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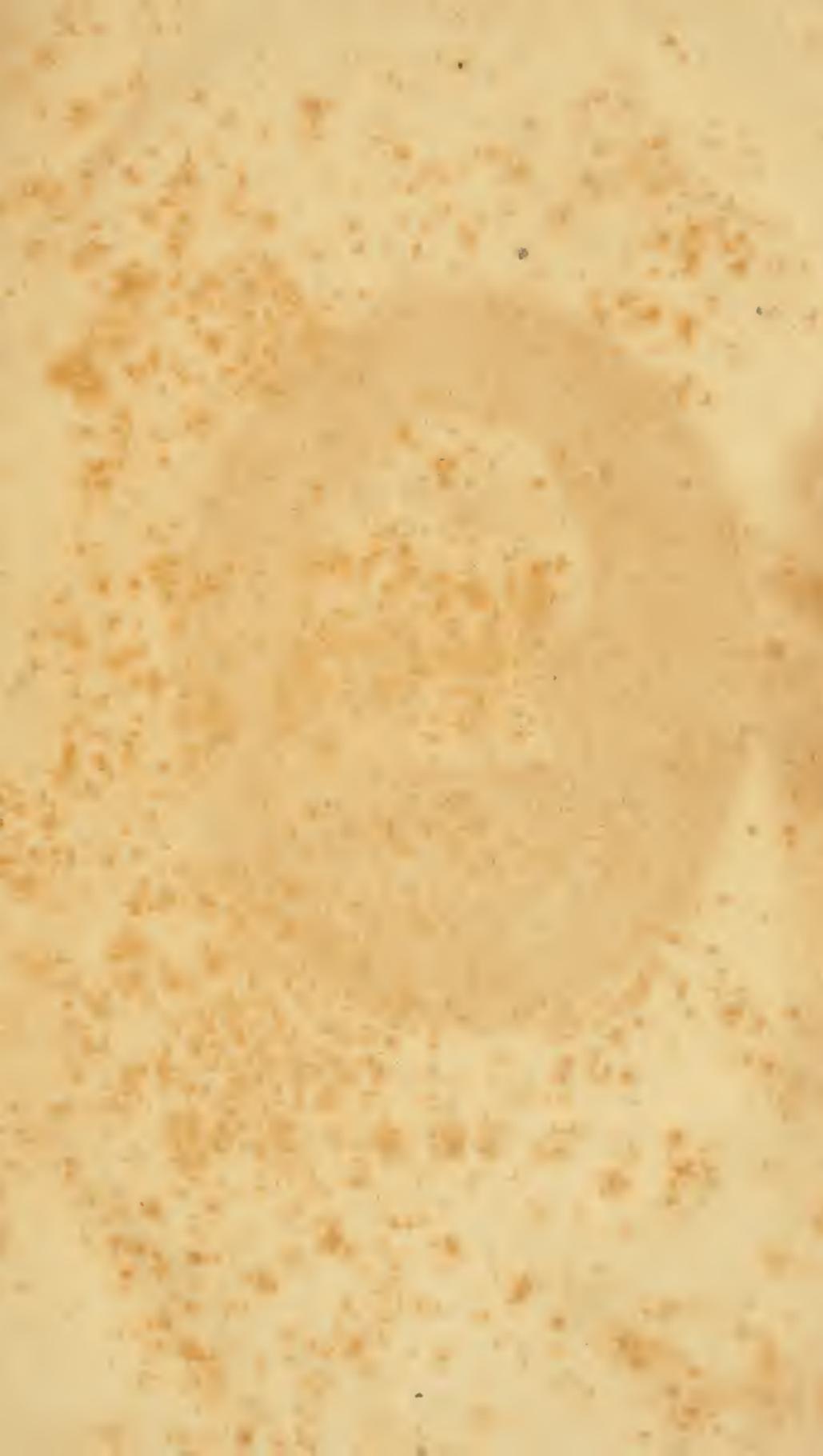
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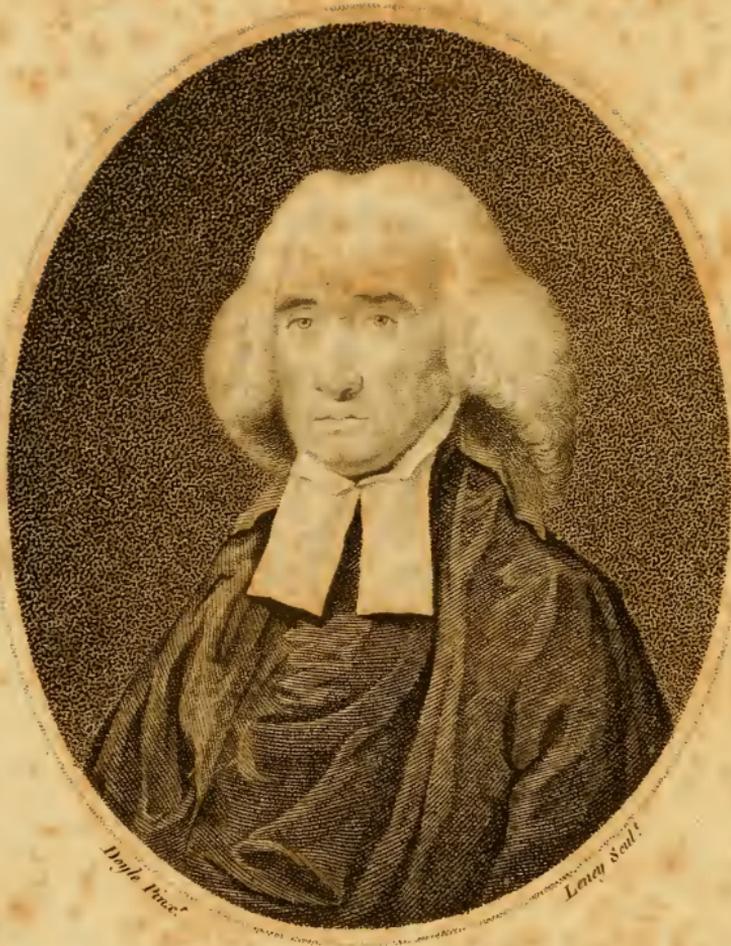
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SAMUEL STILLMAN, D.D.

SELECT SERMONS

ON

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE

SAMUEL STILLMAN, D. D.

COMPRISING

SEVERAL SERMONS NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A Biographical Sketch of the Author's Life.

BOSTON :

PRINTED BY MANNING & LORING,
AND SOLD AT THEIR BOOKSTORE, NO. 2, CORNHILL.

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JAN. 1808.

