal

equal advantages with vindictive rage—a Tribunal, where real goodness will be rewarded with everlasting glory, and actual guilt be banished, for ever, from the presence of the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

To preach to a magistrate, invested with uncontrollable power, that a future punishment awaited him from a supreme Judicature, indicated an intrepid spirit hardly, as it should seem, attentive to its own preservation. St. Paul was a prisoner; he was to appear at the bar of the magistrate, to stand as a criminal to be tried for his life. Instead of moving the pity, and conciliating the esteem of the Judge, by exercising his talents in an ostentatious display of “the many worthy deeds done to the province, by the wisdom” of the Governor’s administration, the Apostle calls upon him to forsake his deeds of rapine, and subdue his habits of lust; and, in the presence, too, of the very person who had so powerful an ascendancy over him; either not considering, or contemning the fate of John the Baptist, whose head was demanded by Herod, by the suggestion of Herodias, whom, like Felix, he had unlawfully married. He exemplified, in his conduct, his

own declaration, " I count all things but loss
" for the excellency of the knowlege of Christ
" Jesus my Lord:" whether the Governor
would admire his discourse, or not; or, whether it might not exasperate, and provoke his Judge, to deprive him of his liberty or his life, was not the object of his consideration, or regard; but, from a knowlege of the character of the person before whom he was speaking, he selected topics, which might be the means, by the blessing of God, of awakening him from his lethargy of vice, and implanting in his mind, seeds of virtue, and principles of piety. But such appeals are, generally, uneasy to a guilty mind; the potion which was administered, though salutary in its effects, was nauseous to the palate. So powerful was the reasoning, and so irresistible the application, he cries out, " Go thy way for this time; when I
" have a convenient season I will call for thee." Often do we observe, that men, however flagrant may be their weaknesses, ridiculous their opinions, or reproachful their conduct—though reproof be given with the gentlest intimation—discover the same uneasiness with Felix: from the same consciousness they are seized with
with

with trembling, and tacitly acknowledge the justice, and propriety of the reproof; but, “go thy way,” they cry, “for this time;” when I am disposed to hear of my weaknesses, my follies, or my vices, which too often meet me with unwelcome interruption, “I will call for thee.”

That the governor of Judea, when the enormity of his sins was set clearly before his eyes, should tremble with apprehension at the sight of his danger; should behold, with horror, the precipice on which he stood, and the gulph below ready to receive him, does not create astonishment, nor excite surprize. “Fearfulness and trembling came upon him, and an horrible dread overwhelmed him: for wickedness, condemned by its own witness, is very timorous, and always forecasteth grievous things.” St. Paul had represented his guilt in such glaring colors; the simplicity of truth was enforced by cogency of argument, and persuasion of oratory, so strong as to impress conviction, and so powerful as to alarm with terror: his Vices presented themselves in dreadful array to his conscience, the tyranny of oppression, the subversion of public happiness,

and the annihilation of domestic peace. Unable to look on such a scene with tranquility, or anticipate its effects without consternation, he trembles at the account he must one day give.

I now proceed to the last part of the text, that, when Felix trembled at the reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, instead of examining his ways, forsaking his sins, and embracing Christianity, he dismisses the Apostle with—"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

When a Judgment to come was founded in his ears, the sad state of his accounts, how utterly unfit, how altogether unprepared they were to undergo an accurate inspection, filled his soul with anxious disquietude. But, notwithstanding, he had not resolution "to break the chain of his sins, with which he was so fast tied, and bound." He might, indeed, purpose to become a Christian, amend his life, and provide against a future Judgment: but this, unhappily, was to be deferred till some other, and, as he termed it, "more convenient season." To have prepared against a Judgment

ment to come, was, to have instantly forsaken all those vices by which he was so infamously distinguished; to “ have renounced the hidden “ things of dishonesty; to have made restitution for the injuries, and wrongs, he had committed;” to have subjected his licentious desires to the reins of continence; and, from having in his bosom a “ heart of stone, to “ have had a heart of flesh:” in other words, instead of “ loving the world, and being a lover “ of pleasure, to have set his affections on “ things above, and have become a lover of “ God.” To a man of Felix’s disposition, this was a strange reverse. And rather than a real conversion should be wrought in him, he puts off both the discourse, and his amendment, to some other more convenient season.

Allow me to trespass a little longer on your patience, whilst I make an application from what has been said.

The Gospel is ordained by God to be preached to make us better men. Does it produce this desirable effect, and, the more we hear it, do we improve in the practice of all virtue?— Or, does he that was unjust continue to be unjust still? Preaching is an ordinance of God,

and is instituted for the express purpose “ of
“ converting sinners from the error of their
“ ways.” The most abject wretch, who hath
not where to lay his head, and the most despo-
tic monarch, that ever swayed a sceptre, are,
hereby, equally put in mind of the duties of
their respective stations, and of the account all
men must one day give to God. The word
preached assures us, that we are to be tried, all,
before a Tribunal where our every action, and
the motives of it, will be known. The man,
who has imbrued his hands in injustice, whe-
ther under the cover of established custom, and
the sanction of popular fashion; whether his
acts of deceit have been secretly committed,
or his lust of rapine openly perpetrated, will
then wish that his dealings had been always un-
disguised as the light, and clear as the noon-
day. To men who are conscious their transac-
tions are not honest, whose hearts tell them
they take advantage of the acknowledged ig-
norance, or unsuspecting innocence of their
neighbor; to such men let me appeal, in the
presence of that God, “ to whose eye all things
“ are naked and open,” and ask them, whe-
ther they do not, like Felix, tremble at the
thoughts

thoughts of a future Judgment? Or, you congratulate yourselves, it may be, on the felicity of address, and dexterity of cunning, by which you can over-reach the unsuspecting; on the exercise of authority, and command of influence, by which you can overpower the helpless. Enjoy your triumph: but you will not enjoy it long. The scene will soon be closed; soon will it be said, “how hath the oppressor ceased! Leave off then from deceit, and let go oppression, and go, prepare to meet thy God.” The same argument applies to the commission of every sin; whether the indulgence of irregular desires, the custom of intemperate swearing, the profanation of the holy Sabbath—“for all these things God will, one day, bring us into Judgment.” Whenever then we hear, by the preaching of the word, God speaking to us, as he spoke by the Prophet to David, saying, “thou art the man,” let us instantly consider our danger; let us consider that we are obnoxious to the wrath of God—that “our sins have separated Him from us—and that there is but a step between us, and eternal death.” From that moment, let us amend

our life; let us not, like Felix, “ defer it to a “ more convenient season,” persuading ourselves, that we will repent at some future period. No: if whilst we are under the power of conviction, and the apprehension of danger, we do not “ begin to learn the way of righteousness,” it is to be feared, that we shall never know it; if we put off our repentance, when our sins flash confusion in our face, there is but too much reason to apprehend, that, as we have lived, so shall we die: we have lived wicked, we shall die impenitent.

It is a melancholy consideration, that many men attend the preaching of the Gospel all their life long, without being at all the better for it: they hear the denunciations of God Almighty against the sins they are continually committing, without thinking it worth their while to consider, that they are the very persons on whom these awful threatenings will be executed. The minister of the Gospel “ stands between the living and the dead,” sent, by God himself, to warn men of the danger to which they are liable by the commission of sin, and they hear him, with as much unconcern, as if they were certain, beyond all possibility

possibility of doubt, of their salvation. How can they reconcile such insolent, such rebellious conduct towards their Maker? Are they content to run the risque of incurring His displeasure? Or, do they think he threatens with a design never to inflict his punishments? Such a thought leads, I fear, to eternal condemnation. To prevent any mistake, where our immortal happiness is concerned, let us be persuaded, immediately, to examine the state of our souls, whether, according to the terms of the Gospel, “we have hope towards God?” let us bring faithfully to our remembrance our past sins, and let the Gospel fairly determine, whether we are the objects of God’s mercy, or of his displeasure. If there be the least doubt—if the Gospel does not pronounce, unequivocally, in our favor—if it does not remove every apprehension—let us not say to our conscience, what Felix said to the Apostle, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;” but let us this day, “before our eyes sleep, or our eye-lids slumber, or the temples of our head take any rest,” let us devote ourselves to God; let our thoughts be exalted, our affec-

tions raised to Heaven, our minds renewed, and let us walk, not as others, but as the children of God. Then, when the awful day arrives, the day, when every son and daughter of Adam, from the existence of creation to the dissolution of all things, shall enter upon their unalterable state of complete happiness, or indescribable misery, we shall be welcomed, through the Merits and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ our Lord, with this transporting invitation, “come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

S E R M O N XIII.

LUKE X. 27.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.

THE Love of God is a sentiment not dictated by nature, but prescribed by Revelation. That God should be the object of terror to his creatures, and should avenge himself upon all that do evil, is an apprehension implanted in the human mind ; but that he should engage our love, and become the moral delight of his offspring, for this ground of comfort, and assurance of consolation, we are indebted to the Law delivered by Moses, and to the Gospel revealed by Jesus Christ.

Such is the origin of this divine principle, the love of God! But, like many of Heaven's best gifts, by some it is admitted with caution, by others, received with coldness, and even re-
jected

jected with disdain. To love God, is considered as inconsistent with our depraved nature, and irreconcilable with our moral state: to love God, is thought to be a degree of evangelical refinement beyond what our present circumstances, and corrupt principles, will bear; for that, if we fulfil, with tolerable exactness, the moral precepts of the Gospel, nothing more will be expected of us. It is from this opinion, as unwarrantable in its principle, as fatal in its effects, that the Christian world, like a river, overflowing its banks, is so deluged with wickedness.

The reasonableness of the duty of loving God will appear, from taking a review of his goodness towards us.

He is a Being infinitely good. He is the sole Author of all the happiness we can hope for, or receive, either here, or hereafter.

To his creatures, "the works of his hands," he hath manifested the greatest tenderness, and compassion. "As I live, saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way, and live:" to which he adds, with all the fervor of affection, and the earnestness of solicitude,

solicitude, “turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will you die?”

But above all, he has signally expressed his love in the redemption of our souls, through the Atonement of his only begotten, and dearly beloved Son. For our sakes he debased himself to the lowest condition; he willingly undertook, and cheerfully encountered, and patiently underwent, sorrow, and pain, and death, to accomplish our salvation.

Here let us add, the many calls and invitations to repentance, and amendment of life, which every sinner may recollect—sometimes outwardly, by the ministry of the word—sometimes inwardly, by the suggestions of the Spirit—to direct him to good, and withdraw him from evil.

But the comforts, the conveniences, the necessaries of life are all, likewise, derived from God: health, strength, food, and raiment, are all owing to God's indulgent care over us, and his overflowing goodness to us. Every day we live, gives us repeated experience of his wonted bounty, and especial concern for man. The natural course of things, with a thousand voices, proclaims them to us, too loud not to be heard,
and

and too convincing not to be regarded. And such is the sense we have of his goodness to us, that, in distress, we all naturally look up to God—when human help fails, we have recourse to divine. “For the Lord is a refuge
 “for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble.
 “He satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the
 “hungry soul with goodness. Look at the
 “generations of old, and see, did any ever trust
 “in the Lord, and was forsaken? Or whom
 “did He ever despise that called upon Him.
 “They that seek the Lord shall not want any
 “thing that is good. This poor man,” said the Psalmist, this or that poor wretch “cried
 “unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and
 “saved him out of all his trouble.”

Now, seeing God, by so many real evidences both to our souls and bodies, expresses his love and care, to all mankind in general, and to every one in particular; can we reasonably do otherwise, than follow the inference of the Apostle, “let us, therefore, love God, because
 “he first loved us.” The measure of our love is prescribed in the text, “with all thy heart,
 “and with all thy soul, and with all thy
 “strength, and with all thy mind.”

Obedience

Obedience to God's commands is, indeed, the surest test of our love. We may make long prayers, be very devout, take every opportunity of receiving the Blessed Sacrament, bring up our families with the very rigor of devotion, allow no intemperate mirth, forbid even innocent amusements, punish every deviation from rectitude, and yet still be far, very far, from loving God "with all our heart, and soul, "and mind, and strength." Are we candid in our opinions of others? Do we lean always to the favorable side, careful to conceal or extenuate, not to publish or exaggerate their faults? And, as to our own dealings, can we challenge slander to convict us of injustice? Do we behold our own cause through the same medium, we do that of others? Are pride, insolence, oppression, banished from our breasts? Are we careful to give no offence by stubbornness of mind, or outrageousness of temper? From our meekness, and quietness, and promoting the peace and comfort of all with whom we are connected, is it evident "that God is in us of a truth?" For the love of God renews the *whole man*. And if we have not subdued our petulant humors, if we have not con-

quered

quered our vicious inclinations, we may rest assured "that the love of God is not in us." Should any one who occasions uneasiness to others, either by injustice, slander, perverseness, persuade himself that he loves God; we know that he is mistaken; for the scriptures declare him "to be a liar; he deceives his own heart, "and his religion is vain." He may be said to love God as the Pharisees did, who "devoured "widows' houses, and for a pretence made "long prayers; ye shall receive, says our Lord, "the greater damnation."

The love of God as we are Christians, consists in the prevalence of our affections to God above all things. Religious offices are to be performed, not as the tasks of duty, but the services of delight. In praying for blessings; in returning thanks for mercies; in acquainting ourselves with the word and will of God, we are to find pleasure. Our heart is to be devoted to God—"for his servants we are"—him we love, to whom we pay voluntary obedience. Whether we fulfil the first commandment, whether "we love God with all our "heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," as it behoves us assuredly to know, let us impartially

partially enquire of ourselves: God grant that our hearts may bear the investigation! Do we then, make the Gospel the rule of our conduct? Do we read it with attention, and observe it with fidelity? Do we observe the Lord's-Day with the reverence so sacred an institution demands? Do we regularly attend public worship ourselves, and oblige our families to do the same? Do we apply what we hear to our own case and circumstances, and thereby become better, and more religious, men? Do we every day pour out our souls in fervent prayer to God to deliver us from evil, and to confirm us in goodness? And, to communicate the blessings of Christianity, do we, daily, assemble our families to worship God? Does it appear by our temper, and our conduct, under whose banners we have enlisted, and whatever we think, or say, or do, does it all, ultimately, conduce to the glory of God?

By Questions such as these, we may know of a truth, whether "we love God with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and strength," or not. Let us be persuaded to put them fairly, and not shrink from the answers. One man
will

will find, instead of loving God in the manner prescribed to ensure his salvation, that he loves every thing but God: where an hour is employed on the thoughts of futurity, months and years are devoted to the pursuits of pleasure, or the improvement of wealth. Another will be enabled to correct the mistake in which he may have lived all his life long, that to attend the service of the Church, and sometimes to receive the Holy Sacrament, to fulfil the common duties of morality, and not to be exceedingly profligate; to swear, perhaps, without thought; or when he is rejoiced; or when he is provoked; that such an one loves God, and needs not doubt of his salvation. Dangerous delusion! Let him diligently peruse the Scriptures, and he will find that the terms of salvation differ widely from this pagan system. We are to "be renewed in the spirit of our minds." We are not allowed, by the Gospel, the habitual indulgence of any one sin: unless God has the first place in our affections we are not Christians: unless our piety, devotion, charity proceed from a Love of God, and not from education, custom, or natural tenderness

derness, the Gospel is lost upon us. For all these virtues adorned the heathens, who never heard the name of Christ, and on whom, with its faintest beams, the sun of righteousness never shone. From devout affections, and exemplary conduct, we are to judge of our love of God. If we love God, "we shall bless him all the day long, and shew forth his salvation."

The Love of God, as it is the first and great commandment, so it is the first principle of Christianity. Should you ask any man, who has not set common decency at defiance, the question, whether he loved God or not, he would think you injured him by seeming to doubt of it. But, in so important a point, let no man deceive himself; for, to repeat what hath been before observed, if we love God, we shall delight to converse with him in his appointed ordinances. Prayer, thanksgiving, meditation, the hearing and reading the word, and the receiving of the Sacrament, accompanied with inviolable integrity, in our dealings, are the infallible proofs of our love of God. But if, instead of affording us pleasure, these duties are irksome, and we discharge them, not with alacrity, but
O indifference,

indifference, we are not religious, we are only moral—"the Love of God is not shed abroad "in our hearts." Many examples, in the heathen world, may be produced, of strict justice, and undeviating probity; but if Christianity consisted in the mere practice of moral virtue, the death of Jesus Christ, and the Revelation of the Gospel had, surely, been superfluous.

Suffer me, in conclusion, earnestly to exhort you, my brethren, to cultivate this love in your hearts, and to "nourish it with all good-ness;" let me prevail with you, if ye have any regard for the peace of your mind, if you have any anxiety about the security of your salvation, if you have any dread of the vengeance of Almighty God, let me beseech, exhort, conjure you, to keep "the first commandment." If you refuse to fulfil the terms of salvation, you are no doubt prepared with the apology you design to offer, the persuasive apology, which is to appease the wrath of a justly incensed God. What is the excuse ingenuity can suggest, and presumption plead for having rejected the Gospel, and disobeyed the command,

mand, the first and great command of your Creator, your Redeemer, and Judge? We are, unequivocally, and peremptorily, commanded to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, “and soul, and mind, and strength.” From this source, our every action, and our every thought are to arise. Though “we give to “every one that asketh us;” though we discharge all our moral obligations with the strictest fidelity, if we do not love God, if God hath not the first place in our affections, what was said of the young man in the Gospel, may, with equal justice, be applied to us, “yet one “thing thou lackest.” Let us rather endeavor to arrive at that state of evangelical righteousness, which consists in “loving God with all “our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength;” for then, and then only, can we judge with certainty, and conclude with confidence, that we are in a state of salvation.

‘ In a matter of such unspeakable moment,
‘ where our souls, and our everlasting happiness
‘ are at stake, grant us, gracious God! to be
‘ no longer under the delusion of error, or the
‘ anxiety of suspense. Implant deep in our
‘ hearts the love of thy name. We desire to

‘ love thee above all things, and beseech thee,
‘ from the bottom of our souls, that, actuated
‘ by this divine principle, after having lived
‘ in that perfect love which casteth out fear,
‘ we may die in thy favor, and be received by
‘ thy mercy, through the merits and satisfac-
‘ tion of thy Son our Lord. Amen.

S E R M O N XIV..

LUKE x. 36, 37.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves ? And he said, he that shewed mercy on him : then said Jesus unto him, go, and do thou likewise.

OUR Saviour, in this chapter, is giving directions to seventy additional disciples, whom he had appointed, “to go into every city “and place whither he himself would come,” to prepare the inhabitants to embrace the Gospel dispensation. After they had received their instructions, they went in obedience to his commands. And when they returned, they told their Master, that, so abundant was their success through his name, the very devils were subject unto them. From the manner in which they relate the miraculous occurrence, they were not, it should seem, prepared to ex-

pect so wonderful a subjection to their feeble efforts. “ And he said unto them, I beheld “ Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven”—the idolatry of the Gentiles, and the wickedness of the Jews have exalted the enemy of mankind ; but the propagation of my Religion, of this new Covenant which I shall make with all the earth, shall subject him “ to everlasting “ chains under darkness. In that hour, Jesus “ rejoiced in spirit, and said,” in a transport of rapture, foreseeing the blessed effects of the evangelical revelation, “ I thank thee, O “ Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou “ hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, even so “ Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight :” not the philosophers of Greece and Rome, not the rabbins learned in their law, are able to acquaint the world what simplicity of worship is most acceptable to the Supreme Being, and how sinful man is restored to His mercy and favor ; these important tidings are to be first promulged by artless, and ignorant men, to be “ endowed,” for the purpose, “ with power “ from on high. And behold, a certain lawyer,” one of those Scribes, whose profession was

was to teach the law of Moses, “ stood up and “ tempted Him,” in order to discover, probably, whether His doctrine corresponded to that of Moses, “ saying, Master, what shall I do to “ inherit eternal life?” Jesus, alluding to his profession, answers by enquiring what the Law enjoined upon that interesting article? The Scribe “ answering” (out of Deuteronomy vi. 5.) “ said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God “ with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and “ with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, “ and thy neighbor as thyself. Jesus said unto “ him, thou hast answered right, this do, and “ thou shalt live. But the Scribe, willing to “ justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is “ my neighbor?” In his estimation none were brethren but Israelites, and none neighbors but proselytes; for, of these two denominations of men, the Jewish Church was composed. The blessed Jesus answers him, in such a manner, as to make the feelings of his heart overcome the prejudices of his understanding, by relating what is called the parable of the good Samaritan.

“ A certain man went down from Jerusalem “ to Jericho”—and, in going through those

wild deserts, and dangerous roads, to the valley of Jericho—" he fell among thieves, who
" stripped him of his raiment, and wounded
" him, and departed, leaving him half dead"
—not content with robbing him of his money, they dangerously wounded and left him, with scarce signs of life: so many robberies and murders were committed on that road, that it was expressively termed the *bloody way*.
" And by chance there came down a certain
" priest that way, and, when he saw him, he
" passed by on the other side. And likewise a
" Levite, when he was at the place, came, and
" looked on him, and passed by on the other
" side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw
" him, he had compassion on him, and went
" to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring
" in oil, and wine, and set him on his own
" beast, and brought him to an inn, and took
" care of him." In the eastern countries there were not inns for the entertainment, but only houses for the lodging, of strangers. Travellers, therefore, carried their own provisions along with them. The humane Samaritan took of his own wine, and gave to the poor
man,

man, and refreshed his spirits, and poured oil of a balsamic, healing quality, into his wounds. After he had taken him to such an inn as the country afforded, he left him there, on the following day, to the care of his host, “and “when he departed he took out two-pence”—equal to about fifteen-pence of our money—“and said, take care of him, and whatsoever “thou spendest more, when I come again I “will repay thee;” from which we may conjecture, that the good Samaritan was either in narrow circumstances; or that the way he had to travel, was so dangerous, he brought no more money with him than was absolutely necessary for his journey—either of which cases being true, enhances very greatly his kindness. I am just to observe further, that the hatred between the Jews, and the Samaritans, was implacable, arising, in some measure, from a disagreement in religious opinions. When the Jews would shew the utmost detestation of our Saviour, they expressed themselves with this bitter invective, “Thou art a Samaritan, “and hast a devil.” In equal abhorrence were the Jews held by the Samaritans. The application, therefore, the Scribe must necessarily
make,

make, was, that all mankind, even his bitterest enemies, were his neighbors, and his brethren.