*District of Massachusetts, to wit :*

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the sixth day of January, in the thirty-second year of the independence of the United States of America, HANNAH STILLMAN, of the said district, has deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof she claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit, "Select Sermons, on doctrinal and practical Subjects, by the late SAMUEL STILLMAN, D. D. comprising several Sermons never before published. To which is prefixed a Biographical Sketch of the Author's Life."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

WILLIAM S. SHAW { *Clerk of the District  
of Massachusetts.*

## P R E F A C E.

AS many persons, and more especially the parishioners and friends of the late Dr. STILLMAN, were particularly desirous of possessing his printed sermons, which could not conveniently be obtained, it was concluded, in order to gratify their wishes, to republish them. But the committee of his church, to whom were referred the sermons for inspection, and who are the editors of this work, were of opinion, that as many of them were merely occasional, and of course had now lost something of their interest, it would be more judicious to select some of the most useful from amongst those already published, and to add a few original ones, which he himself had contemplated for publication, but left in an unfinished state, to complete the volume; adding, at the close, a list of those which, though already printed, are not included in this volume.

It was the usual method of Dr. STILLMAN, to write the principal part of his discourses, but in the application to note only the heads. To some of these have been added a few appropriate scriptural and other passages, by the Rev. Dr. BALDWIN, in order to fill up the chasm.

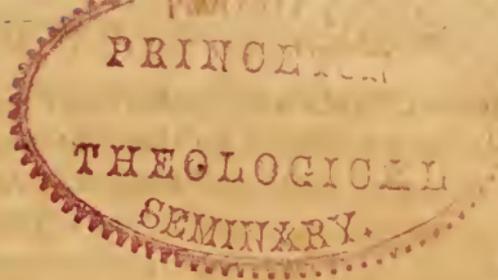
Those persons who have heard the sermons with approbation, will no doubt peruse them with interest, and it is devoutly to be hoped with lasting advantage. To them, in a more especial manner, their pastor, though dead, yet speaketh. He still exhorts them to aspire after perfect holiness; to

reflect upon neglected opportunities of religious improvement, now forever past ; to improve the privileges they at present enjoy ; and to continue stedfast in the faith once delivered to the saints.

The character of their Author will be immediately recognized in the following discourses, by all who enjoyed the happiness of sitting under his ministry. To their minds they will so forcibly recall his image, that they can scarcely persuade themselves that he is not still speaking. Animated, however, as is the strain of feeling which runs through them all, they cannot be associated, in the minds of others, with the impressive manner, the persuasive eloquence, and the ardent piety, which greatly increased their value with those who heard and loved the preacher. This consideration, however, it is to be hoped, will not lessen their interest and use with any persons, who are lovers of genuine piety, or disposed to profit by the means it affords. Delicacy forbids the editors to say more. They commit the work to the public, and rest their judgment, where it ought to rest—with them.

Sincerely hoping that it may be the means of strengthening the feeble, of encouraging the timid, of awakening the secure, and of confirming and edifying the saint, they profess themselves the reader's sincere well-wishers, in the fellowship and faith of our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

BOSTON, }  
 JAN. 1808. }



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

### THE AUTHOR'S LIFE.

MEMOIRS of persons, who have been eminent for their usefulness, or distinguished for their piety, can scarcely fail to excite an interest. All who feel a solicitude for their own moral improvement, or an ardent desire to see others attain to equal eminence, will commonly find in them some new motives and excitements to animation, in running the race that is set before them.

It is with this ardent wish to stimulate others to strive after things that are excellent, that the editors of the following Discourses republish, with some additions, what on a former occasion has been laid before the public, respecting the character of their author. To gain celebrity to his memory, is the least object of desire. Whilst living he sought most of all the praise of God; and now that he is dead, the applauses of men, could he be conscious of them, would to him be a matter of the smallest moment, and less than the shadow of a shade.

In the biography however of the author, variety should hardly be expected. The incidents of a pastor's life are commonly few, and the sameness of his duties leads to a sameness of employment. Yet to all to whom it is an agreeable exercise to contemplate goodness of heart with sensations of pleasure, and usefulness of life with emotions of approbation, the perusal may be attended with salutary effects.

SAMUEL STILLMAN was born in the city of Philadelphia, of parents respectable for their virtues, and of the religious persuasion of Particular Baptists. At the age of eleven years he was removed with them to Charleston, South Carolina, and there received the rudiments of his education, at an academy under a Mr. Rind. His improvements there were such as presaged his future worth; and he gave early indications of a mind seriously impressed with a sense of religious truth. In one of his manuscripts we find some account of very early religious impressions being made upon his mind. These, however, he observes, were generally of short continuance, until more effectually awakened by a sermon delivered by the late excellent Mr. Hart, when, to borrow his own language, he says, "My mind was again solemnly impressed with a sense of my awful condition as a sinner. This conviction grew stronger and stronger. My condition alarmed me. I saw myself without Christ and without hope. I found that I deserved the wrath to come, and that God would be just to send me to hell. I was now frequently on my knees, pleading for mercy. As a beggar I went, having nothing but guilt, and no plea but mercy." How long he continued in this distressed condition is not particularly stated, but it appears from several passages of scripture, he obtained a degree of hope and comfort, though not entirely satisfied. Not long after, he heard Mr. Hart discourse from Matt. i. 21. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." From this sermon he received consolation, and adds, "Christ then became precious to me, yea, all in all. Then I could say of wisdom, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." That I still think was the day of my espousal. Glory be to God, for the riches of his grace to me. Why me, Lord? &c." He was soon after baptized, and received into the church under the pastoral care of Mr. Hart.

After finishing his classical education, he spent one year in the study of divinity with that gentleman. Being called by the church, he preached his first sermon on the

17th of February, 1758; and on the 26th of February, 1759, was ordained in the city of Charleston, South Carolina, to the work of an evangelist.

Immediately afterwards, however, he settled at James Island, a most pleasant situation opposite the city. Soon after he visited the place of his nativity, and on the twenty-third of May, the same year, married Hannah, the daughter of Evin Morgan, Esq. merchant of that place, by whom he afterwards had fourteen children. He also took his degree at the university there, and returned to his society on James Island. But he had not continued above eighteen months with his affectionate and united people, before a violent attack of a pulmonary complaint, forced his removal to another climate. He accordingly fixed himself with his family at Bordentown, New Jersey, where he supplied two different congregations for the space of two years. His ill health somewhat improved, but by no means restored, determined him at length to visit New England, hoping that the exercise, together with the change of air, might yet further mend his impaired constitution.

On his arrival here, 1763, at the request of the Second Baptist Church, he removed his family to Boston, and after preaching one year as an assistant to the late Rev. Mr. Bound, accepted an invitation to settle with the First Baptist Church, and was installed over it January 9, 1765.

By nature he was endowed with a sprightly genius, a good capacity, and an uncommon vivacity and quickness of apprehension. His feelings were peculiarly strong and lively, which imparted energy to whatever he did, and under the influence and control of religious principles, served to increase and diffuse his eminent piety. To this constitutional ardour both of sentiment and action, which led him to enter with his whole soul into every subject which engaged his attention, he united a remarkable delicacy of feeling and sense of propriety, and such sprightliness and affability in conversation, such ease and politeness of manners, and at the same time such a glow of pious zeal and affection, as enabled him to min-

gle with all ranks and classes of people, and to discharge all his duties as a Christian minister and a citizen, with dignity, acceptance, and usefulness. The lively interest he appeared to take, in whatever affected the happiness or increased the pleasures of his friends, the gentleness of his reproofs and the gratification he seemed to feel in commending others, united to his social qualities, endeared him to all who knew him.

The popularity of a preacher commonly declines with his years. Dr. Stillman, however, was a singular exception to this general remark. He retained it for upwards of forty-two years; and his congregation, which, upon his first connexion with it, was the smallest in the town, at the age of seventy, the period of his death, he left amongst the most numerous.

As a minister of Christ, his praise was in all the churches; and wherever his name has been heard, an uncommon degree of sanctity has been connected with it. His principles were highly Calvinistic, and all his sermons bore strong marks of his warm attachment to that system. The natural strength and ardour of his feelings, indeed, imparted zeal to whatever opinion he espoused, and activity to whatever duty he performed. Yet with all his quickness of perception, and acuteness of feeling, his temper was under admirable control, and he was always the thorough master both of his words and actions. Thus embracing what have been denominated the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, he explained and enforced them with clearness, and with an apostolic zeal and intrepidity.

On the leading principles of the gospel, he always preached and conversed as a Christian minister, who took a deep and hearty interest in their diffusion and establishment. But he did not depend for success on his zeal and fidelity. He knew that what he was, and what he was enabled to do in the cause of God, were wholly by his gracious influence. Whilst he realized his own entire dependence, and that of others, he was animated in duty, believing that the Lord meeteth all who rejoice and work righteousness, those who remember him in his ways.

A subject on which he often spoke with grateful adoration was, the true and proper Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. His views of sin as an infinite evil necessarily impressed upon his mind this truth. He considered the Saviour as an infinitely worthy object of divine worship, and in consequence of this dignity of character qualified to make atonement for sin. On this foundation rested his hope of salvation; and if this were not a reality, he despaired of entering into glory, and believed the salvation of every sinner an impossible event. But having no doubt on this cardinal point, he was enabled to preach the gospel with clearness.

On the subject of the trinity and unity of God, he literally believed the declaration of John, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one;" but as to an explanation of the manner or mode of subsistence of the divine nature, he would say he had nothing to do; for revelation did not explain it. He only declared it as a truth to be believed on the divine testimony.

The total moral depravity of man was a principle on which he much insisted on all proper occasions. He had no idea that there was any latent spark of holiness in the heart of a natural man, which, as some suppose, can be kindled by the exertions of the sinner, and kept alive by the same means. This opinion he reprobated with all his heart, viewing it as a denial of that grace which is revealed in the gospel, and as having a natural tendency to take the crown of glory from the head of IMMANUEL. In contradiction of this error, he would often remark on this text as a motto congenial to the feelings of a believer, "Upon himself (Jesus) shall his crown flourish." So far was he removed from such mistake, that he believed the real Christian, though renewed by the Holy Spirit, was constantly dependent on God's immediate agency for the origin and continuance of every gracious exercise. Although he believed the entire sinfulness of the natural heart, he did not erroneously connect with it a license to sin, nor suppose that men are released from moral duties

because they are indisposed to them. From the fact that man is endowed with reason, will and affections, he argued his moral obligation to believe what God has revealed, and obey what he has commanded.

As his views of man's depravity were clear and distinct, he of consequence saw the necessity of regeneration by the free and sovereign agency of the Holy Ghost. That operation of God by which this change is effected, he did not consider as a mere circumstantial alteration or new modification of the sinful affections, but that a new disposition was given to the soul, well described by Paul as a new creation. In this change he supposed the person was brought to have entirely new views of moral subjects.

Respecting the atonement of Christ, his sentiments were honorary to truth. He considered it as an illustration of the divine perfections not discoverable by any other medium; exhibiting to all intelligent beings the odious nature of sin, God's love to holiness, and his unspeakable mercy to the guilty. He viewed the merits of Christ in his obedience and death, as having an infinite value, and as possessing a sufficiency for the salvation of every individual of the human race, had it been the will of God to make its application to the conscience so extensive; but from divine revelation he learned that its design was particular, respecting, in its application to the heart, the elect only. He did not, however, connect with this the erroneous idea of some, that all men were not under obligation to repent of their sins and believe the gospel; but whilst he believed the condemnation of sinners was by the moral law, he supposed that this condemnation would be greatly aggravated by a rejection of the gospel, and that they would be treated as those who despised God's grace.

His ideas of the faith which accompanies salvation were, that it was a belief of the gospel; a hearty reception of that plan of grace which is revealed in Christ Jesus, accompanied with holy love and every gracious exercise. He rejected the error, that the essence of faith consists in a person's believing that Christ died for him

in particular; no such proposition being contained in the word of God, and no one being warranted to believe this till he has good evidence of his regeneration. From his ideas of faith he naturally inferred that good works would uniformly follow. These he zealously enforced as an evidence of faith, but not as designed to originate it. Practical godliness was a subject on which he often preached, and which he urged on believers from the noblest gospel motives.

The purpose of God in his eternal election of a certain number of the human race to salvation, was a principle dear to Dr. Stillman, as a truth clearly revealed. Believing the carnal mind, or natural heart, to be enmity against God, he very justly concluded, that if any sinners were saved, their salvation must be effected by an influence extraneous from themselves. To imagine with some, that God had left it with depraved men to meet him in any conditions which they were to perform, he would represent as dishonorary to the Divine Majesty, who will not give his glory to another. Neither could he believe that any of God's designs originated in time; but that all his purposes were, like himself, eternal. This was his ground of encouragement to preach, knowing that God had determined by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and that he had promised to make a willing people in the day of his power.

From his clear apprehension of eternal personal election, he was firmly established in the final perseverance to eternal glory of all those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God; and that the grace given is an incorruptible seed.