Having illustrated the passages in the parable, which seemed to carry with them a little obscurity, I shall make such reflections upon it as may, by God's blessing, induce those who hear me, to "go and do likewise."

When the traveller was fainting under the pain of his wounds, exposed without a covering to the inconvenience of the climate, dreading, either that he should perish through neglect, or afraid that thieves, wantonly inhuman, might, when they found him destitute of both money and clothes, wreak their indignant disappointment by multiplying his wounds, lo! "a certain priest, a preacher of righteousness, came down that way." When the pitiable wretch saw the robe of religion, he, no doubt, returned thanks to God for sending him a deliverer. When he beheld the priest, he, no doubt, prepared himself to deliver the sad recital of his calamities, and to appeal, with eloquent sensibility, to his nakedness and his wounds, for the melancholy confirmation. A good mind, indeed, would have anticipated him, saying, "what shall I do for thee?" But
the

the priest, to his eternal disgrace, “passed by
“on the other side.”

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came, and looked on him, with still greater inhumanity than the priest who had preceded him; the Levite went near, and stood over him, contemplating his sufferings, and then passed by on the other side.

Though humanity seems inherent in man, yet if there be a character from which we look for peculiar expressions of it, it is surely from him who is professionally taught, that “mercy
“is better than sacrifice,”—it is surely from him whose studies point out to him, how agreeable mercy is to the nature of God—who, “by setting
“his affections on things above,” is so weaned from delusive pleasures here below, that he has not the same temptations to covetousness with other men: if from any character, acts of humanity are expected, it is, it must be, from one of this description. That there should be inconsistency in any man’s conduct is much to be lamented; but that there should be a contradiction between the preaching and the practice, of him, who is separated from the people to declare unto them the law of the Lord,
and

and who is required, by both God and man, and justly required, to shew the excellency of it in his own conduct, and by his own example—words cannot express how contemptible is such a being.

When the unfortunate traveller had been cruelly, and despitefully neglected by two of his own countrymen, who were appointed to teach the statutes, and the ordinances unto Israel; when assistance had been refused him, by those who taught that the second commandment enjoined the sons of Israel to love their neighbors as themselves, the pain he was suffering would be increased by their mortifying neglect, by their cruel disappointment. When he first beheld the priest, he, no doubt, indulged the joyful hopes, that he should, through the compassion of the minister of Religion, be restored to the society of his friends. And though once cruelly passed by, he might not, when he perceived the Levite approaching, abandon himself to the horrors of despair. But when he had been twice neglected, and by men, whose profession required them to recommend, in their discourses, the duty, and to exemplify, in their conduct, the amiableness
of

of compassion—what further hopes could he entertain—and especially from a Samaritan? View with me, for a moment, the situation of both body and mind of the wounded traveller.

Behold him laid in this dangerous road, so much dreaded by the frequency of robberies, and the infliction of cruelty: behold him stripped of his clothes, and wounded by barbarity, left even “hard at death’s door,” without the prospect of succor, or relief; his sufferings embittered by the reflection of leaving, perhaps, an affectionate wife, and a beloved family behind him—of dying, without hearing the voice, beholding the countenance, clasping, in a last embrace, those dearest to his heart—without the comfort of giving them his blessing, and having the bed of death made easier by their affectionate solicitude. He is awakened from his reflections, by the arrival of the good Samaritan. “For as soon as the Samaritan saw
“him, he had compassion on him, and went
“to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring
“in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast,
“and brought him to an inn, and took care
“of him.” Methinks I see the benevolent Samaritan, after refreshing his spirits, and
binding

binding up his wounds, raising him gently from the ground, and setting him carefully on his own beast, observing, with looks of compassion, whether he could bear its uneasy steps, and enquiring, with the accents of affection, whether he felt himself relieved? He completes the kindness he had begun; for when he got the unfortunate man to an inn, he took care of him, administering what his necessities demanded, and what the place supplied. “And “on the morrow, when he departed,” leaving what might be sufficient to defray the expences the wounded traveller might incur, he committed him to the attentions of his host, “saying, take care of him, and whatsoever “thou expendest more” on his account, “when “I come again, I will repay thee.”

Let us accompany the good Samaritan a little way on his journey, and observe the reflections, which may naturally be supposed to arise in his mind.

The greatest and truest pleasure we can enjoy in this life, is to look back, with satisfaction, on those parts of our conduct, which unequivocally demonstrate our love of God, and good-will towards men.

When

When the good Samaritan had bid adieu to the miserable stranger, he would take a review of the affecting circumstances which had so lately occurred.

Lamenting the pitiable situation of the unhappy being, who had called for the exercise of his compassion, he would rejoice in having had the opportunity, of rescuing a wretched creature, from misery, and from death. The poor man's wounds—his utter inability to stir from the place, where the hands of robbers had so inhumanly laid him—the recollection of his circumstances and his friends—all which the unfortunate traveller would, doubtless, relate to him—of perhaps a beloved wife, and numerous offspring, waiting impatiently his return, would again swell his eye, with the tear of compassion, and rend his heart, with the pangs of sorrow. He would curse the prejudice that subsisted, with such inveterate rigor, between his countrymen, and the Jews. As a man, he would esteem humanity inseparable from his nature. Had he himself been in such a deplorable situation, “though there were no dealings,” or, as it would be better rendered, no intercourse, “between the Jews and the Samaritans,” and of
consequence,

consequence, he could not have hoped for relief from a Jew, yet what he would desire of others he would shew to them. And he would go on his way rejoicing, and thanking God, not only that he was superior to such irrational prejudices, but that *he* had been providentially sent that way; lest, had it fallen to some of his countrymen, the unhappy man might have died, not altogether through their insensibility, and hard-heartedness, but through national prejudice, and religious hatred.

Having made such reflections upon the parable, as the several parts of it seem to suggest, it only remains that I make an application.

The Scribe, when he tempted our Saviour, desired to know of Him, “what he should do “to inherit eternal life.” In answer to which question, after assuring him, that the love of God is to be the foundation on which his superstructure is to be raised, He relates this beautiful parable, and concludes with these emphatic words—“go, and do thou likewise:” if eternal life be thy object—if thou art really, desirous of dwelling with God for ever and ever, “love God with all thy heart, and mind, and “soul, and strength, and thy neighbor, as
“thyself;”

“thyself;” and give this proof of thy observance of the second commandment, the best, the most convincing, and satisfactory; may indeed the only proof—go and do as the good Samaritan did. If thy circumstances enable thee, “when thou seest the poor without covering, clothe him, and turn not away from thine own flesh: deal thy bread to the hungry, and give drink to the thirsty soul,” then art thou giving an evidence of thy love of God. But if thy own necessities forbid such expressions of kindness, thou canst at least be civil, and courteous, and compassionate. Let us beware, my brethren, that we place not our religion in mere acts of godliness—in going to Church oft, in repeating many prayers, in assuming a demure look, and wearing a severe countenance. Thou mayst pray like Daniel three times in a day—like the Pharisee fast twice in a week—yet if thou dost not adorn such severity of religion by tenderness, and compassion, and charity—it is not the Religion of Christ, it is the religion of the devil; it is the seducing, the fatal bait, which the grand enemy of mankind so officiously throws in our way to lead us, by imperceptible degrees, to

eternal perdition. What can be easier than to go regularly to Church, at the stated hours of prayer, and to “offer sacrifice unto the Lord our God of that which costs us nothing? Let our alms, as well as our prayers, go up as a “memorial before God.” The Supreme Judge will reward us, not merely according to our prayers, but our charity. Let every man, therefore, who, like the Scribe, would know what he shall do to inherit eternal life, as the good Samaritan did, let him go and do likewise.

SERMON XV.

LUKE XVI. 22, 23.

The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.

THE parable, from which these words are taken, contains many useful lessons of instruction. To the rich, who abound with wealth, and are happy in their independence, it suggests the uncertainty of their possessions, the termination of their power, the reckonings of futurity! to the poor, who are distressed with want, and afflicted with misery, it administers the balm of comfort, the consolations of hope, the joys of heaven. But it displays not "the terrors of the Lord" to the rich, *because* God has given them abundance, nor does it promise blessings to the poor, *because* he has not, in his all-wise dispensations, permitted

“ their cup to overflow.” No, as each shall conduct himself in the sphere in which he is ordained to move, he is the object of punishment, or of reward.

“ There was a certain rich man, who was
“ clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared
“ sumptuously every day. And there was a
“ certain beggar, named Lazarus, laid at his
“ gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with
“ the crumbs, which fell from the rich man’s
“ table.” The character of each is drawn in lively colors, and in exact proportions, with a beautiful view of the light of virtue, and a solemn contrast of the shade of vice. The difference between their circumstances, and situation, is not more visible, than the qualities of their minds, and the endowments of their hearts. The rich man “ had received his
“ good things,” and he enjoyed them without once looking up to the author of them. He possessed wealth, but he reflected not for what end it was given him. He considered it his own, and that he was not accountable for the distribution of it. “ Whatsoever his eyes
“ desired, he kept not from them, he withheld not from his heart any joy :” the magnificence

nificence of dress, the distinction of equipage, the luxuries of dissipation; these enchained his attention, and engrossed his soul. "He lived to himself." Unmindful of his rank in society, he provided for the gratification of his desires, without giving himself leisure to reflect on the afflictions, and the wants of others, and how easily he might, by his attentions, and his bounty, have asswaged and relieved them. "Howbeit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so." Wrapt up in the indulgence of his wishes, to their false security, and delusive enjoyments, he sacrificed the calls of kindness, and the feelings of humanity. Whereas had he looked into himself—had he considered whence he came, and whither he was going—had he attended to the dispensations of Providence, and enquired "who made him to differ from another, and of what he was possessed, that he had not received from God"—had he examined his heart, by what eminence of merit, and distinction of goodness, he was entitled to such superiority of station, the natural result would have been, that he would have looked upon himself as accountable for the distribution of his riches,

and that the way of employing them most acceptably to their benevolent Author, was in relieving the distressed, in comforting the afflicted, in “strengthening the weak hands, “and supporting the feeble knees.” The Scripture, indeed, affords no room for conjecture that the rich man was either hard-hearted, cruel, or unjust. It presents us with a more awful view. “He lifted up his eyes, being “in torments”—why? because he had passed his days as an useless member of society—because, instead of having acted a distinguished part on the theatre of life, he contented himself with the negative merit of merely appearing on the stage, when he might, by his exertions, have contributed to the happy conclusion, and the brilliant success, of the drama. Exempt from trouble, immersed in pleasure, he sits down clothed in purple, and fine linen, with all that wealth can purchase, grandeur boast, and taste adorn; he sits down to a table richly spread, with all the produce of seasons and of climates, equally calculated to captivate the eye, as to gratify the palate.

In the midst of this voluptuousness, “a certain beggar, named Lazarus, came and laid

“ at

“ at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed
“ with the crumbs which fell from the rich
“ man’s table.” But intent only on the accommodation of his company, the splendor of his appearance, the dignity of his station, the unhappy Lazarus lies unpitied, unheeded, a prey to the pinchings of hunger, and the corrodings of disease. Whilst he is suffering from the cravings of appetite, and the pain of his sores, between the hopes of relief, and the dread of disappointment; he perceives, within the gate, every one emulously active to contribute his services towards the pomp, or convenience of his master. In such a state of pain, of suspense, and apprehension, how natural that reflections like these should arise in his mind!

‘ For what end was I born, and for what
‘ purpose was I sent into the world! The Father of mercies doth not willingly afflict his
‘ creatures; yet he hath emptied upon me the
‘ whole vial of his wrath. He has disabled me
‘ from earning my bread, by grievous sores
‘ with which he has afflicted my body; and
‘ instead of the application of oil and wine, to
‘ heal my wounds, he withholds the hand of
P 4 . . . ‘ compassion

' compassion from asswaging their pain. Tor-
 ' mented as I am with their increasing viru-
 ' lence, and with continued neglect, the appe-
 ' tite of hunger urges, with importunity, for
 ' instant gratification. All I desire of this rich
 ' man, or of his dependents, are only the
 ' crumbs which fall from his table. But my
 ' request, modest as it is, is refused. Eating
 ' bread to the full themselves, they do not feel
 ' for me, who am even hard at death's door,
 ' and unless some one has compassion on me,
 ' shall soon be delivered from all my trouble.
 ' May God, in his mercy, put an end to my
 ' sufferings, and my life together! Though he
 ' has singled me out as the object of his chaf-
 ' tisement here, the marks of his displeasure
 ' will not, I trust, accompany me beyond the
 ' grave. Who knoweth but, wretched as I
 ' am now, he may soon receive me to himself,
 ' and amply recompense me for all my suffer-
 ' ings? Who knoweth but he may soon change
 ' my mourning into joy, and convey me to
 ' that blessed abode, where tears are wiped
 ' from every face, where there is no more cry-
 ' ing, neither sorrow, nor pain? This confi-
 ' dence in his goodness, this trust in his mercy,
 ' hath

‘ hath supported me under a burden, other-
‘ wise too heavy to be born. But continued
‘ neglect, violent pain, and unsatisfied hunger
‘ have, at length, with slow and cruel delibe-
‘ ration, almost deprived me of a miserable, and
‘ wretched existence !’

Unhappy Lazarus ! thou wert despised on earth, and thy accumulated sorrows met with no alleviation ; but after thou hadst fallen a victim to their power, thou receivedst for thy reward, “ an exceeding, and eternal weight of “ glory.” Thou patiently submittedst to thy grievous lot, and thou now lookest back with pleasure on the virtues, with the exercise of which, thou wert so severely tried. Thy soul, escaping from this prison of clay, found a refuge in Abraham’s bosom, where it will be eternally preserved from the mortification of disappointment, from the insults of reproach, and the distraction of despair.

Did the same blessings await the rich man ? Did his splendid dress, magnificent table, ostentatious equipage, afford him comfort on the bed of death ? Did he enjoy the reflection, the animating reflection, that he had considered the wants, and relieved the necessities of the
poor ;

poor; that he had lived a life of virtue and piety; and that, having acted the part of a steward, in which he had been ruler over many things, his accounts were made up—so fairly stated, and so accurately balanced—that he only waited their examination to receive an approving discharge? But so far from having accounts made ready, he never considered that he had any to be passed—he never considered that he was accountable to God—but that his riches, fatal delusion! were gotten by his own hand, and by his own might. If then he died, as he had lived, in a state of insensibility—if he passed out of this world, as he had continued in it, without reflecting on the relation in which he stood to God, and to society; what a transition in his circumstances! what an instant change from power to submission, from mirth to mourning, from dissipation to despair! “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being “in torments!” If, on the other hand, he reflected, that, as he had no claim to such distinction of station, his rank, and consequence, and superiority were assigned him, on the express condition that he should act the part of God’s vicegerent, in comforting the afflicted,
relieving

relieving the distressed, and exciting all by the prevalence of his example, and the persuasion of his advice, to fear, and obey, the great God of heaven and earth—what must have been his distraction, and horror? His soul must have felt that “fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation,” before he was plunged into its misery. Dreadful foretaste! He must have laid on his last bed, anticipating the eternity of misery which awaited him, and instead of deriving comfort from the reflection of his wealth, he must have heartily wished, that he had never possessed it. How dreadful must have been the thoughts of meeting the author of his abundance, feeling himself obnoxious to his wrath? Existing in this deplorable state, in this miserable condition, he is called to realize those horrors which were painted by his imagination, and anticipated by his conscience. “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” In hell! the abode of wicked spirits, between which, and the mansions of the blessed, there is a great gulf fixed, so that they, who would escape their punishment, cannot—neither can those who are happy, go to alleviate, no not even with a drop of water,

water, the torments of the damned. See, in this region of woe, the portion of him who, not long ago, “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day!” How had he incurred such severity of punishment? Not, I again repeat it, not because he had been cruel, unjust, or impious. No! because he had centered his happiness in the gratification of his wishes; because he had led a life of indolence, of thoughtlessness, and dissipation. May the alarming reflection suggest to every one of such a character, the necessity of an useful, of a virtuous, and religious life! May the alarming reflection induce all who are blessed with this world’s goods, to acquaint themselves with the distresses, and afflictions of their needy brethren! May it induce those “who have goods laid up for many years, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who hath given them all things so richly to enjoy!”

“The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” He was translated from earth to heaven; not because he had been in want of the comforts, and the necessaries of life; not because he had been the prey of disease, and of wretchedness. No! because

because his poverty had not tempted him “to steal, and take the name of his God in vain;” because, though he had been poor and needy, he “had waited patiently the Lord’s leisure, assured that all things would, in the end, work together,” under the direction of Providence, “for his good.”

How useful an admonition does the Parable, thus considered, suggest to the two different states of rich and poor?

Since happiness is the object of all men, and since riches are desired for the sake of promoting happiness, let those who are blessed with them be careful, lest, in the fulness of their sufficiency, they be tempted to say—“who is the Lord?” instead of seeking it “where alone true joys are to be found.” Let them rather have God frequently in their thoughts, and consider their additional obligations to worship, and fear him. Let them often reflect, that “riches take wing and flee away,” and that they are, at all times, at the disposal of him who entrusted them to their care—who entrusted them, not that their possessors should use them, as though they were absolutely their own—not that their possessors should become independent

independent of him “ who maketh poor, and
“ maketh rich.” Let the rich man never for-
get, that if his riches were transferred to an-
other, all the respect, and adulation, and ho-
mage that are paid to him, would be trans-
ferred together with them. And it would be
well; if he would deign sometimes to divest
himself in idea, of his wealth and property, and
consult his conscience, whether, as a man, he is
entitled to the esteem and respect of his neigh-
bors, and fellow-citizens; or whether, if he
were not a rich man, he would not be, uni-
versally, and openly, the object of derision,
contempt, and of abhorrence? Let him con-
sult his feelings in what manner the neglect,
the caprice, the insolence, his riches may,
in his own opinion, authorize him to shew to
others, would, if their stations were reversed,
be received by himself? Let the rich man,
above all, consider, that he is one day to stand
at God’s Tribunal, without the protection of
wealth, and the influence of authority; that
he is there to give a strict and solemn account
of the manner in which he has employed
his riches, and whether he has made them
conducive to the comfort of men, and the
glory of God? Whether, by his exemplary
conduct,

exemplary conduct, and diffusive charities, he has promoted the cause of Christianity, and the salvation of mankind? And that, in that tremendous day, he may stand before God, with humble confidence, let him be persuaded to wean his affections gently from the things of this life, to set them upon things above, and by abundant charities, fervent prayer, and devout deportment, endeavor to obtain an inheritance “where neither moth nor rust can destroy, and where thieves cannot break through nor steal.”

Let the poor man, instead of murmuring at the station Providence has allotted him, comfort himself with the reflection, that his poverty, if he be virtuous, will soon be succeeded by blessings too great for the tongue to express, or the heart to conceive. Let him, since it hath pleased the Almighty, to withhold from him many of the comforts of this life, endeavor to secure happiness in the next, those joys “unspeakable, and full of glory, which will be the reward of patient continuance in well-doing.” When poverty, “that fore evil,” presses hard upon him, let him remember that to attempt to remove it, either by deceit, or dishonesty,

dishonesty, is directly to oppose the administration of Providence—for God, if it seem fit, will either make away for his relief, or will abundantly reward him for his patience. Let him testify, by his civility, meekness, quietness, that he is deserving of the countenance, of the kindness, and charity of his superiors. Let him be careful not to squander what he earns, in rioting and drunkenness, but let him endeavor to provide for his family, as becomes his station.

And may both rich and poor constantly reflect upon the future life, both of happiness and misery, which awaits us; that “if we have done good, we shall go into life everlasting, and if we have done evil, into everlasting fire!”

God impresses the awful thought so strongly upon our minds, that, in every thing we think, and say, and do, we may prepare ourselves against the dreadful day of trial!

S E R M O N XVI.

GENESIS XLV. 28.

And Israel said, it is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go, and see him before I die.

THERE is not, perhaps, any event recorded by the sacred, or by any other, writers, either ancient or modern, which so much engages our attention; and interests our feelings; as the narration delivered, with such beautiful simplicity, and exquisite graces, by Moses, the oldest, yet unparalleled historian, commonly entitled, the history of Joseph and his brethren. It may not be an unpleasing, nor will it, I hope, be an unprofitable employment of our time, to detail the principal parts of this amusing history; as many reflections will arise which may serve to inform, admonish, direct us, in our passage through life.

The sacred writer acquaints us that Joseph; above all his brethren, was the object of his

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father's

father's partiality and affection. Israel, or, as he is sometimes called, * Jacob, "loved Joseph more than all his children;" and from this source originated many of the sorrows, which were accumulated upon him in the decline of life. Joseph being the son of his old age—for Israel was ninety-one years old when he was born—"he made him a coat of many colors." What but the weakness of age could have suggested that fond, that absurd distinction? The father, by an act of injudicious preference, alienated the affections of all his sons from his beloved child; "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably," or with civility, "unto him." In the simplicity of his heart, he relates a dream, encouraged no doubt by Jacob's notorious partiality, which indicated his future greatness, and their abject humiliation—thus awakening their jealousy, and stimulating their resentment. "And he dreamed yet another dream," prophetic of their still greater mortification.

The Sons of Israel about that time "removed their father's flock to Sechem. And

* Chap. xxxii. 28, and chap. xxxv. 10.