The opinion that religious establishments are contrary to the New Testament, was defended by him. His ideas on this subject are plainly expressed in his sermon before the General Court of Massachusetts, in 1779. The interference of rulers, as such, in matters of conscience, he ever considered as an infringement of natural right. In this sermon he shewed that his own ideas on this subject were similar to those of the immortal Locke. He was a

cordial friend to religious liberty; and all his conduct in life towards Christians from whom he differed, manifested that he was heartily willing that every conscientious citizen should worship in the manner which agreed with the dictates of his conscience, after a candid examination of the word of God.

He preached much to the feelings, and to the heart; and numbers on whose minds naked reason and simple truth could produce no serious effects, his powerful eloquence was a happy means both of touching and reclaiming. Nor was he only a preacher of righteousness. Few men ever exemplified more than he did, the virtues he recommended to others. Whilst he exhibited to his flock the various trials and comforts of Christians, whilst he guided them in the way to eternal life, he led them also by his own example.

His sermons were always studied, and it was his judicious practice principally to write them. Yet from his manner of delivery, a manner peculiar to himself, he always appeared as easy as if speaking extempore. Indeed it was his constant method to add at the moment such thoughts as occurred to his mind whilst speaking. These thoughts were as naturally connected with the subject as though they had been a studied part of it; and as they were usually delivered with much pathos, they had the happiest effect upon the audience.

As a public speaker, as a pulpit orator, he was second perhaps to none. Nature had furnished him with a pleasant and most commanding voice, the very tones of which were admirably adapted to awaken the feelings of an audience, and he always managed it with great success. His manner, though grave and serious, was peculiarly graceful, popular, and engaging. His remarkable animation gave additional interest to every subject he handled. Those who heard him might with propriety have said of him what was said of another eminent preacher—"This man is in earnest; he believes what he says, and says what he believes. Verily this is a man of God. Ten such men, and Sodom would have stood."

His eloquence was of the powerful and impressive, rather than of the insinuating and persuasive kind, and so strikingly interesting, that he never preached to an inattentive audience. And even those who dissented from him in some minor theological opinions, were still pleased with hearing him, for they knew his sincerity, they knew him to be a good man.

Few persons are alike eminent in all the different duties of the ministerial office; but it would perhaps be difficult to say in which of these Dr. Stillman most excelled.

In prayer he always seemed to his audience as if engaged with a present Deity. His addresses to Heaven were generally short, but very comprehensive; they were solemn and edifying, and usually very feeling and impressive; and thus coming from the heart, they seldom failed to reach the hearts of others.

In the chamber of sickness and affliction he was always a welcome visitor. So well could he adapt his conversation, as to comfort or to caution, to soothe or to awaken, just as the case seemed to require. And if he administered reproof, it was done in so delicate and mild a manner, that it oftener conciliated esteem, than created offence. In his prayers with the sick and afflicted, however intricate the occasion, he was always both appropriate and highly devotional. So eminent was his character for piety, and so universally was he beloved, that he was often called to the sick and afflicted of other denominations. And his sympathetic feelings, and his fervent supplications seldom failed to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded bosom. The sick would almost forget their pains, and the mourner cease to sigh. How many wounded hearts he has bound up, and from how many weeping eyes he has wiped the tears away—how many thoughtless sinners he was the means of awakening, and how many saints he has edified and built up unto eternal life—how many wavering minds he has settled, and to how many repenting sinners his words have administered peace, can be fully known only at the great day!

It having pleased the Author of Wisdom to visit Dr. Stillman with peculiar trials, and having largely experienced the supporting influence of religion under them, he was eminently qualified to administer consolation to others. Few persons could describe with such accuracy, or enter with such facility into the feelings and exercises of the tempted, tried believer. Like a skilful surgeon, he knew when the wound was sufficiently probed, and when to apply the healing balm of promise.

In the course of a few years he was called to bury seven of his children, all adults, and some of them with rising families, having previously buried five children in infancy. But notwithstanding his domestic trials were so great, his Christian patience and submission were equal to them all. Such was his perfect confidence in the wisdom of God's government, that with all his extreme sensibilities, his mind lost nothing of its lively confidence, or of its cheerful hope.

Dr. Stillman was possessed of great benevolence of heart, and was a sincere lover of persons of every Christian denomination, whom he esteemed pious and good. Though from education and from principle a Baptist himself, he never believed that the peculiarities of any sect ought to form a separating line, or hinder the union of good men, for the advancement of the common cause of the Redeemer. With many such he long lived in habits of undissembled friendship, and by them his death will not very soon cease to be regretted.

With a view more especially to assist young men in attaining a suitable education for the ministry, he successfully employed his talents and zeal in aiding the interests of Brown University, Rhode-Island, which owes much to his exertions.

It might be mentioned as a proof of the high estimation in which his talents were held as a preacher, that there is scarcely any public occasion on which he has not at one time or another officiated. The university of Cambridge conferred on him the honorary degree of Master of Arts, in 1761. The college in Rhode-Island, of which he was both a Trustee and a Fellow, in 1788

gave him a diploma of Doctor in Divinity. He was elected a member of the Federal convention for the town of Boston the same year, and distinguished himself there by a most eloquent speech in its defence. In 1789 he was appointed to deliver the anniversary oration on independence to the town of Boston, which he accomplished in a manner both handsome and acceptable.

The social feelings of the Doctor were strong, and his powers of conversation such as always pleased. In his manners there was an unaffected elegance and ease, which rendered him uncommonly agreeable to every circle. The affability and kindness with which he treated persons of every description were not less the effect of a natural delicacy than of a general knowledge of mankind. Hence to the great he never could appear servile, nor imperious to those in humbler stations. To both he was the gentleman, and in private company as much esteemed as he was popular in his public performances. His benevolent heart was feelingly alive to distress of every kind, and in contributing to its alleviation in every shape he was actively useful. We find his name amongst the first members of the Humane Society of this Commonwealth. Of the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society he was a useful officer, and of the Boston Dispensary a member from its beginning, and President at his death. The Boston Female Asylum is likewise much indebted to his exertions. He was also an almoner of the private charity of many individuals, who confided in his knowledge and judgment of suitable objects.

A particular trait of his character, in which he truly shone as a Christian minister, was the tenderness and promptitude with which he conversed and prayed with several unhappy persons who were condemned and executed for violations of certain penal laws. Every one who was acquainted with the familiar, yet dignified manner in which he spoke on religious subjects, can form some idea of the solicitude with which he visited those persons in prison, to whom he was called. It pleased God to bless him in these endeavours, by making him instrumental of leading some of them to the

knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It was his custom to impress on their minds a solemn sense of their accountability to God, to show them from his word their state as sinners exposed to his wrath, and then to set before their minds the grace and mercy which could be extended to the most guilty who believe in Christ. It was a truth in which he gloried as a minister of the New Testament, that he could, according to his commission, freely exhibit to the view of a dying sinner, a salvation in Christ Jesus which is complete, and wholly independent of any creature righteousness. On this subject he would say, I have no time to trifle with men's souls by directing them to depend on their own exertions, but I will point them to Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth.

Such was the faithfulness with which he discharged the various duties incumbent on him as a minister of the gospel; such was his zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, that it may be truly said of him, he was the happy man. Holy, spiritual religion was not with him a transient, visionary thing, but the element in which he breathed. His soul was often so enlarged in declaring the glorious gospel, and in expatiating on the riches of God's grace as manifested in his word, that he not only seemed himself to enjoy a prelibation of heaven, but to have been enabled by divine influence to communicate this blessedness to others; so that his friends have often said, after having heard his private conversation or public preaching, truly our fellowship was with the Father, with his Son Christ Jesus, and with one another through the Spirit's influence.

To his church and people he was strongly attached, and particularly attentive.\* Nor did he ever suffer any calls

\* For a long time previous to his death, he was particularly anxious that a colleague pastor should be settled with him. Knowing that time with him was short, he ardently wished to see his church and congregation happily united in a person, whose sentiments and character he should entirely approve, and to whose care he could cheerfully confide his charge, when he should be called to put off the earthly house of his tabernacle. To effect this object,

of relaxation or amusement to interfere with the conscientious discharge of the smallest professional duty. His duty was indeed always his delight, and nothing in his mind ever stood in any sort of competition with it.

His congregation always reciprocated his warm attachment to them. They ever sat delighted under his preaching, and felt a pride in him as an accomplished pulpit orator, no less than a love for him as an excellent preacher; and neither of them were any ways diminished by the attention of strangers who visited the metropolis, and were commonly desirous of hearing this celebrated minister before they left it.

In the different walks of social and private life, Dr. Stillman was peculiarly amiable. Those most intimately connected with him, ever found him a pleasant companion, a judicious counsellor, and a faithful friend. The various offices of domestic life were discharged with the same fidelity and tenderness which marked his public conduct. Of husbands, he was one of the most kind and affectionate; of parents, the most tender and endearing. Indeed, all who resided under his roof experienced his paternal care and goodness.

Through life his habit of body had been weakly, and he was not unused to occasional interruptions of his ministerial labours; yet he survived all his clerical cotemporaries, both in Boston and its vicinity. It was his constant prayer that his life and usefulness might run parallel: in this his desires were gratified. He had now attained the age of seventy years, when the time of his departure had

in his view so important, his labours were incessant; and Providence seemed to smile on his endeavours. The Rev. JOSEPH CLAY, from Georgia, having visited the town of Boston, appeared, both to the pastor and the flock, to be the very object of their united wishes. Proposals having been accordingly made to him for settlement, which he accepted, necessary arrangements were making for it. The Doctor was delighting himself with the prospect; but it pleased Heaven that he should not be permitted to realize its accomplishment. Mr. Clay had returned to the southward, to settle his affairs there. Two or more months before his return, the period he had fixed for it, the melancholy circumstance of Dr. Stillman's death occurred. The following August Mr. Clay's installation took place.

arrived. A slight indisposition detained him at home the two last Lord's days of his life. On the Wednesday following the second of them, without any previous symptoms, he was suddenly attacked at eleven o'clock, A. M. by a paralytic shock. At ten at night he grew insensible, and at twelve his useful life and labours were terminated together. Could he have selected the manner of his death, it had probably been such an one as this, which spared him the pain of separation from a flock he was most ardently attached to, and a family he most tenderly loved; a scene which, to a person of his feeling mind, notwithstanding all his religion, must have occasioned a shock.

In one of his sermons, preached after the death of the late Dr. Peter Thacher, of this town, he says, "Though we would not wish to choose, or offer to dictate to Infinite Wisdom, as to the manner of our exit, yet may we be permitted to say, that when good men are suddenly cut down, they avoid the pains and extreme distresses that always accompany a lingering sickness. And though we would not pray, *From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us, we would devoutly pray, For sudden death, good Lord, prepare us.*"

On the Monday following his death, his remains were attended to his meeting house, where a pathetic and appropriate discourse was delivered on the occasion, by the Rev. Dr. Baldwin, pastor of the Second Baptist Church in this town, to an immensely thronged and deeply affected assembly, from 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8; after which his remains were conveyed to the tomb, amidst the regrets of a numerous concourse of people, who crowded around his bier, anxious to take a last look of the urn which contained the relicks of him, who once to them was so dear, but whose face they should now behold no more.

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*The following extracts from Dr. Stillman's manuscripts are expressive examples of those pious feelings which he habitually cherished and indulged.*

"May 1, 1789. This evening I received the melancholy news of the death of my dear son —————"

(the fourth of his adult children, he had within a short time been called to resign.) O that the Lord would graciously support me and mine under this solemn and distressing event, and help us to make a proper improvement of it. I know it is the Lord who hath done it, and am confident he can do no wrong.

“On the following Lord’s day preached in the morning from John xviii. 11. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” In the afternoon from Gen. xlii. 36. “Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.” To me, and to an affectionate congregation, a solemn and affecting season.”

Upon the subject of his removal from James Island, South Carolina, to Boston, he writes thus:—

“I left an agreeable settlement, to come to Boston; but the way of duty was so plainly pointed out to me, that I do not recollect that I ever had a single doubt about it. God hath made my way prosperous and happy. The people of my own charge, both church and congregation, have been always happily united, and have at all times studied to make me happy. May the Lord reward them for all their labours of love to me, an unworthy creature.

“In Boston I have also enjoyed a pleasing intimacy with Christians of different denominations. Since my residence in it, I have met with some great afflictions, having been deprived of my dear children by death, in melancholy succession. But the Lord hath never left nor forsaken me: underneath hath been the everlasting arm; and I have found it good to be afflicted. My friends have pitied me and mine, and the Lord hath helped us. My trials have been comparatively few, and my blessings innumerable.”

“*February*, 1806. One year more of my life and ministry is gone. How wonderfully hath the Lord preserved such an unworthy creature as I am! O how little have I done for God! The Lord forgive me, and help me, the few days that may remain, to live for him alone. Help, Lord; help me to finish my course with joy, and

the ministry which I have received of thee, so that thou mayest be glorified. I wait till thou call me hence."