"Israel,"

“Israel,” anxious to hear of the safety of his sons, who had justly incensed the men of Sechem against them, * “said unto Joseph, do “not thy brethren feed the flock in Sechem? “come, and I will send thee unto them.” Unfortunate old man! who knew not what that day would bring forth! He knew not what pangs that parting would occasion! He knew not that the son of his old age, who had just predicted that himself, his mother, and his brethren should bow themselves to him to the earth, was leaving his paternal roof, never, never to return!

In obedience to his father’s command, he went in pursuit of his brethren. “And when “they saw him afar off,” recollecting his presages of greatness, and solicitous to prevent the completion of them, “even before he came “near unto them, they conspired against him “to slay him.” Inhuman monsters! to be satiated only with a brother’s blood! Their first intention, dictated by jealousy, and approved by malevolence, of “slaying him, and “casting him into some pit to see what would

* Chap. xxxiv.

“ become of his dreams,” was providentially defeated. For Reuben, hearing their sanguinary purpose, proposed, under the specious pretence of not shedding his blood, but with the real design of actually ridding him out of their hands, “ and safely delivering him to his father again,” that they should cast him into a pit in the wilderness, which, in those countries, were frequently digged by shepherds to hold rain water for their cattle, when they could not find a spring, and were far from a river.

His brethren, after they had cast him into the pit, sat down to eat bread. And during their repast, they perceived a company of Ishmaelites going down into Egypt. A proposition was made by Judah, not to leave him in the pit, but to sell him to the Ishmaelites, or, as they are called, the Midianites, being near neighbors, joined together in trade, and making one caravan, or company. Thus is the child, whom Israel loved more than all his children, in the hands of the descendants of that man “ whose hands were against every man, and every man’s hands against him.”*

To exculpate themselves in the eyes of their

* Chap. xvi. 12.

venerable parent, “they took Joseph’s coat, “and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the “coat in the blood”—diabolical machination! “and they took it to their father, and said, this “have we found; judge whether it be thy “son’s coat or not.” You who are parents, “whose lives are bound up in the lives of your “children,” ye best can tell, what were the feelings of this indulgent, of this afflicted father! Ye best can tell, what were the sorrows of his heart, when the child of his hopes was devoured, as he thought, by evil beasts, and was, without doubt, rent in pieces. Here we must leave him, mourning for his son many days, and accompany this supposed dead son, through a variety of scenes singular and surprising—scenes planned by the wisdom, and executed by the agency, of God.

The Midianites, when they arrived in Egypt, sold Joseph unto Potiphar, an officer of distinguished rank in the court of Pharaoh. Whatever was the department for which his master designed him, the attachment of Potiphar was equalled only by the fidelity of Joseph. “He “made him overseer over his house, and all “that he had, he put into his hands.” He

was advanced, by a quick succession of events, to an eminence of power which often intoxicates, and which, as often, in the wisdom of Providence, is the occasion of falling. But in all this “he erred not, nor acted foolishly”—in affliction, patient and resigned; in prosperity, he was meek and humble.

A circumstance altogether unexpected contributed to his apparent ruin, but produced, in the end, his highest elevation. Solicited, by the wife of Potiphar, to an act, unlawful in itself, and injurious to his master, he is enabled, by a sense of right, and a principle of gratitude, to withstand the importunate solicitation—“how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Misrepresented, however, to his master, he is degraded from being any longer overseer of his house; and “though innocency was found in him,” he is dragged to prison, and immured in a dungeon, where “his feet were hurt in the stocks, the iron entered into his soul.”

In this gloomy mansion were two officers of Pharaoh’s court. And they dreamed each a dream which Joseph interpreted; and it happened in three days from that time, to
both

both of them, as he had predicted. Two full years after, Pharaoh dreamed two portentous dreams, which, when no one of the wise men, and magicians could be found to interpret them, the ungrateful chief butler, to endear himself to the king his master, vouchsafed to recollect his fellow-prisoner, and to acquaint Pharaoh with his supernatural qualifications. When Joseph was brought before Pharaoh, he assured him, that he did not possess the power of interpretation as a natural endowment; "it is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Having heard the dreams, he interpreted them to the entire conviction of the king, and his attendants. Pharaoh, struck with his wisdom, and observing "an excellent spirit to be in him, said unto Joseph, see, I set thee over all the land of Egypt." Joseph was now thirty years old, when he arrived at this summit of greatness. He entered upon his office by taking a survey of the country, and giving directions how the plentiful harvests might be properly disposed; for it is said, "he gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much until he left numbering."

But the seven years of plenty expired. “And
“the famine was over all the face of the earth;”
not only in Egypt, but in all the neighboring
countries; and among those who wanted bread
were the father and brethren of Joseph. “And
“ Joseph’s ten brethren went down to buy
“ corn in Egypt. But Jacob sent not Benja-
“ min, Joseph’s youngest brother, with them,
“ lest peradventure mischief should befall him
“ in the way.” Upon their arrival in Egypt,
they were directed to Joseph, and the dream
which he had related, and which incensed
them against him, now received its comple-
tion; for “they came, and bowed themselves
“ before him, with their faces to the earth.”
He recognized his brethren, but assumed a
character unnatural to the amiable serenity of
his temper. “He made himself strange unto
“ them, and spake roughly unto them,” and
accused them of designs hostile to the Egyp-
tian Government—“ye are spies, to see the
“ nakedness of the land ye are come.” To
remove so injurious a suspicion, they relate to
him their kindred, and situation—the very ob-
ject he had in view. But regardless of their
arguments, he persists in his declarations.

When

When they repeat more fully their circumstances and condition, he pretends to be confirmed in his suspicions. "That is it that I spake unto you, saying, ye are spies;" for if your father sent you, indeed, from the land of Canaan, to buy corn, and ye have yet a brother, why did he not send him also? "Hereby ye shall be proved;" at the last he determines that one of them shall be kept in custody, and the others should return to the land of Canaan. "And they did so"—they agreed to his proposal. What a variety of sensations must have crowded in his breast! the hearing his native language after an absence of twenty-two years from his father's house; the predictions of his brethren's obedience to him fulfilled; the account of his brother's health and welfare; the recollection of the misery his father had suffered on his account, and the joyful expectation that he should soon be restored to his embraces! With such sensations he was overpowered; and nature required relief. He retired, therefore, and wept. Previous to their return to the land of Canaan, Joseph gave orders that, when their sacks were filled, their money should be restored. When they came

to their father's house, and related the occurrences of their journey; when they emptied their sacks, and found every man's bundle of money in his sack, the good old Patriarch vented his apprehensions in this empaffioned complaint, "Me have ye bereaved of my children, Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." Reuben, desirous "that they should live, and not die," undertakes to restore Benjamin safe to his father. A second time they went down-into Egypt: and apologizing to the steward of Joseph's house, for the money that was found in their sacks, he assures them that no evil was intended them, and acquaints them, that they are that day to dine with "the governor over all the land of Egypt." When they were introduced into his presence, he again enquires of the welfare of Israel—"Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, thy *servant* our father is in good health; and they bowed down their heads, and made "obeisance." By presenting, with their own, the duty of their Father, his second dream was fulfilled. Three tables were provided for their mutual

mutual accommodation; one for Joseph, who was distinguished as the head of the land; one for the Egyptians, his attendants and ministers; and one for Joseph's brethren; for the Egyptians, from the peculiarity of their customs, would not condescend to sit at the same table, with the Hebrews. As they sat down to meat, Joseph, to their utter astonishment, placed "the first-born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth."

Before they returned out of Egypt, Joseph's silver cup, according to his own directions, was put in Benjamin's sack, that he might make a trial of his brethren's regard and affection for their youngest brother, and their father. As soon as the morning was light, they were sent away; and the steward went in pursuit of them, and challenged them, with having stolen the cup out of Joseph's house. Scandalized with the reproach, they unlade their asses; but when they discovered it in Benjamin's sack, they returned sorrowful, and sore afraid to the city. When they were come into his house, Judah addresses the Governor, from the eighteenth verse of the forty-fourth Chapter
to

to the end, in a strain of such simple, animated, persuasive eloquence, as art cannot equal, and learning cannot reach. Joseph was moved with the affecting relation ; and, dismissing his attendants, he said unto his brethren, after his mind had got relief by a flood of tears, “ I am
“ Joseph, doth my father yet live ? ” Represent to yourselves their feelings, when they heard the declaration. Every passion which can agitate a guilty mind—shame at having taken offence at their brother’s dreams; indignation at having conspired against his life; remorse for occasioning their father twenty-two years of misery ; and apprehension, lest Joseph should requite them “ as they had thought to
“ have done unto him,” rent their hearts with the violent conflict. But he dispelled their apprehensions, and comforted their souls : he represents them to themselves as agents in the hands of God, to accomplish his hidden purposes. “ It was not you that sent me hither,
“ but God.”

“ When they came into the land of Canaan,
“ unto Jacob their father, they told him, say-
“ ing, Joseph is governor over all the land of
“ Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he
“ believed

“believed them not.” Hearing the name of his long-lost son, the summit of greatness to which he was arrived, “his heart fainted,” for he distrusted the authenticity of the relation. Impatient of doubt, they relate the conversation that passed between them, and appeal to the carriages, which Joseph had so respectfully sent for his conveyance. The spirit of Jacob their father now revives. “It is enough,” says he, “Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go “and see him before I die.”

Methinks I see the venerable patriarch, withdrawing from his assembled family, and retiring to offer the incense of thanksgiving, to the God of his fathers. Methinks I hear him recounting, in the posture of humility, the mercies of God, imploring forgiveness of his distrust of Providence, and pouring out his soul in devout supplications to the awful Being, who “bringeth low, and lifteth up.”

Joseph, knowing the time in which his father and his family would be at Goshen, “made ready his chariot, and went up to “meet Israel his father, and presented himself “unto him; and he fell on his neck,” affecting interview! “and wept on his neck a good “while.”

“ while.” Who is the man so much to be envied as Israel, at this interesting scene? Ye, who are fathers, say, what would be the sensibilities of your souls, at meeting with the child of your bosom, who “ had been dead “ and was alive again, who had been lost, and “ was found;” and, moreover, in a time of universal dearth, when “ the hungry had not “ bread to eat, and the thirsty water to drink,” was “ governor over all the land of Egypt.” And “ Israel said unto Joseph, now let me “ die since I have seen thy face, because thou “ art yet alive;” there is nothing in this world, in which I can now be interested. I have gone mourning for thee many years; my hours have been embittered by thy loss; but it hath pleased God to bless me, in letting me see thy face before I die.

Jacob after this lived seventeen years in Egypt, the only part of his life that he can be said to have known comfort. But even this gleam of happiness was in the setting of his days, when “ he could hardly discern between “ good and evil—when he could not taste “ what he eat, or what he drank.” And “ the “ time drew nigh, that Israel must die.” And
after

after he was buried, for he was laid, as he had requested, with his fathers; Joseph's brethren "sent a messenger to him, acknowledging the "evil they did unto him," and soliciting his forgiveness. Having long buried in oblivion their unkindness, he wept when they brought it again to his remembrance. His heart was too obedient to the dictates of religion, to "return "evil for evil. He comforted them, and "spoke kindly unto them." Joseph was now fifty-six years old; and he lived afterwards fifty-four years, "administering justice, and "executing truth."

The entire history permit me to recommend to your attentive, and serious perusal. And I pray God it may teach every parent, judicious, and impartial, affection to his children; and every child, reverence to his parents, and love to his brethren! May it give understanding to the simple; to the young man knowledge and discretion! May it lighten the burden of affliction, and dispose us all to trust in Him "who "bringeth good out of evil; and who would "not that any should perish, but that all "should repent and live."

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

PSALM CXXii. 1.

*I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into
the House of the Lord.*

TO neglect the public worship of Almighty God is now become so very common, that many men, no doubt, imagine themselves excused from the obligation of attending it. One Sunday succeeds another, and we perceive a growing inattention, an increasing unconcern about publicly supplicating the blessing of God. Many have so habituated themselves to this shameful absence from God's house, that, one might conclude, they have entered into covenant with Him, and that to make a public acknowledgement of his power in prayer, and to offer him the public tribute of praise and thanksgiving, is no longer to constitute a part of their christian duty. It is not to such men I shall now address myself; for as they do not attend on the service of the

R Church,

Church, what is here delivered can neither convince them of their disobedience, nor persuade them to a better mind; but my discourse will be addressed to those who are sometimes present, but generally absent. And observing the congregation rather larger than usual, and, therefore, composed chiefly of those who do not regularly frequent the courts of the Lord's house, I cannot have a more favorable opportunity to beseech you publicly, my brethren, in the name of God, and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye will, from this day, devote the Sunday to the holy purpose for which God Almighty designed it; that ye will, from this day, invariably attend public worship; and that, instead of loitering in idleness at home, or wandering about in mischief abroad, during the time of divine service, ye will "pay your vows in the great congregation," and say, from your hearts, with the devout Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord."

In this discourse I shall, first, shew the obligations incumbent on every person, without exception, to attend the public worship of God every Sunday.

After

After which I shall remove the excuses made for the neglect of it.

And lastly, I shall earnestly exhort you to worship God as regularly as the Sunday comes, "in this house which is called by his name." May the blessing of God accompany what is to be delivered! And may this house, dedicated to God, be distinguished, every succeeding Sunday, by the regular, and constant attendance of every individual, whom God requires to be in it!

1st. It has always been the object of every Government to inculcate, upon the people, religious principles; well knowing, that, if the fear of God be not implanted in the heart, men would never be restrained by a sense of right, a principle of duty, nor the terror of law. And for what end are churches built, and ministers appointed? Surely that the ignorant may be instructed in, and the more intelligent reminded of, their duty to both God, their neighbor, and themselves. The Legislature, conceiving it to be the indispensable duty of every one to attend public worship, has imposed a fine upon all who neglect it: of so much consequence does it appear to rulers and

governors, that the house of God should be regularly frequented. For it is evident, that, unless society be actuated by religious principles, there will soon be a subversion of order, and an end of government.

A second obligation to attend divine worship is, that it is the only mode of conveying, and of receiving instruction. We are more devout, we are more serious, we feel stronger impressions of Religion, by supplicating God in the Church, than we can do in private; for a devout congregation is an emblem of Heaven. Those indeed, who are religiously disposed, may derive much edification from joining in prayer regularly with their families, from offering up their private devotions to God, and from frequently reading the holy Scriptures. But the Church is the only place, where we can be exhorted to the observance of those duties we neglect, and dissuaded from the commission of those vices, to which we are addicted. For instance: the man who does not attend the Church, does not, of consequence, receive the Sacrament. Now, by his neglect, he does not hear his objections to the celebration of the Lord's Supper removed; he hears

no exhortation to the observance of that indispensable duty; and he becomes, at last, almost insensible. that Jesus Christ, the very night on which he suffered death to redeem us, expressly commanded it. Is a man addicted to intemperance, and profane swearing, to excessive passion? By not going to Church he does not hear the folly of his vices exposed; he does not hear the denunciations of God Almighty, "against those who commit such things," denounced; and, therefore, continues in the indulgence of them, till he goes down to the grave with all his sins unrepented of, on his head. Consider, on the other hand, the happy effects of a regular attendance on the service of the Church. A suitable discourse, by God's blessing accompanying it, may be a mean of convincing a sinner of the error of his ways, of leading him to amendment of life, and of making his peace with both God and man. "The word preached may, and does, profit" in a variety of instances. How many thoughtless wretches who consumed their time, and squandered their substance, have become diligent and careful? How many, who behaved like brutes and savages to their families, have, by hearing the

word of God, become docile, and peaceable? Now, if such advantages arise from a regular, and constant attendance on the service of the Church, is it not every man's duty to be constant in his attendance? "I speak as to wise men, judge ye," my brethren, and determine on the propriety of it.

The last obligation I shall mention, incumbent on all men to celebrate the public worship of God, is the express command so repeatedly, and emphatically, delivered in the holy Scriptures.

It is to be observed, that the command is no way qualified, by leaving it to our own discretion, whether we will go to church or not. God's house is the place appointed where we are to receive instruction, to offer up prayers, and to give thanks unto God. The Almighty commanded "the children of Israel, their
 "wives, and their little ones, and the stranger
 "within their gates, to assemble that they
 "might hear, and that they might learn, and
 "fear the Lord their God, and observe to do
 "all the words of his law: and that their chil-
 "dren too might hear, and learn to fear the
 "Lord their God." What attention did they
 pay

pay to God's command? "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before ALL the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers, that were conversant among them." Let any man take a view of this congregation in general, and could he suppose that God Almighty had given a command that *every soul* throughout the parish, who was not prevented by sickness, or unavoidable necessity, should pay his adoration to Him in his own house? "When God judges the world in righteousness," may none of you, my brethren, experience the judgments he will denounce against those who have neglected his worship! God requires, and commands you to appear every Sunday, in this house of prayer. Instead of which, you come when you have no engagement, and just as you may feel disposed. Do you ever consider by whom the command is given? Is there a man amongst you who would pay the same inattention to the *request* of him, of whom you rent a farm, or derive your subsistence? To leave you without excuse; to represent you to yourselves, as ungrateful and disobedient, as

indeed you are, to the God who created, and redeemed you, I shall obviate the pleas with which you so easily satisfy yourselves.

(1) You have business you allege, and you cannot, for the sake of going to Church, neglect it. It may be so. To whom are you indebted for the means of business? To God, you will allow: no doubt. And what command has he given respecting it? "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; on it thou shalt do *no manner of work.*" If business require you to absent yourselves so very often from Church, you had better, I had almost said, have no business; you had better be in the lowest station in life, with just bread to eat, and raiment to put on, than have engagements which prevent your worshipping God. Business is to supply you with the comforts, and conveniences of this life: Religion is to secure your happiness to all eternity. Ask your hearts, whether you prefer?

(2) It is sometimes impiously said, where is the necessity of going to Church, when we observe many people, no better than ourselves, who have gone all their lives? "Their blood

" be

“ be on their own heads! to their own master
“ they stand or fall;” and to him must they
give account for all the means of improvement,
and answer for their neglect of it. Will it
render the punishment of eternity easier to
bear, because you do not bear your punish-
ment alone? We have enough to do to take
care of our own souls, let us not intermeddle
with others, unless we can improve them in
goodness.

(3) It is sometimes alleged, that your clothes
are so indifferent, you are ashamed of going to
Church. In answer to this excuse, will you be
seen by any person, who is not acquainted
with your situation, and circumstances? But it
may be often asked, with too much propriety,
of those who make it; is it not in your
power to provide better? Do you not spend so
much money in drinking, or so much time in
idleness, as, if you were employed in your bu-
siness, would supply you with clothes suitable
to your station? If you are careful, and indus-
trious, be not ashamed. It is not improbable,
but that some people, observing your regu-
larity and devotion, may charitably supply
you

you with some. But if they should not, you had better worship God, and save your souls, than lose them eternally, under the pretence of not having so good clothes as your neighbors.

(4) Some pretend to excuse their neglect of the Church because they are ignorant, and they shall not, they hope, be punished for their want of knowlege. One would think it almost impossible, that any man should pass such a gross imposition on himself. Is the Gospel so uninteresting, that we may live in wilful ignorance of it? If there be any thing in the world a man should be desirous of knowing, it is surely the way to Heaven. Would you not wish to have some greater certainty of your salvation, than the mere hope that you shall not be damned, because you would not know your duty, under the pretence, that you should thereby be excused from the practice of it?

(5) Another excuse made for not attending Church, by some people, is, that they can read the Scriptures, and good books at home. Now I appeal to your conscience before God, in
whose

whose more immediate presence we all are at this moment, whether you are, on the Lord's day, so profitably employed? Your conscience, I presume, tells you that you are not. But to convince you that it is your duty to attend the church, I will suppose you guilty of some vice—swearing, for instance. Now, whilst you have been reading, as you pretend, at home, a discourse hath been publicly delivered by the minister, which remarkably affects your case, and circumstances. Had you heard it, you might have been induced to think on the dangerous state you were in, with respect to Almighty God; you might have determined to reform your life, and to cease from the absurd, and sinful practice, of neglecting public worship. But is it likely you should read at home, what must fill you with shame, and strike you with self-condemnation? Besides, were every one to make the same excuse, Churches would be quite unnecessary, and the whole body of the Clergy almost, would be a burden upon society; as their entire employ would be the baptizing of infants, visiting the sick, and burying the dead. Sunday, that blessed day, appointed for the celebration of

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our Redemption by Christ, would cease to be beneficial; the consequence of which would shortly be, that we should live without sacraments, without piety, “and without God “in the world.” For the profanation of the day which God has commanded to be kept holy, you who neglect the Church are answerable.

(6) The last excuse I shall at present mention is, that the apprehension of catching cold, and the badness of the weather, often prevent many people, they pretend, from attending the service of God, who are sorry to be hindered from it.

Persons of delicate constitutions, and those afflicted with any severe complaints, may justly make the excuse. But “be not deceived;” do not impose on yourselves. Is not your health more endangered by cold and rain, in the prosecution of your business, or the enjoyment of your pleasures, than it would be by attending public worship? We need not argue on this subject; God is the Judge. You may allege many things in vindication of your neglect of it. But be well assured, that your excuses are such as you shall

shall not be ashamed, or afraid to offer at God's Tribunal. When you absent yourselves from Church, are you neither withheld by disinclination, nor diverted by amusements? What answer does your conscience give?

Nothing now remains, but that I briefly expostulate with you for presuming to devote the part of the Sunday, to your own pursuits, which should be spent in the public worship of Almighty God.