On the 15th of February, the last Lord's day but one of his preaching, he notes, "On Tuesday next I shall finish the forty-ninth year of my ministry. How astonishing hath the divine goodness been to me, the chief of sinners, and the least of saints! I now am near my end. O that I may glorify God to the last moment of my life. In life and death Christ is my refuge: to him I flee, looking for salvation through him alone. It is all grace, or I am undone. But, blessed be God, there is redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. If God be for us, who can be against us? The doctrines I have preached through life are now my own support and consolation; and had I ten thousand souls, I think I could trust them all with Him who is "mighty to save," without the least hesitancy. Blessed be his name for the prospect of an eternity to love and praise him. Amen and amen."

The following prayer, written on the close of an anniversary of his ministry, a few years before his death, evidences that the good of the people to whom he preached lay near his heart, and that he realized the importance of a gospel ministry amongst them.

"How long have I lived, and to how little purpose! Yet I trust I can say, through grace, that my poor labours have not been in vain in the Lord. When I shall sleep in the tomb, may the Lord Jesus bless the people of my charge with a plain, able, faithful preacher of his gospel. O that they may not be as sheep without a shepherd. Lord Jesus, send them a pastor after thine own heart; and may those truths which thou hast enabled thine unworthy servant repeatedly to deliver to them, be attended with a divine blessing, when I am no more on earth; and thine shall be the glory forever. The short time that yet remains to me, help me to devote to thee. O that I could live much in a little time, and stand waiting to be gone whenever thou shalt call me hence. Glorify thyself of me, whether it be by life or by death."

# Contents.

## SERMON I.

Mankind universally apt to trust in their own  
Righteousness.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 4—9.

Page 1

## SERMON II.

The Sinner's best Righteousness proved to be  
essentially deficient.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 4—9.

23

## SERMON III.

Imputed Righteousness one of the Glories of the  
Gospel.

ROMANS, iv. 6.

39

## SERMON IV.

Believers exhorted to continue in their Obedience.

PHILIPPIANS, ii. 12, 13.

65

## SERMON V.

Young People called upon to consider, that for their Conduct here they must be accountable hereafter, at the Judgment-Seat of Christ.

ECCLESIASTES, xi. 9.

95

## SERMON VI.

Apostolic Preaching.

1 CORINTHIANS, i. 21.

123

## SERMON VII.

Apostolic Preaching.

1 CORINTHIANS, i. 21.

136

## SERMON VIII.

Apostolic Preaching.

1 CORINTHIANS, i. 21.

150

## SERMON IX.

God's Compassion to the miserable.

PSALM cii. 19, 20.

169

## SERMON X.

The Character of a foolish Son.

PROVERBS, xvii. 25.

191

## SERMON XI.

Hope the Anchor of the Soul.

HEBREWS, vi. 17—20.

232

## SERMON XII.

God's Designs vainly opposed by Sinners.

PSALM ii. 1—4.

248

## SERMON XIII.

The Blessedness of those who die in the Lord.

REVELATION, xiv. 13.

259

## SERMON XIV.

The Resurrection, and Change of the vile Body.

1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 51—54.

283

## SERMON XV.

The Nature and Uses of Prayer.

PSALM lxxv. 2.

295

## SERMON XVI.

The Gospel Ministry.

PROVERBS, xi. 30.

307

## SERMON XVII.

The sinking Soul saved by Grace.

MATTHEW, xiv. 31.

327

## SERMON XVIII.

The Nature and Design of the Atonement.

GENESIS, iii. 21.

338

## SERMON XIX.

The Water of Life.

JOHN, iv. 14.

357

## SERMON XX.

The last Words of Christ to his Disciples.

LUKE, xxiv. 44—53.

370



[The Sermons numbered 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 20, were never before published.]

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## SERMON I.\*

MANKIND UNIVERSALLY APT TO TRUST IN THEIR  
OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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PHILIPPIANS, iii. 4—9.

*If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

THE two leading points of St. Paul's ministry were, the fall of man, with its nature and extent, and the gracious recovery by Christ. He was indefatigable in his attempts to convince mankind of these, that so their lofty looks might be brought low, and the Lord alone exalted. These sentiments appeared to him of great importance ; hence it was that he embraced every favourable opportunity to propagate them. To this he was greatly excited by his own experi-

\* Published by desire of the hearers, 1769.

ence of a deep-rooted enmity to Christ, and an aptness to trust in the flesh. A temper of mind which he knew to be not only inveterate, but universal; fallen human nature being the same in every age and nation; against which the gospel of the grace of God is the only sovereign antidote. Sensible of this, when our apostle visited Philippi, a city of Macedonia, he made *Christ and him crucified* the subject of his ministry; and had this for his comfort, that many of the Philippians became obedient to the faith. These were incorporated into the gospel church state; and were happy for a time in the enjoyment of the special privileges of the church of Christ. But after St. Paul's departure, grievous wolves entered in, not sparing the flock; men of corrupt minds, who tried to draw away disciples after them. The apostle received the sorrowful tidings, and wrote them this epistle by the hand of Epaphroditus, who was a messenger from the saints at Philippi to him while confined at Rome; and had ministered to his wants. Its contents are various and useful, but come not under our consideration at present, except so far as they are connected with the text.

In the first verse of this chapter he assures the Philippians that it was far from being grievous to him, and would be safe for them, to repeat the same things in writing, that had been the subjects of his personal ministry among them. And for this there was at that time a special necessity, arising from the endeavours of false teachers to pervert his gospel; by leading them to the observance of circumcision, and other Jewish rites, in order to acceptance with God. These men

he treats with a degree of just severity. Verse 2. *Beware of dogs.*—"St. Paul here very properly calls the false teachers dogs, because as dogs, they did rend and tear the simplicity of the gospel, and divided the glory of man's salvation between faith and works; because as dogs, they barked out reproaches against the apostles and their doctrine, delivered in its native purity and simplicity."\* And as dogs they were *without*; and as *fierce* dogs, they laboured to devour.

*Beware of evil workers.* A sentence farther descriptive of the same persons, who wrought not *with* St. Paul, but *against* him; and endeavoured to pull down what he had carefully built up. Between whom there was this important difference: Paul built on Christ, as the sure foundation which God had laid; they built on Moses. Paul taught, that if any man was circumcised, he became a debtor to do the whole law, and that by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified; they taught that it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep the law, in order to justification. Paul was under the influence of the Spirit of God; they were led away by a spirit of error and delusion. It is added,

*Beware of the concision.* A name which the apostle seems here to give to circumcision, by way of disapprobation; and as expressive of the injury which the church of Christ might receive from these men, who endeavoured to perpetuate that rite, with the whole law of ceremonies; thereby *cutting themselves off*, and those that adhered to them, as far as they could, from Christ, and the way of life through him. For *Christ is*

\* Dr. Smith's Annotations in loc.