Of every soul committed to his care, the minister of the Gospel must give account to God. To observe you, therefore, my brethren, when you should be attending public worship—some pursuing your pleasures—some engaged in business—some indulging in idleness—and some immersed in dissipation—awakens, in my breast, sensations of the most piercing nature, and enkindles, in my heart, apprehensions the most alarming. When the Sunday comes, and the Bells warn you that “the day “is the Lord's,” let me beseech you to consider, that you are then called by the great God of heaven and earth; that he expects you to attend him in his own house; and that,

that, if you are remiss and negligent, you shall provoke his heavy displeasure. Do not attempt to satisfy your conscience, by pretending some little engagement, or trifling business. The Almighty admits of *no business* to detain you constantly from his worship. Would you be satisfied, were your own commands neglected, under such trivial pretences? We lament that the heathens had no Sunday, no set day, on which they might have worshipped God. And we make ourselves worse than the heathens, because, having such a day, we despise and defile it. Represent to your minds the awful season, when you shall be visited with sickness, and arrested by death; and ask yourselves, if you think your consciences will signify their approbation of your having been *only occasional* worshippers of God? Do you think you shall derive any pleasure in that awful hour, from the reflection, that you have spent so many Sundays, emphatically called *God's own days*, in idleness, in business, or in pleasures? Ah soon, too soon it may be! will that time arrive. And should I be called on to attend you in those agonizing moments, if I am not successful

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ful in my attempt, to persuade you to attend public worship, every page of the Bible will forbid me to give you encouragement to expect salvation. Consider how deplorable such a state will be, and may God give you Grace to prevent it!

S E R M O N XVIII.

GENESIS, XXVIII. 16.

*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it
not.*

THE careless and irreverent behavior of many people, in the house of God, affects with deep concern, all serious, and well-disposed minds. Is it that they do not go there, with the actual design of worshipping God? or because they may as well spend an hour in Church as any where else, and therefore think themselves discharged from the obligation of devoutly supplicating God? Whatever be their motive, it is evident that they do not consider themselves in the more immediate presence of him, who is “jealous of his honor, and who “will not give his glory to another.” All such, with too great reason, may say with Jacob in the text, “Surely the Lord is in this place, “and I knew it not. And he was faraid, and
S “said,

“said, how dreadful,” or how awful, “is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” That I may, by the blessing of God, excite, in every irreverent worshipper, the same awful ideas; that I may, by the assistance of Divine Grace, awaken, in every careless breast, the tremendous thought, that surely God is in this place, I will beg your serious attention, whilst I shew,

First, The motives and inducements that ought to bring us to the house of God. Secondly, The devotion and reverence with which we ought to behave in it. Thirdly, I shall point out some of the improprieties too often observable in our congregations; and shall then conclude with a serious application.

First, We go to Church to acknowledge Whose we are, and Whom we serve; to demonstrate to the world, and to ourselves, that we have enlisted under the banners of the Lord; and that, “whoever others may serve, the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice only will we obey.” We go to Church to return God our public thanks for creating, preserving, and redeeming us from everlasting misery; to beseech him to “give us those
“ things

“ things that be needful for us ;” and above all, to grant us the direction and assistance of his Holy Spirit, lest we fall a prey to our grand adversary, the devil. We go to Church to confess our unworthiness, how little we deserve, and yet how much we receive, to declare our resolutions of amendment, and to supplicate the Grace of God, to enable us to keep them.

I shall shew, therefore, in the second place, the reverence and devotion we ought to feel in our hearts, and express in our behavior, whilst we are in the Church of God. “ How awful
“ is this place ! This is none other than the
“ house of God, and this is the gate of Hea-
“ ven.”

Let us consider how we behave, when we are admitted into the presence of a superior, of whom we have a request to make, and whose refusal, or compliance, will be attended with loss, or productive of advantage. Do we sit down careless and unconcerned, not regarding what he says, and behaving with evident marks of disrespect, and uneasiness ? Do we seem visibly weary of his company, and openly acknowledge the irksomeness of his presence ? And when he assures us of his disposition and

power to serve us; when he treats us with the kindness of esteem, and the warmth of friendship, do we return his civilities with the coldness of indifference, and the mortification of disdain? On the contrary, do we not express by our looks, declare by our words, and demonstrate by our actions, our attachment to his person, and our regard to his interest? Do we not shew by our behavior, our sense of his kindness, and how highly we value the favor he has conferred? And is the obligation one man can confer on another, to be compared with the mercies we supplicate, and receive from God? Does the distinction, between one mortal and another, merit greater honor and reverence, than our Almighty Creator merits of us all? How ought we to carry ourselves then in his Divine Presence, and in the house appropriated to his worship! Ought we not there to collect our wandering thoughts, and fix them steadily upon God? Ought we not to be careful both what we think, and how we behave, lest, instead of obtaining a blessing, we bring on ourselves a curse? Our congregations ought to exhibit an assembly of people met for the sole purpose of worshipping God; of sup-
cating

receiving his blessing, of deprecating his vengeance. Every look, every gesture, every posture in which we stand, or sit, or kneel, should express our sense of God's awful presence. And instead of suffering our minds to be employed about either business or pleasure, we should attend entirely to the service in which we appear to be engaged, whether it be in prayer, thanksgiving, reading, or hearing the word delivered by the minister. But we not uncommonly hear many people, as soon as they go out of Church, declare, that, instead of attending to the prayers and the sermon, they have been thinking upon very different subjects. This may, to such thoughtless creatures, appear a trifling circumstance; but it is the greatest insult that can be shewed to God, and his worship. It is "drawing near to him with your lips, while your hearts are far from him; it is appearing to men to pray, but it is being within full of hypocrisy," of hypocrisy towards God. "And an hypocrite," it is said, "shall not stand before Him. Holiness becometh the house of God;" and when we approach to worship the Lord, it should be "with an holy
S 3 " worship ;"

“ worship ;” our hearts should accompany our tongues in the celebration of religion.

I now proceed to take notice of the errors observable in our congregations. I mention first, the manner in which some people go into Church ; they appear quite careless and indifferent ; when they go to their seats, they sit down with as much unconcern, as if the business they went about were of no consequence. Let me recommend it, earnestly recommend it, to every person, rich and poor, young and old, as soon as you get to your respective places, to “ fall meekly upon your knees,” and to beseech Almighty God to accept your prayers and devotion, to grant a blessing to what the minister is about to deliver, and to bring it home to your consciences. Let me beg of you all, to make use of such a prayer every time you go into the Church, and let me prevail with you, to teach your children one likewise. Such a behavior would be devout and reverent ; we should then *appear* like what *we are*, a congregation of fallen creatures, supplicating salvation of our Almighty Creator. But there is one thing I would recommend *before* you

you go into the Church; consider into whose house, and for what purpose, you are going. And when you enter the Church-yard, look with serious reflections on the graves, the repositories of the silent dead; consider that you may never be permitted to walk among them again, and that the very next grave that is opened, may be for yourself. Such reflections will suggest a reverent behavior in the House of God.

(2) Many people go late into the Church, and often, not without making a prodigious noise, so that not only the whole congregation is disturbed; but some, thoughtlessly and inconsiderately, whether they are engaged in prayer, or in attending to the word of God, instantly withdraw from their duty, and thus add to the noise and confusion, already made. Now no person who considers he is supplicating a blessing from Almighty God, perhaps preservation “from sudden death, or from “eternal damnation,” would presume either to rise from his knees, or to cease offering his petition, because somebody at that time is going to his seat. One cannot but wish, if for no

other reason, that every one would be early in his attendance on the service of the Church.

I cannot here omit mentioning, that if the least noise be made, either by the falling of a book, or any other little accident, how very anxious many people seem till they know what is the matter. Let your attention be fixed upon God, and the salvation of your souls, and you will behave with more decency and reverence.

(3) There is a regulation, that it is much to be wished, was made in almost every congregation. The indecency, I believe, is only to be found, to our great reproach, in the Church of England; I mean the shameful, the irreverent custom of praying to God, in the indolent posture of sitting on our seats. Were a person taken in a country of savages, whose custom was to murder every one they apprehended, would he, when they made signs to him that he was going to die, sit indolently down, and carelessly ask them to spare his life? Would he not fall upon his knees, and earnestly implore their mercy? How few shew the same solicitude for their eternal salvation—let this congregation bear witness!

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Should any man, to excuse his want of devotion, fancy, that, though he repeats his prayers in a sitting posture, yet he prays in his heart, and hears what the minister prays, and observes and goes along with him, let him weigh well in his mind the direction of the Apostle, “glorify God in your *body*, as well as in your “spirit, for both are God’s.”

Though God principally requires the heart, yet having made our bodies, an homage is due unto God from them. And be assured, where “the heart is right towards God,” the reverence of the body will naturally follow, as far as it is in the power of the heart to command it.

Good men, in all ages, have not contented themselves to worship God with good thoughts, or inward motions only, but with the external acts of Religion—such as either the institution and practice of the Church, or the custom of the country had made external signs of honor; as uncovering the head, bowing the body, kneeling on our knees.

Nor has any age, I believe, of the Christian Church produced men, who have betrayed such flight thoughts of God, and his Son Jesus Christ as the present, in the careless and negligent

ligent way of Worship to which many seem to have given themselves up.

The dissenters from the church, whenever they go to prayers in their public meetings, all either fall upon their knees, or shew their reverence by standing. And shall all other sects, when they pray in their public congregations, discover external marks of homage to God Almighty ; and shall we, the members of the Church of England, the best of all Churches, consult our ease as if we were at home ? This is a contempt of God, a reproach to our Church, a scandal to our Religion, an offence to devout minds, and an ill example to all who observe, or sit near you.

Let me suggest further, that that frequent sitting during the time of Divine service, produces drowsiness and languor. And this is one cause, why people sleep more in the Church of England, than they do in the meetings and conventicles of dissenters.

I have to add, that, as many people may object they cannot kneel upon the bare ground, it is devoutly to be wished that every one, who is able, would provide himself, as he may do it at a trifling expence, with a bafs, or hassock, for
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the purpose—and that every person who is not able to procure one might be supplied by the superintendants of the parish. Your Church would then have much more the appearance of an house of God, than it has at present.

It is, however, to be observed that some, from age, or bodily infirmity, or from a variety of causes, cannot bear to kneel during the time of service with comfort, and therefore, cannot kneel with devotion. It is not expected, nor would it be proper, that such people should attempt to do it; but let me suggest even to these, that the utmost reverence is due from them to God, and that, if they do not neglect to pay it, though they are obliged to sit on their seats, he will mercifully accept their services.

(4) I am next to take notice of the extreme impropriety of leaning against the pews, or seats, during the time of the reading of the Psalms, and of the Prayers by those who stand up, as though those persons were unable to support themselves. It betrays a shameful indifference for the worship, and service of God. Let all men, whose behavior is so irreverent, consider, that assuredly “the Lord is in this place,” beholding, and observing them.

(5) Let

(5) Let me remark too, that a very disagreeable custom prevails of repeating aloud after the minister, to the great disturbance of many who sit near them, those parts of the service in which the congregation should follow him only with the eye. Sometimes they read too fast, and prevent others from understanding what he says. The Rubric directs where the people should repeat; and where it gives no directions, it intends that the congregation should be silent, and listen to the minister.

(6) I would, briefly, mention another circumstance, which, though it may escape general observation ought, I think, to be suggested and impressed: those who have Bibles in the Church, generally look for the text; and usually the whole congregation, when it is taken out of the Psalms; and some are often so long in finding it, that a part of the Sermon is finished, before they have paid the smallest attention to it. Now the first part of the sermon is often an explanation of the text; and if people do not know the meaning of the text, they cannot profit much, I apprehend, by the discourse upon it.

(7) Let me mention, further, what has always

ways given great offence to serious minds, the levity, and foolish talking, to which many addict themselves in the house of God. One would imagine that such people go with no other view, than to make remarks on the dress, on the finery, and folly, of their neighbors. Is whispering, talking, laughing, seemly, do you think, in God's presence? Let me beseech you to cease from so foolish, and so sinful, a practice.

(8) Let me, lastly, take notice of another indecency, committed chiefly by the younger part of the congregation, I mean the irreverent custom of rushing out of the church, almost before the service is concluded. Let me prevail with you all, and you who are fathers and masters more especially, to enjoin your children and servants, before they depart from God's house, to go reverently on their knees, and beseech God to forgive the wanderings of their hearts, and the coldness of their devotions; that, "what they have heard with their outward ears, may produce in them the fruits of good living." Teach them then to depart like sinful creatures, who have been worshipping an Almighty God.

I will beg your patience a moment longer,
whilst

whilst I make a short application. Let me then request of you all, my brethren, to think seriously, before you enter the Church, into whose awful presence you are going. And when you have entered it, let me beseech you to fall meekly on your knees, to supplicate God's acceptance of your prayers, and to grant that the word to be preached, may become "a favor of life unto life," to all that hear it. Let there be, in future, no noise made by your entering it. And whether you are reading, or hearing the word, or offering up your prayers and thanksgivings, do not let any little disturbance, as the opening of a door, or the falling of a book, withdraw your attention from your duty. Let this Church be, in future, distinguished by the reverence and devotion of all who frequent it; and let me entreat you to pay so much honor to Almighty God, as to pray to him, not in your present custom of sitting on your seats, or even the more decent one of standing, but "meekly kneeling on your knees." Let all impertinent gazing at other people's dress; let all talking, whispering, and laughing, be for ever banished from this holy place. And instead of hastily departing before the Blessing
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is pronounced, let us return thanks to God for the opportunity of attending His house and service, and beg his Grace to accompany what has been delivered.

· May God Almighty grant, that neither our negligence in frequenting this house of prayer, nor our contentions in rending and troubling it, nor our irreligion in polluting of it, may ever hinder the benefit we hope to reap in it, nor prevent his hearing all our prayers, which we put up in humility and reverence ! May the eyes of that gracious and holy God we come here to worship, be opened day and night in this house of prayer, and his ears attentive to our petitions, and his hands open, and ready, to relieve our wants, and to bless us every Lord's day, and in all our weekly concerns to our lives end, through Jesus Christ our Lord ! ✓

S E R M O N X I X .

P R O V E R B S X X . I .

*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and
whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

OF all the vices to the commission of which we are allured, either by the propensity of nature, or the temptations of life, there is not one that involves us in so many dangers as excessive drinking.

In whatever light we consider that detestable vice, whether as pernicious to our health, destructive of our understandings, fatal to our families, or offensive to God, it stands pre-eminently distinguished above every other. So malignant indeed in its nature, and so ruinous in its consequences is every sin, that we may say of the commission of each, what the women answered one another, when they were congratulating the king of Israel on his success against

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the Philistines, "Saul has slain his thousands;" but of drunkenness it may be said, "it hath slain its ten thousands."

The design of this discourse is to shew the sin, the folly, and the danger attending it.

So heinous does the sin of drunkenness appear to the Apostle, that he exhorts his Corinthian converts, with those who indulge in it, "not to keep company," not to have any fellowship, or intercourse, with them; "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother," that professes the Christian faith, "be a drunkard, with such an one, no not to eat."

In his Epistle to the Galatians, he joins this vice with those other works of the flesh, which exclude Christians from the kingdom of God. In the catalogue are, "hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, murder, revellings, *drunkenness*; of the which I tell you, they who habitually, or frequently, commit them," or any of them, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Drunkenness is such an enemy to every thing that is virtuous and pious, to every thing

thing that is decent and becoming, the religious and the good, would, one would think, rise up, as one man against it, as a sin that degrades us from the honor of human nature, and renders us more vile and contemptible than “the beasts that perish.”

Shall man that is made “after the image of God,” and ranks in dignity next to the glorious angels—shall man who is endowed with reason to inform him of the will of his Creator—who is possessed with conscience to awaken him to comply with it—shall a Christian who has taken the vows of God upon him, and bound himself by the most awful obligations to renounce all prohibited indulgences, in order that he may be entitled to an eternal kingdom; shall, I say, this wise and rational creature, man—shall he part with his reason, his conscience, his heaven, his God, for the sake of “wine which is a mocker, or strong drink which is raging”—which will involve him in present shame, and expose him to eternal ruin? This is such a pitch of folly, such an extravagance of madness, as all, upon serious thoughts, must condemn with scorn, and reprobate with indignation.

The commission of this vice is become so frequent, and custom has rendered it so familiar, many endeavor to persuade themselves, either that it is no sin, or if it be, that it is of a very venial nature: but that they may not, as my text says, "be deceived thereby," by any sophistry of argument, or convenience of persuasion, let them weigh this persuasion in the balance of scripture, and it will at once, "be found light:" for says the word of God, as sure as a future state is to succeed the present, as sure as a Heaven is provided for the righteous, and the sober, so sure are drunkards to be of the number of those who shall not enter into it.

Our Blessed Saviour gives warning to all Christians, to be prepared against his second coming to judgment. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, lest that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare it will come upon all that dwell upon the earth."

Religion, which prohibits intemperance, and restrains excess, does not deny a freedom consistent with innocence, nor refuse a pleasure allowable by decency.

As we have seen the sin, let us now consider the folly of drunkenness; that "wine, or strong drink," in the language of the text, taken to excess, often makes people fools, or mad:— "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and "whosoever is deceived thereby, is not wise."

A person intoxicated is not always master of himself; he cannot always do what, in a sober temper, he is inwardly convinced is best for him to do, but is subject to the unreasonable commands, and arbitrary power of his passion; and at perfect variance even with his own mind, frequently committing, what he, as frequently, condemns.

Were a person enjoined, under the severity of a heavy penalty, to be every day drunk as a just punishment for the transgression of the laws of his country, with what justice would he complain of the unreasonableness of the law; and with what propriety might he murmur at the tyranny of the imposition!

A man intoxicated with liquor can scarcely articulate his chaos of ideas; he is rude too in his manners, and disorderly in his conduct: sometimes indeed he has neither the power of his tongue, nor the use of his limbs; but in

both cases the greatest kindness that can be done to him is to put him carefully out of the way, till time and sleep bring him to his senses again. And surely, when his understanding returns, if he hath any sense of shame, or feeling of disgrace, he must be covered with confusion when he reflects how scandalously he has offended against decency, and good manners.

And it is not only whilst he is in a state of intoxication, that his faculties are disordered, but such is the influence of custom, and the prevalence of habit, he is often so besotted as to become a child in understanding, when, through length of days, and accuracy of observation, he might have been enabled to "give subtilty to the simple, and to the young man knowlege, and discretion."

A person of distinction and consequence, who addicts himself to intemperate drinking, loses the respect and deference, which, when he is sober, he is often anxious to have paid, even in an undue proportion.

Drinking is a vice, which, more than all others, exposes people to acts of violence, and the disgrace of quarrels: those especially whose tempers are naturally violent, and under no restraint.

restraint. And whoever is of a peevish disposition, and little master of himself, should carefully abstain from that degree of strong liquor, or that sort of it, which produces the mischievous effect of transporting him into madness and frenzy. How many persons fall out in the rage of drinking, of which they know not the reason, and can very faintly recollect the manner?

And this is so common, Solomon observes of it proverbially, that “he, who sits long at “the wine” till liquor enflame him and his company, is like to have “wounds without “cause.”—“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath “babbling? who hath wounds without cause? “who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry “long,” says he, “at the wine.”

When the spirits of some men are enflamed by immoderate drinking, they blaze out into a passion at the least affront, and often when the affront is but imaginary; they are so far out of their own power as to act, and talk such unjustifiable, and absurd things, as, in a sober, cool temper they cannot bear to reflect on, or to have, I do not say, repeated, but even intimated, to them.

Drunkenness is a vice which cannot be supported but at a prodigious expence, together with a waste of time, and neglect of business. How many leave their families at home pinched with want, often starving with hunger, in order to maintain this expensive vice? Drinking, when it has involved a man beyond what his circumstances, business, or income will bear, hath been the ruin of many a comfortable and plentiful subsistence. “The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.”

Drunkenness, let it be considered, is a vice whereby persons generally suffer in their reputation, and in the esteem of the world. What name is more notoriously infamous than that of a drunkard? Can you entrust a business that requires vigilance of attention, and comprehension of thought, to a man addicted to drinking? No one of common understanding is so regardless of his own interest: for in men so habituated to intemperance, implicit confidence is not to be placed. Your business is generally neglected, and they offer you some idle excuse, which aggravates their offence, and enhances your mortification.

We have seen the sin and folly, let us now proceed to the danger, both with regard to this life, and the next.

Drunkenness sows the seeds of disorders in the constitution, and tends to make life often short, and sometimes painful. Fevers, dropsies, a distracted head, and a vitiated stomach—these, and many more, disorders proceed from excessive drinking. Some persons, indeed, from strength of constitution, and severity of exercise, may not be sensibly affected by it. But to the most robust, excess is, ultimately, poison. Upon some it may work more slowly, than upon others, but it seldom fails, in the end, to “bring down their heads with sorrow “to the grave.”

And as to those who survive the distempers generated by drinking, we may observe such manifest decays in their strength, and understanding, and memory, that, they appear like walking anatomies, to deter all thoughtful men, from such destructive, and pernicious courses.

Again, when the nature of man is changed into that of a beast, he is insensibly prepared for the reception of “other spirits more wicked than himself,” and is exposed to the danger “of going on from one wickedness to another.”

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When God takes away the power of his grace, and the guidance “of his Spirit,” the poor wretch is at the mercy of every temptation suggested by the “world, the flesh, and the devil;” he then goes on till God will bear with him no longer, but “gives him up to a reprobate mind.”

Besides, each scene of drunkenness prepares a person for the commission of every other sin, to which the propensity of his nature, or the convenience of temptation, may incline him.

Lastly, let us consider the accidents to which a drunken man is perpetually liable.—A person, in a state of intoxication, is often incapable of avoiding the most shocking misfortunes. So strong a mist is before his eyes, that he cannot discern the danger of a pit, nor the horror of a precipice.

Need I instance those who have been dragged by their horses, and have gone senseless out of this world, to answer for their profligacy in another?

If by these, or such like accidents, men are brought to a sudden, and untimely end, in what a dismal condition do they pass out of this, into the next life, dying in the very act of abusing

abusing God's mercy, and transgressing his will?—"Charity, which hopeth all things," here shrinks with horror from the prospect of futurity.