*become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ; ye are fallen from grace ; i. e. the doctrine of grace.*

Having thus cautioned the Philippians against false teachers, the apostle proceeds to speak of himself and his brethren, in opposition to them. Verse 3. *For we are the circumcision ; q. d. Though we lay aside that rite, and have nothing to do with the circumcision of the flesh, we have that “ of which it was a shadow,” even the circumcision of the heart. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

*Which worship God in the spirit ; i. e. with our soul or spirit, and in that spiritual way that God hath appointed ; being assisted by the Holy Spirit, who helpeth our infirmities, &c.*

*And rejoice in Christ Jesus.* This is said to distinguish them from those who rejoiced in themselves, and in their submission to legal institutions.

*And have no confidence in the flesh ; q. d. whatever is our course of obedience, we lay no stress on it ; but view it as a cypher in the great affair of justification. Though, says St. Paul, I might also have confidence in the flesh : meaning upon the principles of these false teachers ; to prove which, he brings in the text, If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is*

*in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

The former part of the passage is St. Paul's narrative of the privileges of his birth, his strict manner of life, and his confidence in them for justification before God. In the latter part of it, he declares that his apprehension of things was altered, and that he was now sensible of his former ruinous mistake; and therefore that he did most heartily count all those things which were *gain* to him before but *loss* and *dung*, that he might win Christ, and be found in him. The following particulars are proposed for consideration.

I. All unregenerate men are apt to trust in their own righteousness.

II. Such righteousness proved to be essentially defective.

III. The sinner, upon his becoming experimentally acquainted with the grace of the gospel, is thereby led to renounce all confidence in the flesh, and to expect acceptance with God *only* on account of the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

I. All unregenerate men are apt to trust in their own righteousness.

Self-approbation and self-confidence are first principles; they are natural to man, and grow up with him. Nothing is more common than for

man to entertain a good opinion of himself, and therefore he is not apprehensive of danger in trusting to himself. Why should he be afraid to put confidence in one whom he views with so much esteem?

This spirit is interwoven with man's whole soul, and discovers itself in the common affairs of life. Accordingly we find that men in general give the preference to their own understanding; and are all attention while others are lavish of their praises. Why, but because they are fond of themselves, and think they deserve to be equally esteemed by others? On the other hand, with what difficulty do persons under the influence of this fondness for themselves brook an affront? They are ready to think, if they do not say so, that men of their importance deserve better treatment. *Is thy servant a dog*, said Hazael to Elisha, *that he should do this great thing?* No, verily; Hazael is a better man, as if he had said, than to bring such calamities on Israel; and thou, Elisha, the man of God, art surely mistaken in his character: yet soon after he did it.

Could this spirit be confined to temporal things, the hazard that men run would be infinitely less; though in this case, *he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool*. But when it is introduced and prevails in those things in which men have to do with Jehovah, they run the dreadful risk of losing their souls; for a self-righteous Pharisee will be as surely damned as an openly profane sinner. This *harsh saying*, as some may deem it, is sufficiently proved by the text, and by all those passages of scripture which denounce woes against Pharisees. Paul knew that his confidence in the

flesh would have terminated in his loss of heaven, if the Lord had not brought him to see the insufficiency of his own righteousness, and enabled him to fly for refuge to the hope set before him. Hence he counted all but *loss*, that he might *win* Christ, and be found in him.

But nothing can be more to the purpose, than our Lord's conduct toward the self-righteous Pharisees, in the days of his flesh. He places them in the same class with scribes and hypocrites; and eight times in the course of one chapter (Matt. xxiii.) addresses them with, *Wo unto you*; which he concludes with these awful words, *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

But such is human depravity, that mankind universally, considered in unbelief, entertain this fondness for themselves. It is what they soonest discover, and part with latest. We see our children, as soon as they learn to distinguish good from evil, ready to place great confidence in some supposed goodness. They are not guilty of this evil and the other, and are not so bad as some who are within the circle of their acquaintance; and hence are ready to infer the goodness of their state. Neither is this to be confined to the follies of childhood and youth; verily, it is the folly of men of every age. Under its influence Paul became a noted zealot; for all his religion was founded on this principle. This he frankly confesses.

There are many things that might be mentioned, to prove the universality of this fatal temper.

1. The general drift of the holy scriptures. Every man who does not wilfully shut his eyes,

must observe, that one manifest design of the word of God is to lead mankind to form a proper estimate of their own character, and thereby prevent their putting confidence in themselves. Accordingly the corruption of the world is represented as extending to every individual of the race of Adam, and to every power and faculty of the human soul. *They are ALL gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is NONE that doeth good, no, not ONE.* Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that EVERY mouth may be stopped, and ALL the WORLD may become guilty before God. ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Passages of the same import are numerous, all tending to prove that the WHOLE WORLD is become GUILTY before God.

Now that corruption which extends to all mankind, is proved by the same infallible volume to reach to all the faculties of the souls of men. Attend to the following scriptures. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that EVERY imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Note, every imagination was evil, and that continually. We also read that *the carnal mind is enmity against God; that the understanding is darkened, the will obstinate, the affections inordinate.* *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.* He is represented dead in sins, alienated from God; an enemy in his mind by wicked works. St. Paul declares, that *they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* And Christ assured Nicodemus, that *that which is born of the flesh is flesh.* By being in the flesh, nothing less is meant than the

totally corrupt condition of every man before regeneration. In this state he is by nature: for he *is born of the flesh, and he is flesh; yea, he is all flesh*, i. e. wholly carnal, depraved in every part.

The living oracles abound with passages immediately designed to prove that human nature is in a state of *total corruption*, of which those above cited are only a specimen.

From hence I would observe, that the infinitely great God, knowing the propensity that there is in man to think well of and to trust in himself, saw it necessary thus to exhibit his dreadful character in its true light.

2. That this principle is both general and dangerous, may be learned from the whole tenor of the gospel. The gospel of Christ is calculated to bring down the lofty looks of man, that the Lord alone may be exalted. It is good news to sinners; yea, to the chief of sinners. It considers all men on a level; that is, *lost, guilty, and helpless*; as in debt ten thousand talents, and having nothing to pay. One cannot plead the privileges of his birth, as giving him the preference. Another cannot introduce the obedience of his life, as a reason why mercy should first be exercised towards him. On the contrary, all who are saved according to the riches of grace, are brought, as with one voice, to plead guilty, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. The salvation that the gospel sets before us, is altogether sovereign and unmerited; consequently one man has no more right to it than another. The Lord *will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion*. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God

*that sheweth mercy.* Thus the grace of God, which is most illustriously displayed in the gospel, destroys all boasted distinctions among men.