Having shewn the sin, the folly, and the danger, of drinking to excess, I will only detain you, whilst I recapitulate the arguments that have been urged.

Drunkenness is pernicious to both body and soul; with a drunkard we are forbidden to keep company—a drunkard is of the number of those sinners who shall not be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Our Saviour cautions us against the commission of this vice, lest we should be surprized by death unawares. The drunkard ceases to be master of himself: his behavior is so unseemly, he cannot reflect on it without shame, nor hear of it without confusion. Instead of instructing by his advice, and engaging by his example, his understanding is bewildered, and his conduct detestable. Let him reflect too, how he exposes himself to insults, or is involved in quarrels; how often, at such times, he does what he has reason deeply to regret all his life after. Let him consider the injury he is committing against his family;

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how much better his circumstances would be, if he would save with care, what he thus squanders with profusion. And it is of some weight too, that he ruins his character and reputation; he is no longer considered as a person in whom you can place confidence, and, of course, subjects himself to reproaches, and to loss of business. With hurting his reputation, and injuring his fortune, he destroys his health. Such is his habit of body, that the pricking of a thorn, or the stinging of a gnat, shall be attended with as long a confinement, and severe a pain, as, in a sounder constitution, would be the violence of a fever, or the fracture of a limb. Let him consider, that, when he is intoxicated, he knows not what mischiefs and and follies he may be drawn into.

Lastly, let him remember how liable he is to dangers and misfortunes—how many men in a state of drunkenness, and insensibility, have been summoned before the tribunal of their Judge; and let him ask himself, if he would choose to add to the number? Let him weigh all these things seriously; and if he has any regard for his substance, his health, his character, his salvation, he will preserve himself
from

from all immoderate use and excess of wine, which, the wisest of men says, “ is a mocker, “ and from strong drink, which is raging,” because, he had observed by experience this to be true, that “ whosoever is deceived thereby “ is not wise.” Which good advice may God Almighty give us all grace to observe through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

S E R M O N . XX.

MATTHEW V. 34.

I say unto you, swear not at all.

WHEN human laws are violated, it is generally under the veil of secrecy, and in the hour of concealment ; it is generally either with the prospect of gain, or the expectation of pleasure. But the commands, which Almighty God delivers, are openly, and daringly insulted ; and though the transgression of them promises neither profit, nor delight ; though it be attended with the displeasure of God at present, and his eternal displeasure hereafter ; men persist, through the wantonness of sport, and the violence of outrage, to disobey, offend, provoke the Being, who “ gave them life, and “ breath, and all things.” And of the several commands, whether “ written with the finger “ of God,” or enjoined “ by his own and only “ begotten

“ begotten Son,” there is not one, I believe, to the violation of which men are so much addicted, whatever be the cause, as that of profane swearing, the vice prohibited by our Saviour in my text, “ I say unto you, swear not “ at all.”

To dissuade you from a practice, which betrays such a want of reverence towards God, and of decency towards men, let me beg your attention, whilst I shew, in the first place, the extreme danger incurred by profane swearing.

After which, I shall examine the reasons people urge in their justification. And lastly, I shall earnestly exhort you to desist from a custom, which exposes you to the judgment of an Almighty, and incensed God.

Now, as we are expressly forbid to swear precipitately, and rashly, by the sacred name of God, to accustom ourselves to swearing is an open, and public declaration, that we call in question the wisdom, and bid defiance to the power, of an All-knowing and Omnipotent God: it is telling the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, that the laws he has enacted, and the commands he has delivered, are trifling in
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their nature, and ridiculous in their tendency; and that we do not think it worth while to pay any outward regard to him whose protection we renounce, and whose vengeance we defy. But can there be such an instance of folly, such an extreme of madness, as to sport with the holy and tremendous name of the Lord God, the great Creator, the mighty Sovereign, the dreadful Judge of all the world? Is it nothing to invoke the adorable name, to engage the venerable testimony, to defy the terrible vengeance of the divine Majesty of heaven and earth?

“ O God, my flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments!”

The danger we incur by profane swearing will further appear, by considering for what end the faculty of speech was bestowed upon us.

It is no less by our speech, than our shape, that we are distinguished from the brute creation. The tongue is said to be “ the best member that we have.” And can it be supposed that the Almighty endowed us with it to profane his name, and insult his authority? Can it be supposed that it was the design of

our All-wise Creator to give us the power of speech, that we might the more effectually distinguish ourselves from all the works of his hands, by the insolence of provocation, the defiance of justice, and the renunciation of mercy? Can any man reconcile the inconsistency of blaspheming the name of God, and supplicating his forgiveness, with the same mouth? At one moment imprecating vengeance, and calling for damnation; at another suing for pardon, and pleading for acceptance?

“Thou hast given me a tongue, O Lord, and I will praise thee therewith!”

The aggravation of profane swearing will be heightened by considering further, that whilst it dishonors God, it brings destruction on ourselves.

Now, if “at the day of Judgment, we shall give an account of every idle word,” uttered in the levity of mirth, and the transports of dissipation, and if even these will incur the censure, perhaps meet the punishment, of the Judge, what will be the judgment denounced against deliberate oaths and imprecations, against wilful curses and blasphemies? God himself has sworn that the sin shall not go unpunished:

nished: he hath engaged his justice “not to hold such an one guiltless.” Assure thyself, O swearer, that God will one day vindicate his name from the abuse, and his authority from the contempt, which thou so industriously heapest upon them. Remember, that thou importunest God to hear, and bravest him to judge, of thy wickedness. And reflect too, whilst the time is allowed thee, whether *the delight* thou hast in uttering oaths and curses now, will be a sufficient compensation, for the sentence of being doomed “to dwell for ever, with the devil and his angels?” How wilt thou be able to hear this tremendous denunciation, from insulted Majesty, “thy delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto thee; thou lovedst not blessing, therefore shall it be far from thee?”

There is one argument against profane swearing, which, though comparatively of little weight, may not, perhaps, be urged altogether in vain—it is an offence against good manners. Now, if any favor hath been conferred on me, which conduces greatly to my happiness, by a character I highly regard and revere, and if I am subject to the mortifica-

tion of hearing him ridiculed and abused ; can I be supposed to esteem those persons by whom I am so much mortified ? Can I hear with patience, or reflect without indignation, on the abuse which has been so wantonly heaped on my benefactor, and my friend ? And can I hear the sacred name of God profaned—can I hear the Deity insulted, by whom I was created out of dust, by whom I am redeemed from eternal death, and with whom I hope to dwell for ever, and ever—can I hear such a Being provoked and defied, without being troubled with fear, and filled with horror ? Does the swearer suppose that a serious, and religious man can hear his multiplicity of oaths, without feeling concerned for the honor of his God ? But does he not himself observe, how visibly a whole company is shocked with his imprecations ? how cautious every one is, of even leading him to speak, lest their ears should be stunned by his blasphemies ? And can he help reflecting on the censures, which every one passes upon his conduct, after his departure ? Whatever be his rank or situation, every person whom he leaves behind, delivers his sentiments with freedom expressive of contempt ; each person la-

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ments that the innocent and improving society should have been interrupted by observations so unmeaning, irreverent, and impious; and exclaims, in the language of David, with indignant abhorrence, “I will not henceforth know this wicked person;” each declaring his hearty desire that he could, with decency, avoid his hateful society.

I now proceed to examine the reasons people urge in their justification.

Men allege, that they have contracted the habit of swearing they know not how, and that it is become so familiar, they swear without scarce knowing that they are violating a commandment: which is saying, in other words, that they have lived without a sense of God on their minds, and have treated Him, by degrees, with such insolent familiarity, they are hardly conscious whether they invoke his sacred name, or not. That many men swear, without considering, what they are saying, and Whom they are provoking, is easy to be believed; because, be the subject of their conversation ever so trifling, we hear them continually swearing by the name of God, and trying, as it were, whether they cannot utter

within a certain time, such and such a number of oaths as necessary, in their opinion, to render their conversation intelligible, or interesting, or agreeable. Is this the return you make unto God, for his wonderful love in redeeming your souls by expiating your guilt with his own Blood? Consider, how by swearing without thought, you are adding sin, to sin—consider what deep repentance such an accumulation of guilt will demand—and, consider further, that if it be not repented of, you are irretrievably lost, both body and soul, for ever. The reflection of having disobeyed, it may be, almost all your life long, a positive command of God without consideration, will not alleviate; no—it will increase the torments of hell. Many men, notwithstanding, look upon the sin of swearing as not deserving punishment, because they are, in other respects, just and upright. Strange! that a man can persuade himself it is his duty to fulfil every engagement, into which he may enter, “with a man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass,” and should think himself authorized to “forget” the obligations he is under, of paying reverence to “the Lord his maker!”

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Another excuse some men plead, is, that they are urged to swear by passion and disappointment. And, indeed, we sometimes hear people, when in a passion, swear such tremendous oaths, we are afraid that God Almighty will vindicate his injured honor, by inflicting instant punishment upon them. Now people of this description are, usually, I think, those who have been fortunate in life, whose undertakings have succeeded, and who are not subject to mortifications. And, therefore, because Almighty God has prospered, I will not say, blessed them, if he withhold for a moment his indulgent providence, unable to brook disappointment, they wreak their vengeance, by insulting the Author of all their good, by outrageously daring him, instead of comforts, to pour upon them his curses. When they are provoked, they can find no way of expressing their resentment, but by desiring God to render them, not objects of his mercy, but of his indignation—"to destroy them, both body and soul, in hell." If God were extreme to mark what we do amiss—if he were so enraged by our offences as to punish them

by immediate tokens of his displeasure, which of us could abide ! The swearer would then find the punishment he implored, not, as it is now, delayed, but inflicted ; and whilst the oath was in his mouth, the vengeance of God would fall upon his head.

The Legislature, in its wisdom, to stop the progress, has inflicted a punishment on this detestable sin : and happy would it be for society, if the character of an informer, in this respect at least, had ceased to be odious—happy would it be for the swearer himself, if an information were laid, and the penalty exacted, for every oath. Why the law is not enforced, two reasons, which, I fear, are incontrovertible, may be assigned ; men are indifferent about the honor of God ; and the magistrates themselves, the guardians of the laws, are sometimes guilty of a violation of those laws they are commissioned to protect.

There is one circumstance, which, without impropriety, may be mentioned here, the frequent, the habitual custom many people have of “ taking God’s name in vain.” Whatever be their conversation, the name of God, of
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the Almighty, is perpetually ushered in. If they be relating any thing surprising, you are hardly able to collect their meaning, by their frequent and profane exclamations: if you are telling them of any extraordinary circumstance, you are every moment interrupted by the same senseless, and impious custom. Nay, “to take the name of God in vain” is become so universally fashionable, that it even makes a part of the conversation of women; and *the sacred name of God*, I blush to speak it, is introduced, *even by them*, to give a spirit, and an ornament to their discourse, forgetting the advice of the Psalmist, “to set a watch before their mouth, and to keep the door of their lips.” “Accustom not thyself,” says the wise son of Sirach; “to much swearing; neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One. A man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house.”

I will detain you a little longer, whilst I earnestly exhort you to observe the direction of our Saviour, “I say unto you, swear not at all.”

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I am to address you then, my brethren, on one of the most interesting subjects, which can engage the attention of an assembly of Christians. As we are all to stand one day before God's dread tribunal, and to give an account for every profane, and idle word we have spoke, I am to persuade you, in the language of the Psalmist, "to put a bridle in your mouth, that "you may not" rashly, or inconsiderately, "offend with your tongue." And if I am so happy as to prevail with him who swore, to swear no more, instead of living under the displeasure of God, he will abound, it may be hoped, "in the fruits of the Spirit, gentleness, "goodness, meekness, faith, temperance." To the young, and inexperienced, swearing may appear a genteel accomplishment; but what is the appearance of being genteel; what would be the actual possession of the whole world, if it be incompatible with a state of salvation? If your life be prolonged to an advanced age, and your oaths and curses be multiplied in proportion; when your end draws nigh, and your soul is on the eve of its departure "to give account of all the deeds done in
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“ the body,” instead of feeling the assurance of Redemption, and the consolations of Grace; instead of beholding, by faith, the holy Angels ready to convey your departing spirit into the hands of your Redeemer, you will be distracted with remorse, and agonized with despair; your conscience will present a legion of devils, waiting, with impatient solicitude, the dissolution of the soul and body, to punish, with implacable, and eternal severity, your inexcusable disobedience.

Let those who are learning, and those who have been already taught in, this school of profligacy, consider well the consequences of the progress they make in the vice of swearing. If, in the young man, this detestable habit appears indecent and profane; in him whose forehead is furrowed by the wrinkles of age, it is shocking and impious. Would to God, therefore, I could prevail with him to consider that the Grave is soon—he knows not how soon—to receive him! Would to God I could prevail with him to consider, how bitter will be his reflections, how melancholy his prospects, when he is standing on the precipice
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of eternity, and the prop of time is falling fast from his support! Would to God I could prevail with him to consider, what it is to die, in despair of God's mercy! For the word of God warrants the assertion, hard as it may seem, that the man, who "accustoms himself to much swearing," hath no ground of hope for Salvation. And can I perceive one, or rather I might say, so many of you, my brethren, to be in that dreadful state, without warning you of your danger? Can I observe you living at ease in the commission of so abominable a sin, without beseeching you, in the name of God, and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to cease from it? Some, I fear, may, upon a review of their conduct, perceive their profane oaths to be "as the stars in the firmament;" their impious curses, "as the sand upon the sea shore." But from this day, my Christian brethren, no longer add to the catalogue of your offences against the Most High. Do not, for' God's sake, do not preserve your unhappy consistency to the last. Though you may have lived without Religion, and swearing is almost inconsistent with the profession

profession of Religion, let me, for God's sake, for the sake of your souls, let me prevail with you not to die without repentance. In your return from this house of God, "see, if you can tell, how oft you have offended;" beseech God "to blot out your transgressions," and to give you grace "to swear no more."

SERMON XXI.

JOB XIX. 21.

Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O, ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.

SUCH are many of the afflictions of life, that they can be no way alleviated without the sympathy of friendship, and the tenderness of compassion.

For though a consciousness of integrity is the only source of comfort, though a sense of uniform rectitude is alone able to support the violence of external assaults; yet sometimes so formidable is their onset, so heavy is their pressure, the gentle hand of compassion is required to ease the smart of anguish, and deaden the pain of affliction.

Of the truth of this position, the Patriarch of Uz is an eminent example.

“ There is none like him,” saith the Almighty,

mighty, “ upon the earth, a perfect, and an upright man, one that feareth God, and “ escheweth evil.” Notwithstanding this testimony of his integrity, he exclaims, in the pathetic language of the text—“ Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O, ye my friends, “ for the hand of God hath touched me.”

The first account which is given of this son of affliction, after premising his uprightness and piety, is the accumulation of his riches, and the splendor of his household, in consequence of which, he was considered “ the greatest of “ all the men in the East.” Blessed with a large and goodly family, the ties of kindred, cemented by the bands of concord, amity, and love, he was in possession of every good this world could bestow. But, to prove him in the furnace of affliction ; to know of a truth, whether he served God from a principle of piety, or as the security of his fortune, messenger succeeded messenger, one acquainting him, that “ his oxen and his asses were slain by his “ enemies the Sabeans ;” another, “ that the “ fire of God had fallen from heaven, and burnt “ up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed “ them ;” a third, “ that the men of the land
“ of

“ of Chaldea had fallen on his camels, and carried them away, and slain his servants with the edge of the sword :” whilst he was relating these last tidings, another arrived to inform him, “ that, as his sons and daughters were eating, and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house, a great wind came from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young men, and they were dead.” His vessel of sorrow was already full, but this last drop made the waters of affliction overflow. He seems marked, by a peculiar designation, to bear the weight of God’s vengeance. In the morning, he is sheltered, and protected, from the violence of storms, and the horror of shipwreck; in the evening, he is struggling with the waves of disappointment, and plunged in the abyss of forsaken hope. And how does he receive this severe chastening of the Almighty? He does not break out in harshness of invective, nor bitterness of complaint; but, with the piety of resignation, accompanied with the feelings of sensibility, “ naked,” says he, “ came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath

“ taken away, blessed be the name of the
“ Lord !”

There are not wanting, it must be confessed, instances of men, who have experienced such a reverse of fortune, and who, instead of drooping under the burden, have risen superior to all their calamities—men, who have been supported by the force of spirits, the advantages of health, and the assistance and consolation of friends; all of which, as singular as undeserved, the upright Patriarch was deprived: his own person was afflicted with a grievous distemper, and his friends, miserable comforters! together with the wife of his bosom—and surely she was bound by the tie of interest, the impulse of affection, the obligation of duty, to have softened, with a lenient hand, all his sorrows—were leagued, all, in an unnatural alliance, to insult him with his misfortunes, and reproach him for his insincerity. The Patriarch here exhibits an amiable pattern of wisdom, resignation, and piety: when his complaints are disregarded, and his supplications despised, he, in the consciousness of his innocence, raises his thoughts from earth to Heaven; from human comforters, to the source
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of all consolation, "I know that my Redeemer
" liveth, and though after my skin, worms
" destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see
" God. I shall come even to his seat: he will
" put strength in me, for doth he not see my
" ways, and count all my steps?" Anticipating,
in humble expectation, "this recompence of
" reward, till I die," says he, "I will not re-
" move my integrity from me; my righteous-
" ness I hold fast, and will not let it go, my
" heart shall not reproach me so long as I
" live."

God Almighty having, in his infinite wisdom, assigned to his creatures an endless variety of situations, one "to abound," whilst another "is perishing with hunger;" one to enjoy his health and strength, in the fulness of spirits, and the energy of vigor, whilst another is racked with pain, or disabled by infirmity, it may not be an useless employment of our time, to shew the provision the great Father of our existence has made for those of his children, who are pining in want, or languishing in sickness.

The first consideration is, that, as all mankind have derived their being from the same

fountain of life, and all, upon the same foot, without any particular regard, or personal claim to his favor ; it follows that the rich, out of their abundance, are to supply the wants and necessities of the poor.

And the reason on which this humanity, to be exercised by one description of men towards another, is founded, is incontrovertible. “ For “ who maketh thee to differ from another ? ” Are you blessed with hereditary wealth, provided to your hands without care, as it is squandered, often, without judgment ? Surely then it must occur to you, that you are highly favored of Heaven, and that some acknowledgement is due to him, from whom you have received it ?

And what acknowledgement so just and natural, as “ binding up the broken in heart, “ and giving medicine to heal their sickness ? ”

Again. Have you been successful in business, and fortunate in your intercourse with the world ? Have your projects succeeded beyond your expectations, and have riches rolled by every tide, and been wafted by every gale ? This is under the auspices, and by the permission, of Heaven ; “ Not your hand, nor your
“ might

“might have gotten you this wealth.” Or, if instead of this superfluity of abundance, you are but a little more prosperous than some of your neighbors—to whom are you indebted? If then the sun of prosperity shine on you, and withhold his fostering beams from others, is it not an intimation from “the Giver of every good gift,” expressed in characters too legible to be overlooked, and too important to be disregarded, to wipe away the tear from the cheek of sorrow, and comfort the heart that throbs with affliction?

But let it not be imagined, that the exercise of compassion is to be confined entirely to the rich and prosperous. No. Compassion does not altogether consist in the distribution of charity. To instruct the ignorant, to reprove the profane, to cheer the desponding, is the common duty of all mankind; of both rich and poor. To satisfy the doubts, to remove the scruples, to appease the disquietude of our neighbor, is incumbent on all, the lowest lot, of humanity.

But the great Author of our being has made a farther provision for those, to whom he has denied the good things of this life, in the be-

nevolent principles he has implanted within us. At the sight of a distressed object we feel, and we cannot but feel, strong emotions of compassion. This generous principle arises with an impatient, and imperceptible hurry in our breasts. Our wishes to relieve, are eager to be gratified; and if we are restrained by the want of power, we would purchase it at the expence of a participation of the wretch's sufferings.

This humane principle receives not only the sanction, but the encouragement, of Revelation, and is there placed before us in every light that may engage our regard, or interest our affections. Compassion is, in the Evangelical Covenant, recommended by Example, and enjoined by Authority; and it is required of us as an indispensable article of our duty, as a distinguishing mark of our adoption.

To acts of mercy we have an urgent inducement set before us, in a living and familiar pattern. The holy Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of our faith," was constantly employed in removing the ills, and relieving the infirmities of those, who labored under them,

Thus are we excited by the suggestions of
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our nature—required by the precepts of our Religion—encouraged by the example of our Redeemer—to alleviate the distresses of others, and administer comfort to those, who cannot administer it to themselves.

With the hard-hearted and inhuman, these arguments, and arguments like these, although founded in reason, and supported by Revelation, will have little weight.

Yet to these sons of inhumanity, let us suggest, that, so uncertain is every possession on this side the grave, the most affluent, however fenced he may be with all human securities, knows not how soon he may stand in need of the assistance, and friendship of others: or, if he is not reduced to distress, God often denies him the power of enjoying, either by want of health, or, through a dread of poverty, the riches, which, with such avaricious parsimony, he hath scraped together.

Than such a Spectacle—a man surrounded with abundance, and withheld, by an Almighty Power, from an application of it, to the conveniences and comforts his situation requires—there can be nothing more melancholy.

“Man,” says the Scripture, “is born to

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“trouble;”

“trouble;” it accompanies every state, as naturally as the shadow accompanies the body. Every wise man, therefore, though he cannot dry up its source, will break its power, and avert its fury. He will imitate the conduct of the Patriarch, that, when his troubles come upon him, whether the chagrin of disappointment, the loss of health, or the frowns of fortune, he may possess one comfort greater and better than all this world can bestow, the reflection, the cheering reflection, of having uniformly, and effectually, promoted the welfare and happiness of his fellow-creatures. “When the ear hears me,” may he say, “then it blesses me; and when the eye sees me it gives witness to me, because I deliver the poor that cry, the fatherless and him that hath none to help him. The blessing of him that is ready to perish, comes upon me, and I cause the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I am eyes to the blind, and feet am I to the lame.”

To excite in every breast the amiable virtue of compassion, let us take a view of the dwellings of affliction, not what imagination may create, or fancy feign, but what is too frequently

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quently exemplified by our own observation. How often do we behold a large, and innocent, and deserving family, deprived of all the comforts, and the necessaries of life, by an unforeseen and unexpected stroke, without the power of making any provision for themselves; unable, through weakness, to earn their bread, and ashamed, through the recollection of better days, to beg it. Into such a dwelling let us enter; and instances, God knows, of such uncertainty of all human good, meet us, very often meet us, in our passage through life. We see the mother of a numerous offspring, overwhelmed with all the distractions of sorrow, lamenting, with equal affection, the loss of an indulgent husband, and the fate of helpless orphans. Every expedient which occurs to her bewildered mind, to provide them with the comforts of a decent competency, and preserve them from the snares of impending ruin, she adopts as likely, and as soon rejects as impracticable. Hear the disconsolate widow, crying over her children, with the feelings of maternal tenderness; ‘ I am left, my children, your protector, ‘ without the means of protection. The com- ‘ forts of life we enjoyed in common together ‘ are

' are fled with your affectionate parent who
 ' procured them. Anxious to provide against
 ' the vicissitudes of fortune, and the casualties
 ' of accident, he sunk under the load of evils
 ' which his sollicitude suggested. The bitter-
 ' ness of death was increased with the appre-
 ' hensions of what we should suffer, when we
 ' were left behind him. The stroke is now
 ' given, and we feel, what, at a distance, I be-
 ' held with gloomy horror. Had it pleased
 ' God to have spared him, whilst you were able
 ' to support yourselves, whilst he had impressed
 ' on your minds a strong sense of integrity and
 ' Religion, fortified by such principles, we
 ' would have struggled hard, for an honest live-
 ' lihood, for a virtuous support. But though
 ' the scene be so lamentably changed, though
 ' every prospect of comfort be vanished, we will
 ' not, under the Providence of the Almighty
 ' abandon ourselves to despair. Thy ways, O
 ' God, are unsearchable; and if it seem good
 ' to thee to deprive us of the means of sub-
 ' sistence here—for all thy dispensations, how-
 ' ever unpalatable, are tender mercies—grant us,
 ' gracious God, soon to meet, where tears and
 ' sorrow, and anguish shall be known no more.'

Lct

Let the most hard-hearted be witness to such a scene of parental fondness, deep distress, and pious resignation; let him revolve in his mind what such a family must suffer, and he cannot, surely, refuse shewing compassion to them. I will only observe that the poorest, the meanest, the most contemptible are among those, for whom the Redeemer of the world is making intercessions to their Father who is in Heaven. And he does not, we know, intercede in vain. Resemble then the Father of the universe. Attend to the supplicating voice of distress, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon
" men, O, ye my friends, for the hand of God
" hath touched me."

S E R M O N XXII.

* PSALM XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days that we may
apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

AS we have now almost arrived at the end of another year, I cannot address you more properly on any subject, than on the uncertainty of human life; imploring you to beseech the Almighty to give us grace “to number our days”—not to reveal to us the determinate time of our life—but that we may make a right, and true, use, of the certainty we all of us have, of our approaching dissolution.

The Psalm, from which the text is taken, was written by Moses, when the children of Israel had provoked the Lord in the wilderness; in consequence of which the Almighty

* Preached the last Sunday in the year.

threatened

threatened that they should all perish, and that none should reach the promised land, Caleb and Joshua excepted, but should all die in the space of forty years. When the Lord had “brought his people out of Egypt with a “mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm”—when, during their journey, “he rained down “Manna from heaven, and struck the hard “rock that the waters gushed out,” in order to “preserve them alive by a great deliver—“ance—when he had brought them to the “borders of the promised land,” and there commanded Moses to send a ruler out of every tribe, that they might report “whether the in—“habitants were strong or weak, few or many, “and the land they dwelt in, whether it was “good or bad—what cities they dwelt in, “whether in tents, or strong holds”—that is, whether in open villages, or walled cities—“and commanded them also to bring of the “fruit of the land, for it was almost the time “of vintage—and, during their journey, to be “of good courage;”—after an absence of forty days, they returned, and “reported of the land “that it was very good,” and produced a cluster of grapes of prodigious size, and pomegranates,

granates, and figs, in confirmation of their report; but added withal, that they despaired of ever getting possession of it, because the inhabitants were of that warlike complexion as to bid defiance, and threaten death, to such a desperate attempt. This conclusion of their account filled the whole people with indignation against Moses, and against the Lord; and, with impiety in their mouths, and rebellion in their hearts, they cried “ would God we had died in the
“ land of Egypt, or would God we had died
“ in this wilderness! But Joshua and Caleb,
“ who were of them that searched the land,” remembering the mercies which God had shewn them since their departure from Egypt, would have dispelled their fear, animating them to take courage, “ for that the land, they
“ had passed through to search it, was an exceeding good land; and that, if they would
“ not rebel against the Lord, but put their
“ trust in him, he would bring them into this
“ land, and give it them,” it being the very country he had promised to their fathers, “ a
“ land flowing with milk and honey.” The people, however, so far from hearkening to their voice, “ bade the congregation to stone them
“ with

“with stones.” To divert them, provoked as they were with wrath, and exasperated with despair, from a purpose which proclaimed defiance to the Almighty himself, “the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shewed hot displeasure amongst them: he swore by himself, saying, that all of them, as they had desired, save Caleb and Joshua, should die in the wilderness, in less than forty years.” You will read the entertaining relation, in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Numbers. The lives of the Israelites being, by this event, so much shortened, Moses composed the Psalm of which my text is a part, beseeching the Almighty, that, as forty years were to be the extreme of their life, and many might be called hence much sooner, he would be graciously pleased to prepare them against the awful day of his visitation, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

The first argument I shall urge to prevail with you to make the same supplication, is the uncertainty of human life.

So slender is the thread by which the principle of life is sustained, that it is often cut by the most trifling accident. . How many,
blessed

bleſſed with the moſt robuſt conſtitutions, catch diſorders, which, though imperceptible in their origin, and diſregarded in their progreſs, are fatal in their termination? How many come into the world, with the ſeeds of diſeaſe implanted in the habit, which wither and conſume the body that contains them? How many fall a ſacrifice to their own raſhneſs, to the obſtinacy, nay ſometimes to the indiſcretion, and levity of others? How many, employed in buſineſs, or amuſed with innocence, from which, as danger is not perceived, ſo it is not apprehended, are cut off by the viſitation of God! In a word, the food we eat, the air we breathe, the raiment we wear, the ground we tread upon, all are inſtruments in the hands of Providence, to execute his will, and haſten our diſſolution.

Now, if we are always “encompaſſed with ſo many, and great dangers;” if we are, every moment, liable to ſuch inevitable, and fatal attacks, will not prudence dictate, and wiſdom recommend the method, adopted by “the meekeſt of the ſons of men,” to beſeech him, “in whoſe hand are the iſſues of life and death, ſo to teach us to number our days,”

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that,

that, whether we are arrested by “the pestilence that walketh in darkness,” or wounded by “the arrow that flieth in the noon day,” we may fall like men not ignorant of the danger, and not unprepared for the event?

But to the uncertainty of human life, let us add, secondly, the certainty of death.

That we shall all die, our constitutions afford us, from their weakness and debility, the most decisive evidence. Nor can our lives be prolonged to such a period, as to justify us in the neglect of preparing for death. Though we should live to “the age of three-score years and ten, or four-score years, they will be “days in which we have no pleasure in them.” And is that state to be envied, in which we shall live without satisfaction, and die without hope? Could an exemption from death be pleaded by any mortal, some might catch at the shadow of hope, that the same favor would be extended to them. “But it is appointed “unto all men once to die.” And as death is the prelude to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery—may the Almighty “so “teach us to number our days, that we may “apply our hearts unto wisdom!” By reflecting

flecting on the certainty of death—by anticipating the time, when the union between the body and the soul shall be dissolved—when this body shall be turned to dust, and the soul, its inhabitant, shall wing its flight “to God that gave it,”—by anticipating that awful moment, God grant us to live prepared against its approach!

A third argument I shall urge to prevail with us, to beseech the Almighty to give us grace that “we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,” is the great importance of the state in which we die.

If we die in a state of unrepented sin, “a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation” inevitably awaits us. For to no purpose is the Gospel revealed, to no purpose did our Saviour, Jesus Christ, come into the world, to redeem us, and “purify us unto good works,” if we are at liberty to live in the utter neglect, in the absolute contempt, of those rules he has prescribed, for the government of our lives. Is it fitting that our Redeemer should take upon him our nature, be crucified, and slain for our sakes, and we refuse to do what he enjoins? Can we persuade
Y 2 ourselves,

ourselves, that, if we live in the wilful transgression of the commandments, and are to be judged at the last day by the Gospel, we shall, notwithstanding, be preserved from wrath, and entitled to mercy? Impossible! No man, who ever reads or hears the word of God, can amuse himself with an expectation so egregiously deceitful. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that," and that only, "shall he reap." If then, according to our works, we are to be punished, or rewarded; and if, when we lie on the bed of death, our comfort is to be derived from "our being made like unto Jesus Christ;" if we desire to be possessed of the animating assurance, that, when we walk through the "valley of the shadow of death, the rod and the staff of God" will support and comfort us; can we be so infatuated as not to implore by prayer, and obtain by piety, this heavenly assistance? By bringing frequently to our reflection the concluding scene of our lives, we shall be induced, and, by the support of God's grace, shall be enabled, to live in such a manner, that we may anticipate it, without consternation. For as it is a season that must arrive,
a trial

a trial we must undergo, not to be prepared against its approach, is to act in opposition to every principle of reason, to every suggestion of wisdom. To apply our hearts unto wisdom, by rightly numbering our days, or by making a true estimate of life, is to look forward to the time, when life shall cease, and eternity commence, and to be able to review our conduct, if not with cordial approbation at least, without severe reproach.

I will trespass a little longer on your patience, whilst I make an application that may, perhaps, be thought not unsuitable, to the present season.

As we have almost completed another annual revolution of time, let us be prevailed with to examine seriously our past conduct. Since the commencement of the period which is now expiring, some of our friends, our relations, and acquaintances have been carried to their graves. Mortality hath made a rapid advance, and hath spared neither sex, nor age, but with unrelenting violence, has destroyed helpless innocence, and decrepid infirmity, the bloom of beauty, and the vigor of health. To the Providence of the Almighty it is owing,

that we have been spared. Had we been of the number of those who are now in the regions of death, could we have appeared, in the presence of our Maker, as rational creatures, who had been blessed with a revelation from heaven, to enlighten our minds, and regulate our lives? Or would the violation of its laws, and the transgression of its commandments “have risen up against us, and condemned “us? Let us consider what it is to die with any one sin, on our head. It is to appear before Almighty God, and make an open acknowledgement, that we have lived in rebellion against him, that we have disregarded his laws, and renounced his protection. God of his mercy grant, that no one here may die, in such a situation! Our lives, we know, are uncertain—this is the last time, it may be, some of us shall be permitted to worship God, in this congregation—let us, therefore, from this day, begin to reform our conduct, to “repent and “turn to God.” Let us not enter on another year, without the strongest resolutions, without the most fervent prayers to the Almighty, to enable us, by his grace, to live well. Let us, from this day, expel every passion that alienates

our

our heart from God. Let us become his servants, and demonstrate our fidelity, by that test, which can alone be acceptable to him, and satisfactory to ourselves, obedience. Instead of putting off the thoughts of death, let us live, from this day, to learn to die. Let us often contemplate the time “when this mortal shall put on immortality”—when the Judge of the world will send *us* the summons, to appear in his more immediate presence. Whether we may live to enter upon another year, we know not; but in all human probability, before the close of it, some of us, who are now here, shall be reduced to dust; shall become as though we had never been. The brightest eyes in this assembly may, before that period, have waxed dim—before that period, the pleasing prospect of comfort and happiness, which many children now behold, may, by the loss of their affectionate parents, have vanished—before that period, many tender wives, stricken with grief, may lament the loss of their indulgent husbands—many disconsolate husbands, overwhelmed with cares, may be deprived of the dearest objects of their affections!

Such being the uncertainty of human life,

let us not continue under such infatuation, as to defer any longer being reconciled to God, that if it shall please him to prolong our lives to the revolution of another year, we may, from this day, date our entrance upon a new existence; we may, from this day, “ have “ ceased to do evil, and have learned to do “ well.” It will be a day we shall then review, not with guilty despondence, but with religious cheerfulness: instead of living under the displeasure of God; instead of being subject to the depressions of melancholy, and the disquietudes of grief, when we are visited with sickness, or overwhelmed with afflictions, even then “ we shall fear no evil; for God will be “ our God for ever, and ever, He will be our “ guide unto death.”

‘ Grant, we beseech Thee, gracious God!
 ‘ when thou art pleased to call us to thyself;
 ‘ when that awful moment approaches, that
 ‘ the delights of riches, and the hardships of
 ‘ poverty shall cease from before our eyes;
 ‘ when we are bidding a long adieu to our
 ‘ friends, relations, and every thing in this life;
 ‘ when we are encompassed with the horrors
 ‘ of death, and are about to be launched into
 ‘ eternity;

‘ eternity ; Oh ! grant, that our spirits may be
‘ sustained by a lively faith in thy Son Jesus
‘ Christ—that the visage of death may be dis-
‘ armed of its terrors—and that we may tri-
‘ umphantly enter “ into that rest which re-
‘ maineth for the people of God ! ”

SERMON XXIII.

DEUT. XXV. 14, 15, 16.

*Thou shalt not have in thy house divers measures,
a great and a small.*

*But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a
perfect and just measure shalt thou have; that
thy days may be lengthened in the land which
the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

*For all that do such things, and all that do un-
righteously, are an abomination unto the Lord
thy God.*

WERE the holy Scriptures perused with more frequency, and greater attention, the welfare of society would be preserved by the uniform observance of justice, and the pervading prevalence of integrity. For could any man, who had constantly before his eyes God's awful denunciations against fraud, dare, deliberately, to commit it? Would any man—for
whatever

whatever consideration, who meditates on the scriptures which testify of God, which “ shew “ us what is good, and what the Lord our God “ requires of us”—openly violate those laws which bring dishonor on God, and destruction on himself? No, he would be able to return a right answer to the awful question proposed by our blessed Saviour, “ What shall it profit “ a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose “ his own soul? or, what shall a man give in “ exchange for his soul?”

The design of this discourse is to shew, that every man; by dealing fairly and justly, most effectually promotes his own interest, and secures the blessing of God on his endeavors—and to exhort you, in the last place, as you hope to meet the Saviour of the world in peace, to “ wash your hands in innocency, and “ take heed unto the thing that is right.”

Now, in the language of the text, “ not to “ have divers measures, a great and a small, “ but to have perfect and just weights, and “ perfect and just measures,” is, not to wrong any one, though, in all human probability, we could do it without danger of discovery, and dread of disgrace: not to have the villany to encroach,

encroach, or the meanness to impose on the simplicity, or ignorance of others, however conducive to our own interest:—not to detain from any one, what we know in our conscience, belongs to him, though he may not know it himself:—not to deceive by speaking otherwise than we think—but to perform what we profess, and fulfil what we promise: and to be *in reality*, what we are *in appearance*: it is to observe literally, the rule propounded by our Saviour—“ whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them :” —it is to prosecute all our designs by fair, and honest means, and to challenge the inspection, and judgment of God, upon our every action.

The advantages of acting fairly, and honestly, are many in number, and great in value. For what so effectually promotes character, and establishes reputation? An honest man we trust with confidence, and esteem his promise equal security with the strongest engagements.

Not satisfied with employing an honest man ourselves, we feel it incumbent on us, for both the good of our friends, and as the reward of uprightuess, to proclaim his integrity. “ Who

“ ever

“ ever saw the righteous forsaken ?” His honesty entitles him to our notice, and recommends him to our regard, and we are happy to bestow on him every mark of kindness, and every testimony of esteem. To what inconveniences do men readily put themselves, to befriend an honest man ? They cheerfully postpone a favorite design, or a necessary work, as well to accommodate him, as to avoid the employing a man of an infamous, or even of a suspicious, character. Let the poor man compare this lustre of reputation, this heart-felt satisfaction of integrity, with the advantage of a lie, and the gain of deceit—and what was said of the character of the unrighteous, he will find to be applicable to the work of unrighteousness.—“ I went by
“ and lo ! it was gone ; I sought it, but the
“ benefit of it could, no where, be actually
“ found.” Let him consider further, that when a man has once deservedly obtained the character of unjust and unrighteous, “ no credence is given to his words ;” when he speaks truth, he is not believed ; when he means honestly, he is not trusted. Let the honest man reflect upon this, and he will then see
how

how much better is a little, acquired by justice, and improved by integrity, than “ great revenues without right.”

Would men, whose object it is to be rich, duly weigh the prodigious advantages resulting from the reputation of fair-dealing and honesty—whatever might be their principles—they would act fairly, in order to promote their own interest. But to personate a character which has not a real existence—to pretend to be honest, when there is no principle of honesty—what is it but to live in perpetual apprehension, lest some unlucky accident should betray the hypocrisy, or some unforeseen circumstance discover the guilt, of our conduct? If, therefore, a man think it his interest to be esteemed an honest man, let him be so indeed—and his conduct, the more it is examined, the more amiable it will appear: for though the fruit of his reputation hangs exposed to the caprice of wantonness, and the violence of outrage, he will, notwithstanding, enjoy it, in security, “ under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree.” Fraud, deceit, extortion, point out indeed—but the direction is deceitful—the readiest way to wealth; they
lead

lead to “ the high mountain, from which are
 “ seen all the glories of the world, and the fe-
 “ licity thereof;” but riches, obtained in this
 manner—by the sacrifice of our innocence,
 and the prostitution of our integrity—are pur-
 chased at infinitely too great an expence. To
 what inconveniences, troubles and mortifica-
 tions has the man exposed himself in the ac-
 quisition—to what lashes of censure, and keen-
 ness of asperity is he perpetually subject,
 through the brutality of ignorance, and the
 malevolence of envy—in the enjoyment of
 this ill-gotten wealth? And; “ after walking
 “ in a vain shadow,” as the Psalmist expresses
 it, “ and disquieting himself in vain, to heap
 “ up riches without knowing who shall gather
 “ them—whether a wise man or a fool—he
 “ leaves them often in the midst of his days”
 —the very time he has set apart in his own
 mind to enjoy them—and the profusion and
 prodigality with which they are squandered,
 are, often, proportionate to the avarice and
 rapacity with which they were acquired. Have
 not, therefore, “ in thy house divers measures, a
 “ great and a small. But thou shalt have a per-
 “ fect and just weight, a perfect and just mea-
 “ sure

“ sure shalt thou have ; that thy days may be
“ lengthened in the land which the Lord thy
“ God giveth thee. For all that do such things,
“ and all that do unrighteously, are an abomi-
“ nation unto the Lord thy God.”

Let us now see how the blessing of God may be obtained on honest, and fair, dealing—and this will appear from the consideration of God’s regard to justice, as well as from the testimony of Holy Writ. The man who trespasses on his neighbor, by breaking down the fences of justice and honesty, sets himself to counteract the designs of Providence. For it is the will of heaven that all men should act with fairness towards each other, because the violation of right introduces into society nothing but distrust, disorder, and confusion. But the testimony God bears to uprightnes is found in, almost, every page of Scripture. “ The Lord loveth the thing that is right. “ Such as are blessed of God shall possess the “ land, and they that are cursed of Him shall “ be rooted out.” Let me not be understood to mean, that every honest man prospers in life more than the unjust—this is by no means the case. An honest man, having no indirect

views, no fraudulent measures to accomplish, behaves with openness and candor; and, meaning no ill himself, he does not suspect others of it, so that an advantage is frequently taken of his ingenuous, and amiable simplicity. Besides, his conduct is a continual reproof to the unjust, and unrighteous; it is no wonder, therefore, that “they bend the bow privily “to shoot at him that is true of heart”—as it is written, “the ungodly seeth the righteous, and seeketh occasion to slay him.” But if, by prosperity, you mean the Blessing of God, the upright man alone can be said to prosper; “for God has made an hedge “about him, and about his house, and about “all that he hath on every side.”

If it be urged in favor of injustice, that men, notorious for oppression, deceit, dishonesty, and every vice which defiles the human heart, are caressed by the Great, and patronized by the Wealthy—let not this stagger thy virtue, nor provoke thy indignation. “This “is an evil under the sun, and it is common “among men.” But, as in the days of the Psalmist, so likewise, in our own—“often “has the ungodly been seen in great power,
“ and

“ and flourishing like a green bay-tree—but
“ when you went by, has he not been gone?”
Such men are guilty of an egregious mistake
in their first setting out—they choose a wrong
foundation—they overlook the rock, and build
upon the sand—and, “ when the rain de-
“ scends, and the floods come, and the winds
“ blow, and beat upon the house, it falls; and
“ often great is the fall of it.” When they
have practised iniquity so long, they get be-
wildered in its mazes; and, having been ac-
customed to toil in the artifices of deceit, and
the stratagems of dishonesty; “ the pit they
“ dig for others, they fall into, in the end,
“ themselves.”

I will presume a little longer on your pa-
tience, whilst I earnestly exhort you to the
uniform practice of honesty, and uprightnes
in all your dealings.

And let me, first, entreat you, as you regard
your own peace of mind, and the good opinion
of the world.—If you deal unjustly—whether
you be rich or poor—you deprive yourselves
of the greatest of earthly blessings, inward
satisfaction. Many there are, who have been
successful in their callings, who have labored

with patient perseverance—many who have accumulated with astonishing rapidity, and when you expected, that they would enjoy the fruits of their industry, the power has been withheld from them. No sooner is the hurry of business over—no sooner does the tumult of employ subside—than the mind, wanting an object on which to engage her thoughts, turns, naturally, to the hoarded treasure. The man reflects how it has been obtained: the very act of bequeathing his goods is a sad memento how unjustly he has acquired them. His animal spirits droop—the functions of the soul are almost suspended—“fearfulness and “trembling come upon him, and an horrible dread overwhelms him.” Or, to drown reflection, he enters into various engagements—his uneasy thoughts are dispelled by the incense of adulation, the mirth of company, and the revelling of wine. And, if he can but keep reflection at a distance, he wears a look of complacency, and assumes a smile of cheerfulness. Miserable is the state of that man, who is at variance with himself—whose reproof and torment are in his own bosom! Would you not prefer a little—would you not
prefer

prefer a state which will barely supply food and clothing for the body, to the envied state of being possessed of “riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt?” Would you not prefer a state, in which you can challenge all the world, and triumphantly say, “I have injured no man, I have oppressed no man; I have defrauded no man?”—in which you can appeal to God for the innocency of your hands, and the integrity of your heart?

To exhort those in a lower station of life—“not to have in their houses divers measures, a great and a small—but, on the contrary, a perfect and just weight, and a perfect and just measure”—in other words, whatever may be your calling—to act honestly and fairly, without fraud and without deceit—would God such exhortation were unnecessary! Would God you would consider, that an unblemished character is your chief dependence! And if you stain it by open fraud, or secret imposition, you rob yourselves, and become poor indeed—you are bereft of the support of your benefactors, and the consolations of your conscience.—As it hath seemed good to the Almighty to place you in an humble sphere of

life, be not impatient of poverty, “but trust
 “in the Lord and be doing good,” discharge
 the duties of your station, “and verily you
 “shall be fed.” By holding fast your integrity,
 and being content, by patient labor, to
 support yourselves, you engage all mankind
 to become your friends; and continued kindnesses
 will do you more good, than what you
 can make, by chance, through fraud or over-
 reaching.—When you are confined to a bed
 of sickness, and stand in need of the assistance
 of your neighbors, your pain will be
 asswaged, and your bed made easy, by the
 attentions of the humane, and the relief of
 the wealthy. And above all, you will make
 God your friend.—When He calls you out of
 this world to give an account of your conduct,
 your integrity “will cover a multitude
 “of sins”—it will plead for you with irresistible
 efficacy, and, having gained the approbation
 of men on earth, will secure the favor
 of God in heaven. When, therefore, you
 are disposed to act dishonestly and deceitfully,
 call to mind that “all that do such things,
 “and all that do unrighteously, are an abo-
 “mination unto the Lord.”

As to those who have risen to superior stations, let me request you to remember, that, however independent you may be on men, you are subject still to the will of Providence. “He is about your path, and about your bed, and spieth out all your ways.” At his dread tribunal you are to meet, face to face, “the poor, the needy, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.” Can distress challenge you, as its author; can poverty fix on you, as its cause? You will not then be protected by the power of gold, nor the superiority of station. As the righteous, and the just, will obtain the approbation of their Judge—so will He render unto the unrighteous, and the unjust, “seven-fold into their bosom. For all that do unjustly, and unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord.”

Reflect, my brethren, all of you, on what has been said; and when you return to your several occupations, let it be evident that this discourse has not been addressed to you in vain. Whatever you may have been in your past life; in every future period of it be strictly honest, and uniformly just. Neither practise yourselves, nor encourage in others, arti-

fice, or dishonesty. Fortify your souls in the ways of uprightnes, by the frequent reflection that you are to appear before the Judge of the world ; and that, what you are now so anxious to conceal, will then be openly exposed—think how you shall be overwhelmed with shame, with remorse, and with apprehension, and think, how every one you may have wronged, by the use of “ a small measure, or “ a false balance,” will deliver in his evidence against you.

S E R M O N XXIV.

JAMES V. 14.

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.

IN the affairs of this life, whatever is of moment is performed by wise, and prudent men, without delay: in the affairs of eternity, indifference, thoughtlessness, neglect, defiance, are so conspicuously visible, as to strike the most inobservant. I would lead your attention to a circumstance of infinite moment: I mean, the extreme absurdity, the unaccountable folly, the imminent danger, of suffering sickness and decay, to make slow, yet sensible, attacks upon the human frame, before the ordinances of the Gospel are embraced, and before any preparation is made for eternity, An absurd notion prevails amongst the ignorant, that the sick, who are so ill as to need the visits of the clergy, rarely recover. Ridiculous! It is likewise supposed, that, if a man
make

make his will, he fhall not long furvive. What! Do you imagine Providence is directed in the adminiftration of the univerfe by circumftances like thefe? “ God doeth whatfo-
 “ ever pleafeth Him in heaven above, in the
 “ earth beneath, in the fea, and in all deep
 “ places, and none can ftay his hand, or fay
 “ unto him, what doeft thou?” In confequence of fuch dangerous preposfeffion, the minifter is often fent for, when the poor wretch is in the agonies of death, or fo diftracted with pain, or overwhelmed with ficknefs, as to be infenfible of his fituation. What is to be done? He is requested to adminifter the Bleffed Sacrament, and the friends of the fick perfon charitably hope, that, if it fhould please God to take him, all will then be well. Sometimes indeed he is induftrioufly kept from a fense of his fituation, left a concern for his falvation fhould co-operate with his ficknefs, to bring him to the grave.

If there be any condition, which, more than another, excites our commiferation and pity, it is that of a wicked man with fmall hopes of life, awakened to a fense of his danger. Stung with remorse, his whole conduct arifes before
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his view—the extortion and injustice he has committed; the oaths and curses he hath uttered; the sabbaths he has profaned—he sees every sin unite to condemn him in the sight of God: he looks forward to the issue of his conduct, and his conscience presents the Redeemer of mankind, no longer merciful and forbearing, but ready to take vengeance for his iniquities—“ a fire devours before him, and behind him a flame burneth.” Had the man, before his sickness had made so dreadful a progress, sent, as the text directs, “ for the elders of the church, the ministers of reconciliation”—had he made the best reparation to those he had injured—had he, as his sickness increased, made a proportionate progress in the work of repentance, and made his peace with God—he might, instead of being distracted with remorse, and agonized with despair, have entertained humble hopes of being admitted, through the all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ, into the mansions of everlasting peace. Can there be a stronger argument to prevail with you, on the first intimation of sickness, to enter upon the work of repentance? that, if it shall please God to restore you to health, sorrow for sin may

may produce reformation of life: or, if the Almighty, in his all-wise counsels, should otherwise determine, that you may have a more comfortable prospect of eternity.

By a timely exhortation to repentance and amendment, the sick may be enabled, if sickness continue long upon them, to correct, by the assistance of Divine Grace, the depravities of their nature. Many men may have behaved so brutishly to their families, that they would wish to make some reparation, according as their circumstances and situation may allow: at least, they would wish to acknowledge, how sensible they felt themselves of the impropriety of their conduct; and to ask, and to receive, forgiveness of those, whom they had teized by their caprice, provoked by their suspicions, or oppressed by their power. It might occur likewise, "through the ministry of the word," that such a disposition could be no recommendation to the favor of the Almighty. For one of the chief ends of Christianity is, to promote peace, and good-will, and happiness, one amongst another. A man who had been always influenced by caprice, or enflamed by violence, might be induced to compare his
conduct

conduct with the example Jesus Christ had left for his imitation ; whose whole life was composed of meekness, patience, and humility. And if it pleased God to raise him up from his bed of sickness, instead of continuing a reproach, he might become an ornament, of human nature,—distinguished in the whole tenor of his conduct, not, as heretofore, by levity, by arrogance, by oppression—but by prudence, by condescension, by forbearance.

Has the sick person been notorious for injustice, and unfair dealing? It is the duty of his minister, to represent to him, the eternal hazard to which such conduct exposes him—to shew him, from the Scriptures, how Almighty God, has expressed His abhorrence of it; and how He has set his face against all who deal unrighteously. Should the man recover, and return to a better mind, his future uprightnefs will be considered, in some measure, an atonement for his former iniquity. And thus will society, from a worthless, obtain a valuable, member.

But it may be, that the sick person, not by his general conduct, but by some particular act, has either enriched himself, or oppressed another. The minister of Christ is to shew
such

ſuch an one that “ it is eaſier for a camel to
“ go through a needle’s eye, than for him to
“ enter into the kingdom of heaven,” ſhould
he die with that ſin on his head; and that un-
leſs he make reſtitution, and ſatiſfaction, to the
party he has injured—unleſs he does, as he
would wiſh to be done by—not all his prayers,
and ſighs, and lamentations will, in the leaſt,
propitiate the favour of God. That very act
“ *will witneſs againſt him to damnation.*” When
his fears are excited, and his apprehenſions
alarmed, with the view of eternity, then is the
miniſter to urge, to entreat, to beſeech him
not to delay the making his peace with an of-
fended God, by making reſtitution, and ſatiſ-
faction to injured men; which, if he accom-
pliſhes, that ſoul is ſaved from eternal perdi-
tion.

The ſick perſon may have acquired, or be
poſſeſſed of, much wealth, and his whole life
may, perhaps, have paſſed, without ever being
decorated with any acts of charity; but, on the
contrary, chequered by thoſe of meaneſs, and
deceit. He is to be told that, to be entitled
to the mercy of God, he is to be merciful him-
ſelf; that he is to feed the hungry, clothe the
naked,

naked, and instruct the ignorant, which is the surest way of “ laying up treasures where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Thus if he recover, he becomes “ a father to the poor,” and instead of being a “ song and a by-word, when the ear hears him then it shall bless him, and when the eye sees him it shall give witness to him, because he delivers the poor that cry, the fatherless, and him that hath none to help him.”

There is an advantage in preparing for a future life, in the beginning of sickness, which is productive often of infinite good: people are sometimes prevailed with, who have deferred that necessary work, to make their Wills; by which means, many law-suits are avoided, and the sick person disposes of his property in such a manner, as, when he is to give account to God, he shall not be ashamed. But if he live in the hope of soon recovering, and suffer his disorder violently to attack him, before he considers seriously that he is on the brink of the grave; when the necessity of making a Will is suggested to him, the want of recollection, or the severity of pain, may prevent his
making

making fuch a diftribution as is dictated by equity, and will be sanctioned by Religion.

What has been faid will, I am aware, be censured and ridiculed, although it is on fo ferious a fubject, by one description of men, who will be ready to fay, in the language of the Prophet, that “it is healing the wound of “God’s people falſely.” By the wife and the good, the doctrine will be underſtood, and approved: and, far from fearing the censure, or the ridicule, I ſhould reproach myſelf with the applauſe, of men, who meafure Chriſtianity by their preconceived opinions of it. Ask yourſelves, whether, when a man is on the brink of the grave, it does not ſeem the moſt likely thing he can do to reconcile himſelf to the Almighty, to ſend for thoſe he has injured, begging their forgiveness, and making the beſt reſtitution in his power—to reconcile thoſe whoſe affections he may have alienated from others to their manifeſt injury; and to beſeech all, who accompanied him in his mad career, to take warning by his melancholy example?

When the ſick perſon has compoſed his mind, by doing all in his power to render thoſe he leaves behind him, more ſatiſfied, and comfortable,

fortable and happy—thus expiating his offences againſt ſociety—he is to be exhorted to turn his thoughts moſt ſeriouſly towards God—to bewail his manifold violations of God's laws—and to beſeech Him, through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, that He would graciouſly accept his contrition, and not conſign him, according to his demerits, to endless torments. Thus being truly penitent, he is to be aſſiſted in preparing his heart to commemorate the death of Jeſus Chriſt, in the holy Sacrament. He is then to have the gracious promiſes of God, the complete Atonement of the Redeemer, and the whole new Covenant, opened fully to his view. And if his repentance be ſuch as, upon his recovery, would have produced amendment, we may charitably hope, that the caſe of the ſick perſon is not quite deſperate. Such are the overflowings of the Divine Mercy, that we may preſume the Almighty will not diſown him at the day of Judgment.

I now proceed to ſhew the propriety of requeſting the prayers of the Church.

The united prayers of others may ſometimes obtain that for us of God, which we cannot

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obtain

obtain by our own private prayers alone ; as feems to be intimated in the verfe following the text—“ the prayer of faith fhall fave the “ fick, and the Lord fhall raife him up : and “ if he hath committed fins they fhall be for- “ given him. If two of you,” fays our Sa- viour, “ fhall agree on earth, as touching any “ thing they fhall ask, it fhall be done for “ them of my Father which is in heaven. For “ where two or three are gathered together in “ my name, there am I in the midft of them.” Surely our Blessed Saviour afcribes fomething more to thofe united prayers, than to our own fingle, and private, prayers alone. And it teaches us befides a moft ufeful leffon—the dependence we may have upon, and the help we may receive from, one another. For whilft one compassionate christian affifts his neighbor in his ficknefs today, tomorrow he may ftand in need of the like affiftance himfelf.

And all, who hear that fuch a fick perfon defires to be recommended in their prayers, fhould remember him out of a feeling fenfe of his mifery. They fhould reflect, that the fick perfon cannot come to God’s houfe to pray for himfelf ; but can only recommend his cafe
and

and condition to us, for our Christian charity towards him, and our prayers for him. And let every person, in the congregation, consider that the same may one day be his own case; that he shall as earnestly desire the prayers of his neighbors, as he is now desired to pray for him that is sick.

When, therefore, the prayers of the congregation are desired for any sick persons, let us consider their condition, and think upon the pain they endure, and the misery they feel, their restless nights, and weary days; how, “in the morning, they say, would God it were even, and at even, would God it were morning;” and let us make their case our own, or think how shortly it may be so. And surely, we shall then recommend them to God heartily, and fervently, hoping that such prayers will be efficacious, either towards the recovery of the sick, or their happy change; which is the end of all our addresses to the throne of grace, that God would be pleased to preserve them awhile from a temporal, or for ever from eternal, death.

Nothing now remains, but that I make a solemn appeal to your consciences.

There are two states which divide the life of man, health and sicknefs. Now as sicknefs is often the forerunner of death, “and after death the Judgment,” I am to exhort you to prepare, whilst you are in health, against the day of sicknefs, which, unless we are instantly cut off by the vifitation of God, will one day overtake us. And if we live regardless of it, if it should suddenly arrest us, in what way shall we be enabled to discharge the duties of a state with which we are entirely unacquainted? Languor of body, depression of spirits, consciousnefs of guilt, apprehension of punishment, may so distract our mind, that we may have no resolution to make our peace with either God, or man. Let us, who are now in health, enquire of our hearts what would be our prospect of eternity? Could we look around upon all our neighbors, upon every one with whom we have had any intercourse, and challenge them to say any evil of us? Have we defrauded no man? Have we injured no man? Could we, on our return from this holy place, lie down on a bed of sicknefs, with clean hands, and pure hearts? Could we look forward to the Judgment-seat
of

of Chrift, without fearing to meet the unprotected, the innocent, and unsuspecting? For we cannot pafs out of this world with rational, with well-grounded hopes of being faved, unlefs, if we have committed injuftice, if we have done to others as we would not be done unto ourfelves, unlefs, I fay, “ we make reftitution “ and fatisfaction.” And, as Chriftians, could we review our lives with complacency, and approbation? Or, have we offended God by perpetual drunkennefs? By frequent curfing and fwearing? By devoting the Lord’s Day to the purpofes of idlenefs, bufinefs, or diffipation? By neglecting to participate that moft folemn ordinance, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper? How many of you, my brethren, are at this moment fmitten by your confciences? How many of you are under the fevereft reproof for your fhameful, and fcandalous contempt of the laft command of your gracious Redeemer? How many of you have always flattered yourfelves that you will communicate before you die? I appeal to your hearts—are you guilty of deceit, of injuftice, of drinking, fwearing, profaning the fabbath, of difregarding the Holy Sacrament? Do you live in the

open commission of a vice the Scripture forbids? Do you live in the wilful neglect of a duty it enjoins? If you do—impose not on yourselves, by hoping that you are in a state of salvation. Place no dependence on the merits of Christ, whilst you live in any known sin. For be assured, if you die as you live, He will say unto you—“depart from me, I know not whence ye are.” Let me, therefore, beseech you to repent, whilst you are in health, and turn to God. Acquaint yourselves with Him by breaking off your sins, and by acting uprightly. Every day of your lives offer up your prayers to him, and do not have this duty to learn, when you lie on a sick bed. Every day of your lives consider, how you shall be prepared, when sickness arrests you, for eternity. If you knew the agony of mind, the misgivings of heart, the stings of conscience, those men feel, whom sickness overtakes, whilst they live in the commission of sin, I should not, this day, exhort you in vain.—Could I describe to you the situation of that man whose life has been profligate and wicked, whom a fever, a consumption, or any other disorder is precipitating to his grave; how very awkwardly he
sets

sets about the work of repentance ; how very unholily he prays for the forgiveness of his sins, and how very weary he appears of that Divine employment ; how half unwilling, and exceedingly afraid he is, to receive the Blessed Sacrament ; how, when he is tortured with pain, or disappointed of rest ; from his habit of cursing, he vents his imprecations against his disorder, although he is standing on the precipice of eternity—there is not a single person that now hears me, who would not, from this moment, cease to live wickedly, who would not, from this moment, strive to die happy. But though language cannot describe, imagination cannot paint the horrors of such a situation, remember that, unless you repent, such situation will one day be your own ; and be assured, that the *apprehension* of death, that the *dread* of eternity is nothing, when compared with *the actual punishment* which awaits you, of “ dwelling for ever with the devil and his “ angels.”—The denunciation is tremendous, but it is the denunciation of Him who is TRUTH itself.

S E R M O N XXV.

LUKE ii. 11.

** Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

† **A**T the institution of the Passover, to commemorate God's mercy, in saving the lives of the children of Israel, "by a great deliverance," Moses instructs them to perpetuate the memory of that signal event to future "generations; it shall come to pass," says he. "when your children shall say unto you, what mean you by this service? that ye shall say unto them, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." Is the question proposed to us, why we celebrate this festival? We answer, it was instituted by

* Preached on Christmas day.

† See Joseph Mede.

the Church of God, as a religious, and thankful commemoration, of the great benefit of our Saviour's incarnation—his taking our nature upon Him for our redemption. “ It came “ into the heart of Moses to visit his brethren, “ the children of Israel.” “ Blessed be the God “ and Father of Lord Jesus Christ,” that He came, as on this day, “ to visit us in great humility,” in order to “ redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself!” “ As “ the king of Israel descended from his chariot, “ put off his royal apparel,” and in a less distinguished habit, entered the battle; so did the Redeemer of men divest himself of his heavenly glory, come down from the throne of his majesty, clothe himself with the flesh of mortality, to conquer our enemies, and to rescue us from their power. This is the meaning of our “ keeping this feast unto the Lord, and “ of our having an holy convocation, or assembly,” on this bright, auspicious day. “ For “ *unto us* was born this day a Saviour, who is “ Christ the Lord.”

When God, in the beginning, “ laid the “ foundations of the earth, when he laid the “ measures thereof, and stretched the lines
“ upon

“ upon it, the morning stars sang together,
“ and all the sons of God shouted for joy;”
they admired, praised, and adored the power,
wisdom, and goodness of God, which were so
conspicuously displayed in the works of the
creation. And, if ever there was a day on
which God’s Almighty power, his incompara-
ble wisdom, and his infinite goodness appeared
again, as it did at the creation of the world,
surely it was on this day, when “ the Son of
“ God took upon Him our flesh,” to repair the
breach between God and man, and to “ make
“ all things new.” For, can we doubt that
God, who contrived the scheme of our re-
demption, to give at once satisfaction to his
justice, and triumph to his mercy, was pleased
with this day, on which our Saviour came
into the world with that body which his Fa-
ther had provided him? “ Go, I pray thee,”
said Jacob to Joseph, “ and see, whether it be
“ well with thy brethren.” But God, know-
ing the wretched condition mankind was in
without a Saviour, sent his Son, not to enquire
after our welfare, but to procure “ eternal re-
“ demption for us.” And, as at the creation
of the world, “ the sons of God shouted for
“ joy,”

“ joy,” so they again rejoiced at the birth of Him by whom the world was made. For no sooner had the angel of the Lord delivered his message, “ those glad tidings of great joy” to the shepherds, “ but suddenly there was with him a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying—Glory be to God in the highest, and, on earth, peace, good-will towards men.” And the ground of our joy, and the reason of this anthem being sung by the choir of heaven, is expressed in the words of my text, “ For unto us is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

In discoursing on these words, it will be necessary to enquire, who the Saviour is, declared by the heavenly herald, and what are the offices He sustained to entitle Him to this high character—secondly, who are the people He came to save :—After which I shall conclude with some reflections suitable to this day’s solemnity.

I. He, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, was no other than both God and man: “ God, of the substance of his Father, begotten before the world ; and man, “ of

“ of the substance of his mother, born in the
“ world : perfect God and perfect man : and
“ as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man,
“ so God and man is one Christ.”

It was expedient that our surety should be man, because He was to perform that perfect, and exact, obedience, which God required *of us*; that, thereby having sanctified our nature in himself, God might once more look upon, and be pleased with, it; and He now, in heaven, intercedes with his Father, to accept us through his mediation. Now, had he been only God, he would have been free from all subjection, and could have paid no obedience—“ being equal to his Father, as touching his Godhead :” but then, He, assuming our nature, was “ inferior to his Father, as touching his manhood :” and in this capacity, “ Christ came into the world to do the will of God, and yield obedience to Him.”

Again, obedience being a debt we owe to God, and God having decreed that his justice should be satisfied, “ it behoved Christ to suffer, and then to enter into his glory.” But the Godhead is of that infinite perfection that it cannot

cannot suffer; so that if he had had no other nature, he could not have paid that debt for us, the punishment due to sin. It was also fit that God's justice should be satisfied in that nature, which had transgressed; and that the same nature should suffer the punishment, which had incurred the guilt. And, therefore, so transcendent, was the love of the Son of God towards the sons of men, that rather than they should still lie under the power of death, he resolved, at an appointed time, by becoming incarnate, to accomplish our salvation.

But then, that our redemption should be complete, our Redeemer was to be God, as well as man. For had he been only man, why would not the sentence have been pronounced against him, as well as against the rest of Adam's posterity? "Thou shalt surely die; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return:" and if so, "instead of saving others, he could not have saved himself." But suppose him to have been created innocent, and to have retained his innocency, he could not have made "satisfaction for the sins of the whole world:" it could be no sufficient ransom for those innumerable multitudes that
" were

“ were to be redeemed to God, out of every
“ kindred, and tongue, and people, and na-
“ tion.”

Besides, could man, or angel have wrought our salvation for us, it was not fit that we should owe such an inestimable blessing to any other person, than to him who created us; because the value of our redemption, being more than that of our creation, it would engage us to love our Redeemer, more than our Creator: and therefore, in the work of our redemption, God would not give us occasion to love an angel, or a saint, better than himself. The Son of God, who “ sits at his right hand, by whom he made
“ the world, He must restore all things,” that the blessings of our creation, redemption, and all other good gifts might meet in Him, and we be thereby obliged to “ love him with all
“ our heart, with all our soul, with all our
“ mind, and with all our strength.”—“ The
“ Church,” says St. Paul, “ is purchased with
“ God’s own blood.” Thus is our redemption wrought out by him who is “ the blessed and
“ only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord
“ of lords !”

By considering the offices our Saviour sus-
tained,

tained, we shall the better understand how, and in what sense, he may be said to save us.

He was a prophet: this word, in a strict sense, signifies one who is enabled, by the Holy Ghost, to foretel things to come. Our Saviour foretold the manner of St. Peter's death, and the long life of St. John. But, in a larger acceptation, the word is put to denote a person who is endowed with power, to interpret, and make known, the will of God. St. John acquaints us how well qualified he was for this office, "He was in the bosom of the Father." He made a full declaration of his Father's will, in those sermons, parables, and discourses, which we find recorded in the four Evangelists. He taught upon what terms, and conditions, blessedness was now to be had, under the dispensation of the Gospel. He revealed, some commands of God, which were before, either not at all, or so obscurely, revealed, in the Old Testament, that men thought themselves not obliged to observe them. He freed many passages from the false glosses which the Pharisees had put upon them; and, as the Apostle speaks, "He brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." He instituted

Sacraments

Sacraments, and ordained a ministry to convey the blessings of Religion to succeeding ages.

He was a priest: man, having incensed and provoked God's justice, by a continued course of sin, it was highly necessary, that, in officiating for us with God, our Mediator should render Him some great and honorable reparation in our behalf; and the greatest reparation he could make, was to take our punishment upon himself, and offer up his own life to God, as a sacrifice, for our sins. Had God required the punishment of those that had sinned, the whole race of mankind must have been destroyed: and he would not pardon us without some commutation for the punishment that was due to his justice, that he might preserve, and maintain, the authority due to his laws. Upon which account his infinite wisdom and goodness found out this expedient, that some other person should suffer in our stead; and so we might not be destroyed, neither our sins go unpunished. Jesus Christ gave "himself
" a ransom for us, and, by that one oblation
" of himself once offered, he made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and
" satisfaction, for the sins of the world."

He was a king: he came into the world, indeed, in a low condition, very different from that of a prince. He not only humbled himself in taking our nature upon him, but was born of mean parents, who could not bring a lamb, and, therefore, they, at his presentation in the temple, offered for him “a pair of turtles.” And yet the Prophet Isaiah truly styles him, “the Prince of peace.” The angel Gabriel told his mother, that “He should reign “over the house of Jacob for ever.” He obtained, in his human nature, an absolute power and dominion, whereby “he became Lord “and Christ; the Prince and Saviour of his “people.” And this was according to what he had told his Apostles, before his ascension, “all “power is given me in heaven and in earth;” by virtue of which he established a Church, in order to disseminate his blessings, and proclaim his salvation.

And he had a power to send down the Holy Ghost to support it with wisdom, and direct it in truth. “When the Comforter is “come, whom I will send from the Father, “He shall teach you all things:”—by this Spirit, he conducts his subjects, if they will submit

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mit to his direction, into the way that leadeth to eternal life. "The Son of man hath power to forgive sins," and he applies a pardon to every one who conscientiously embraces his Gospel: we are the purchase of his blood, and the trophies of his victory; and, "if we are faithful unto death, he will give us a crown of life."

II. Let us consider, more particularly, the persons for whom he was born. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." These words were spoken to a few shepherds, "who were keeping watch over their flocks by night." Now these shepherds were Jews; which people expected a Saviour to be born of, and for, their own nation. But so jealous were they of their privileges, and so unwilling others should participate with them, that they denied him to the rest of the world; as if "God was still to be known, and worshipped, in Jewry only." And if "he had not been a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel, these glad tidings of great joy" would have been nothing to us, who were "strangers to the common wealth of Israel." But blessed, for ever blessed, be the God of all

consolation, who sent his Son “to give light
 “to all who sat in darkness, and in the shadow
 “of death! We were all concluded under
 “sin;” and since “the wages of sin is death,”
 we were to suffer eternal punishment, from
 which human means could suggest no deliv-
 erance. We were all in the same condition,
 and no one could take upon him, to satisfy for
 others, who stood in need of a Saviour him-
 self; and therefore, had not He, who was
 both God and man, undertaken, and paid our
 ransom for us, we must have been liable to the
 wrath of an incensed God.

Having considered by whom we are re-
 deemed, and, that it was to deliver us from
 eternal punishment, Jesus Christ, as on this
 day, “left the glory which he had with the
 “Father before the world was,” may I not ad-
 dress you in the words of our Saviour to his
 disciples “Will ye also go away?” and answer
 for you all, “Lord! to whom shall we go?
 “Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

III. I shall beg your attention, whilst I
 make some reflections suitable to this day’s so-
 lemnity

That God should leave the throne of his
 glory,

glory, and condescend so far as to take upon Him our flesh—that He should purchase for us so great an inheritance—what tongue of men, or of angels, can sufficiently admire it, and make any suitable returns of praise? “He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” Yet at “his birth, the angels called upon one another, to give glory to God.” And shall we, for whose sake he came down from heaven, be insensible of his love? Surely it ought to fill our hearts with a lively sense, and our mouths with a due acknowledgement, of his mercy! “A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful,” to behold the goodness and favors of God, to recount his mercies, and to hope for a continuance, and increase of them. To obtain which, let us consider,

(2dly) That we are required to live, not only in the profession, but under the influence, of Christianity. We are to regulate our actions, our desires, our thoughts by the word of God. God is no more reconciled to sin now, than he was before the coming of our Saviour, neither is Christ less a professed enemy to Satan. “There is no more concord between Him and

“ Belial, than there is communion between
 “ light and darknes;” nay, the very end of his
 “ manifestation in the flesh, was to destroy the
 “ works of the devil.” In this new and blessed
 covenant, he offers his purchased blessings,
 upon condition of our entering faithfully into
 his service; he expects us to “ die unto sin,
 “ and live unto righteousness.”

(3dly. We may learn how odious is sin in
 the sight of God, by the greatness of the per-
 son of our Mediator. God, of his mercy, did
 not banish us his presence for ever, but he
 would admit no less person, than his own be-
 loved Son, to mediate between him and us, and
 would accept no less ransom than that of his
 life. Considering then, that “ God sent his
 “ only begotten Son into the world, that we
 “ might live through him,” we should en-
 quire seriously of ourselves, whether the end of
 his mission be answered? He has made our
 obedience to be our interest, as well as our
 duty. He forbids us nothing but what is un-
 becoming our nature, and destructive of our
 present, as well as future, happiness. Let us,
 therefore, be persuaded not to make such a
 trial of his mercy, as to transgress his laws, and
 “ cast

“ cast his commandments behind us.” If a Saviour be born to us, let us, from this day, labor to have an interest in his merits. Let the day on which the Son of God took upon him our flesh, be the day on which we become true and sincere Christians. And to strengthen our resolutions, and encrease our faith, let us all, “ with one consent,” commemorate his nativity, by partaking in the Holy Sacrament of his body and blood: thus, by “ going on from strength to strength, when “ he shall appear the second time unto salvation, we may also appear with him in glory.” Which God of his infinite mercy grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Blessed Saviour and Redeemer!

SERMON XXVI.

JOHN XVI. 7.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you.

THESE are the words of our Blessed Saviour to his disconsolate Disciples, not long before his passion, whose minds were depressed, and whose apprehensions were alarmed, with the melancholy news of their Master's sufferings, the ill treatment He foretold they should also meet with in the world, and his leaving them in this comfortless condition, to go to the Father who had sent him. They must be desponding with grief, and overwhelmed with anxiety, as often as it occurred to them, that they were “ to be hated and persecuted; put out of the synagogues; yea, that the time should come when he who killed them

“ them

“ them should think that he did God service.” And as an aggravation of their sorrow, he with whom they had been so happy and secure; for whose sake they had left all that they had; he who, amidst all their distresses and sufferings, was to be the joy and rejoicing of their hearts; even he, from whom alone they expected assistance, protection, comfort, and happiness, was shortly to be taken from them. But to dispel that sorrow, he promised them another Comforter, who, by being “ present with them in “ spirit,” should make amends for their master’s “ being absent in body.” “ Nevertheless I tell “ you the truth, it is expedient for you that I “ go away: for if I go not away the Comforter “ will not come unto you; but if I depart I “ will send him unto you.”

In discoursing on these words, I shall shew, first, why the Feast of Pentecost was instituted.

(2dly) How Christ’s going away was expedient for his Disciples.

(3dly) The great blessings the Apostles received by the coming of the Holy Ghost, the promised Comforter.

I. This Feast the church now celebrates, the day

day of Pentecost, is so called from its being the fiftieth day after the resurrection of our Lord. He died at the time when the paschal lamb, which was the type of him, was offered; and the Holy Ghost descended, as on this day, in order that the Gospel might hold some correspondence with the Law. The feast of weeks, or of Pentecost, was instituted by Moses, while the children of Israel were journeying in the wilderness towards the land of Canaan, and was observed by them for two reasons, to which our Whitsuntide bears a strong resemblance.

They observed it in remembrance of their being delivered from Egyptian slavery. "And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks, or of Pentecost," says Moses, "unto the Lord thy God, and thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt." And we keep our Pentecost, in memory of our being delivered from worse than Egyptian bondage, the bondage of sin and Satan. For on this day, the Holy Ghost endowed the Apostles with power, to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel to the whole world, that we all might become members of Christ the head.

The Jews likewise kept this Feast in memory

mory of the Law's being delivered on Mount Sinai. And so we keep our feast in memory of our Law's going out of Sion, the promulgation of the Gospel. The old Law was given by Moses a servant, thereby intimating bondage—but grace and truth, the revelation of the Gospel, by Jesus Christ our King, and therefore makes us free, and entitles us to call God our Father.

Having shewn why the Feast of Pentecost was instituted, I proceed to consider

II. The necessity of the mission of the Holy Spirit; “it is expedient for you that
 “ I go away: for if I go not away' the
 “ Comforter will not come unto you;
 “ but if I depart I will send him unto
 “ you.”

Now this will the better appear, if we consider that the Trinity, or three persons in the Godhead, was to be made known to the disciples of our Lord. All the three Persons were concerned in the creation of man; “let us
 “ make man,” saith God; which is spoken after the manner of men who deliberate, and advise, when they are about a matter of great moment, to shew the dignity of man's nature,
 above

above that of other creatures. All the three Persons were to be concerned in the work of our Redemption; God the Father, by sending his Son into the world, and accepting that sacrifice once offered on the cross as an Atonement for us; God the Son, by becoming man, and offering that sacrifice; God the Holy Ghost, by a visible, and sensible, effusion of his gifts and graces. And, therefore, it was expedient for them, by whom the doctrine of the Trinity was to be propagated in the world, that the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, should thus come, and manifest himself to them, “in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” So that it became expedient, that Christ should go up in our flesh into heaven, and send down the Blessed Spirit to be with them here upon earth.

(2dly) The mission of the Holy Ghost was necessary, or, in the words of the text, “it was expedient that Christ should go away,” because He was to be an advocate with the Father, pleading the merit of his sufferings, and urging his promise of acceptance of it, as a full, and perfect satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. A blessing inestimable in itself,

itself, and which makes abundant recompence for his absence ! But besides this, it gave both them, and us, a comfortable assurance of our own ascension, of our meeting in heaven, there to be happy with him, to all eternity. We could not have expected that dust and ashes should have ascended the heavens ; but since our nature is gone before in Him, we may justly hope to follow after him. He is our head, and where the head is, the members may expect admission. “ I go to prepare a place for you : I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Whither our fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus.” The word fore-runner implies that some are to follow after ; and if He is our fore-runner, and hath entered for us, then we are they that are to follow, as being of the same human nature, and members of the same body.

III. Let us now consider the great blessings the Apostles received by the coming of the Holy Ghost. “ I will not leave you comfortless,” saith our Saviour to his disconsolate Disciples, “ but I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter, that

“ that He may abide with you for ever :” which promise was punctually fulfilled, as on this day, by the Holy Ghost’s descending on the Apostles to authorize them with power, and enable them with success, to execute the office to which they were appointed. “ The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.” Christ had revealed the whole will of his Father, concerning the salvation of mankind to his Disciples; “ all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” But then their understandings were not illumined to comprehend the sense, and receive the meaning, of the doctrines. It was “ the Spirit of Truth, that was to guide them into all truth.” And no sooner had they received the Holy Ghost, than they became learned in the mysteries of Religion : no sooner had the fiery tongue lighted on St. Peter, than he undertakes to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the true Messiah, and Saviour of the world. And it is surely no small argument of the truth of the Christian Religion, that

that so inconsiderable a number of poor, illiterate men—men without any temporal authority to assist them—men who struck at the very root of the established religions of the countries in which they preached—should convert to Christianity so large a part of the then known world. “The Lord worked with “them,” in such a manner, that those who heard them, “were not able to resist the wisdom, and the Spirit, by which they spake.”

Again, Because the Apostles were the first preachers of Christianity, and so were to deliver a true and exact rule, according to which, succeeding ages were to believe in their hearts, and observe in their practice; the Holy Spirit, therefore, was so to teach them, as to keep them from falling into errors. Whatever then we find in their writings, we are to receive as true, and as a rule of both our faith, and conduct. But this extraordinary way of teaching was not to continue; the rule being given, we are to apply ourselves diligently to read, and learn it; and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, on our measure of application, and desire of improvement, is now the ordinary way of his teaching. He hath put into our hands the means

by

of instruction, it will be our own fault if we do not make a right, and proper, use of them.

But lest the opposition the Gospel should meet with, should affright the Apostles, and deter them from preaching it, the Holy Ghost, therefore, inspired them with zeal and courage to “speak the word of God with boldness,” and administered comfort under all their afflictions. The Gospel, indeed, could not be expected to be received with ardor, and observed with fidelity; the severity of its precepts being diametrically opposite to the corrupt pursuits, and vicious inclinations, of men; the purity of its worship directly contrary to the absurd rites, and indecent solemnities of the Heathen; and the sublimity of its doctrines absolutely inconsistent with those religions which had obtained for so many ages, and which were established by the policy, and supported by the powers, of the respective governments. And such was the influence of the Comforter upon them, that “they spoke the word of God with boldness, and being persecuted, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” When they were brought

before rulers and kings, He dictated their defence, and demonstrated their innocence. And, as they were to be fully satisfied of the truth of the doctrine, which they delivered, so their constancy and courage in delivering it, are an incontestible proof of their belief of it. For had they not been convinced of the truth of what they taught, their constancy would have failed, and their courage have drooped, when persecution arose; because no man is willing to lose his life, for maintaining what he does not firmly believe to be true. May their zeal and courage be imitated by us, in our several stations! May the ministers of the Gospel “preach the word in simplicity, and godly sincerity!” And may the Religion of Christ be believed, professed, and practised by us all! But, to the Apostles preaching the Gospel, the Holy Spirit added his efficacious Grace to render their preaching, “the power of God unto salvation.” However learned, or eloquent, may be the preacher, it is the Grace and Blessing of God that must bring him a plentiful harvest. May the preachers then beg this blessing at God’s hand! May the people bring along with them, a heart disposed to receive
the

the doctrine of the Gospel, and a resolution to put it in practice !

As a farther confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, the Holy Ghost endowed the Apostles, with the power of working miracles.

This extraordinary gift served as their credentials, to convince the world that they were the ambassadors of Heaven—that, from the same source were derived both their doctrine, and their power. Miracles were attestations to the truth of what they delivered, since they could not be performed, without special permission ; and would never be allowed, in the confirmation of falsehoods. Thus Nicodemus, having heard of our Saviour's miracles, confessed, that " He was a teacher come from " God, for no man," says he, " can do those " miracles that Thou doest, except God be " with him." And when our Saviour had given sight to one " that was born blind," we find him concluding Christ, to be, at least, " a worshipper of the true God. We know " that God heareth not sinners ; but if any " man be a worshipper of God, him He " heareth."

But, seeing the Apostles were to preach the Gospel, to several parts of the world, it was requisite, that they should be enabled to speak the several languages of the people, to whom they should preach, that their doctrines might be understood, the truth of them embraced, and the precepts observed. And therefore,

The Holy Ghost bestowed upon them the gift of tongues.

When the Holy Ghost descended, “there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men of every nation under Heaven.” And those men, from every nation, heard the Apostles speak, in their own tongues, or languages, the wonderful works of God. What must have been their astonishment, when they reflected on the meanness, and obscurity, of the Apostles, neither assisted by genius, polished by education, nor improved by exercise? Hitherto, the worship of the true God had been confined to Palestine. “God was known only in Jewry:” But now their commission being “to teach all nations,” they were inspired to speak a diversity of languages, that, in whatever country they might preach the Gospel, their hearers might be enabled fully to comprehend it. The
confounding

confounding of languages became a punishment to the old world, by separating men from mutual offices of kindness, and facility of commerce, rendering mankind barbarians to one another. But the gift of tongues was an unspeakable blessing to mankind, as it was a mean of bringing men of all nations, into an unity of faith, and of the knowlege of the Son of God; into a fellowship of that Religion, which was to banish all discords, and unite men's hearts, in the bonds of peace. And the gift of tongues was not bestowed in vain. For after the Apostles departed to their severall provinces, by giving themselves diligently to the ministry of the word, and the Lord's working with them, converts to Christianity were multiplied, in numbers past recounting.

Having shewn, as I propos'd, why the Feast of Pentecost was instituted—how Christ's going away was expedient for the Apostles—and the great blessings they received by the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; it only remains that I briefly apply what has been said.

The doctrines of the Gospel are constantly preached to us, and we have been educated in them from our infancy. They are delivered

to

to us, “ in our own tongue wherein we were
“ born,” and are accompanied by the gracious
influences of God’s Holy Spirit. Let us then
seriously demand of ourselves, whether we pro-
fit by them, in the manner the Almighty in-
tends ? If we have hitherto lived under the
dispensation of Christianity, without being im-
proved in righteousness, and enriched by Grace,
let us beseech the blessed Sanctifier of our
souls, to “ create in us a clean heart, and re-
“ new a right spirit within us.” If it be “ a fear-
“ ful thing to fall into the hands of the living
“ God,” let us think in time, what portion of
wrath we are treasuring up for ourselves, by
“ neglecting the word spoken to us.” The
Christian Religion was promulged, and, as at
this season, the Holy Ghost bore witness to the
truth of it, “ by many signs, and wonders, and
“ mighty deeds,” to give comfort to us here,
and happiness hereafter. Let us not, for God’s
sake, let us “ not, receive this gift of God in
vain.” If its doctrines were embraced, and its
precepts practised, amidst the terrors of perse-
cution, and in the jaws of death; what excuse
can *we* offer for not heartily embracing it, when
it has the force of law, and the support of au-
thority,

thority, when it is recommended by men, and commanded by God? To receive, or to reject it, is left indeed to our own choice; but it is at the same time accompanied with the most awful sanctions. It is a rule of conduct, and according to our transgressing, or observing of it, we are to be punished, or rewarded. "The word that I have spoken," says our Saviour, "the same shall judge them at the last day." God Almighty grant us "to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it," that when the great day of retribution comes, the neglected word may not sit in judgment upon us.

‘ Heavenly Father! who art more ready to
‘ hear than we to pray, and to give more than
‘ we can ask, or think, grant us, this day, thy
‘ Holy Spirit. We presume not to ask it in
‘ the measure, in which it was formerly impart-
‘ ed to the first preachers of thy Gospel; but
‘ we supplicate thee to endow us continually
‘ with its graces, that we may not receive the
‘ revelation of thy word in vain. Thou gavest
‘ us thy heavenly covenant, to prepare us a
‘ people acceptable in thy sight; we supplicate,
‘ therefore, thy Holy Spirit, to inspire us with
‘ all

‘ all those virtues which will make Christianity
‘ appear so amiable in our observance of it, that
‘ every one may embrace thy Gospel from
‘ conviction, may believe its doctrines, and ful-
‘ fil its precepts, by beholding in us the best
‘ members of society, the most useful neigh-
‘ bors, the most dutiful children, the most af-
‘ fectionate parents, the most exemplary Chris-
‘ tians. Grant, gracious God, that the Spi-
‘ rit of truth may, this day, descend into our
‘ hearts, and, after having established his dwel-
‘ ling within us, grant us, we implore thee, to
‘ become the eternal temples of thy glory, and
‘ of thy truth !’ Amen. Amen.

FINIS.