There was a remarkable distinction, long kept up between Jews and Gentiles. The former treated the latter with contempt; while they concluded that they alone were God's peculiar people. But this glorious gospel immediately tended to annihilate this distinction; by teaching the converted Jews, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of God in Christ.*

From the premises I remark, That it is necessarily supposed in the doctrines of Christ, that mankind are universally apt to trust in themselves. For why should the Lord reveal such a gospel to us, which in its very nature tends to debase the sinner, and to destroy self-confidence, if men were not in danger of being led away by this spirit?

3. We farther learn this melancholy truth from the ministry of the apostles. Sensible that it was one grand end of the gospel, to eradicate this temper, they invariably pointed all their artillery against it. To prove this observation by quotations from the epistles of the several apostles, would lead me unavoidably to trespass on your patience. Neither is it necessary, seeing they all adopted the same plan of preaching, and were of one mind as to the leading truths of the gospel. Therefore when you hear one of them, in a sense you hear the rest. They all unite in describing the corruption of human nature, and the redemption that we have in Christ: doctrines that are entirely opposite to the carnal mind; and which,

according to the rules of human prudence, required much art to introduce them, with the smallest prospect of success. Had they proceeded upon the plan of pleasing men, they might have kept back some of the doctrines; but half delivered others, passing over in silence such things as tended to irritate the corrupt mind; and have interspersed through the various parts of their discourses, so many extenuations of human depravity, that even sinners themselves would have had no objections. But such a conduct they held in the greatest contempt. And being confident that the success of the gospel did not depend upon their artful recommendation of it, but on the supernatural influence of the Spirit of God, they determined in the name of the Lord, that they would preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And though no part of their ministry would probably expose them more to the popular odium, than a clear and an impartial account of the sinner's state, both by nature and practice; they made it a leading point.

They seem to have been under no fears that they should depreciate human nature, or rob man of his fancied dignity; knowing that it was impossible to exaggerate on this occasion. In the first sermon that was preached after the descent of the Holy Ghost, the Jews are charged with the *murder* of Jesus of Nazareth; and are painted in the blackest colours. The charge is often repeated in the course of the apostle's ministry; and notwithstanding some are enraged at them, and they cast into prison, thousands are converted to Christianity. In no softer language than the following, does Stephen speak to the people, *Ye stiff-*

necked, and *uncircumcised in heart and ears*, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. This is plain dealing; calculated to bring down their lofty looks. Agreeable to which you find through the different epistles, that mankind are represented, dead in trespasses and sins; enemies in their minds to God; blinded by the god of this world, &c. &c. But of this we have spoken already. I therefore ask, why the apostles should unanimously adopt such a method of preaching, and constantly address sinners in language so fully expressive of their wretched condition, had they not known that *self-confidence* was both a *general* and a *hazardous* principle?

4. I now beg leave to appeal to your consciences as in the sight of God, whether, to be ingenuous, you are not sensible of this as an habitual temper? Are you not inclined to think well of yourselves; and to place a degree of confidence in some circumstances, which you imagine distinguish you from others? Are you not displeased, when attempts are made to debase man; and ready to declare with a certain lawyer, *Thus saying, thou reproachest us also?* Have you not often thought, and perhaps often said it, that though human nature is depraved, it is not so bad as represented? Do you not think, that man ought to be treated with more respect; and that some pains should be taken to convince him of his importance?

The sentiments contained in those queries are popular, and have many advocates, whom you should always look upon as your enemies. They may feed your pride, and confirm your confidence in the flesh; but the event will be shocking. The period hastens, when the Lord will *lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding places.*

I doubt not, my brethren, if you act an honest part between God and your own souls, that you are now conscious of such an aptness to trust in yourselves. And whether you will confess it or not, there are many who openly appear to vindicate, as they imagine, man's injured honour. They tell us a fine story concerning the dignity of man in his present state; which would lead us, could we credit it, to think he had never fallen; or, that if he has fallen, the injury he received by it is so small, that he is capable, with a very little assistance, of recovering himself. These are living evidences of this fondness for, and aptness to trust in self.

I shall now descend to a particular consideration of some of those things, that mankind, under the notion of righteousness, place as the ground of their confidence. St. Paul has enlarged on, and warmly exploded his own mistake in this point; having built his expectation of heaven on the following particulars.

1. *Circumcised the eighth day.* Circumcision was a divine institution, to be administered to Abraham's male issue. They who complied with it while the law was in force, obeyed a divine precept. Our apostle was not only circumcised,

but it was on the *eighth day*, exactly agreeable to the law of God. Which he particularly mentions, because the Jews would not allow it to be valid if performed before that day, and looked upon it less valuable if administered after it.

2. He was *of the stock of Israel*. “This,” says one, “is said to distinguish him from an Ishmaelite, or Edomite, who were circumcised, and from the son of a proselyte, who might be circumcised on the eighth day; but he was a natural Israelite, to whom the various privileges belonged, mentioned Rom. ix. 4, 5. and therefore had as much right to trust in the flesh as any Israelite whatever.”

3. *Of the tribe of Benjamin*. St. Paul had not forgotten to which of the tribes he belonged; and could boast that he was of one of the most honourable, even Benjamin; a tribe that maintained their fidelity to God, and their regard to his worship, when the other tribes revolted.

4. *An Hebrew of the Hebrews*. Meaning that he was a Jew both by father’s and mother’s side; so that in a strict sense he was of the seed of Abraham; or, “of a family which had not mixed in marriage with the Gentiles,” or other nations.

5. *As touching the law, a Pharisee*; therefore one of the strictest sect among the Jews, as to a religious manner of life.

6. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church*; i. e. the church of Christ: which he did from a regard to the Jewish religion; supposing that the Christians were a deluded set of people, and that their sentiments were immediately derogatory to the honour of God. In this his zeal boiled over, and he manifested to his brethren that he was a warm

religionist ; which part of his character recommended him to those who were zealous of the law.

7. *Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* So very strict had he been in his obedience to the law, that neither himself nor his brethren could find fault with him,

This narrative confirms the observation, viz. That mankind make their own righteousness the ground of their confidence. For the very things which the apostle now rejects, had been *gain* to him before. The same spirit lives and reigns still. There are crowds of modern Pharisees, who, though they fall far behind Saul, as to the privileges of his birth, or the strict manner of his life, are equally self-confident. Among the several things which men are apt to place confidence in, I shall mention the following :—

1. That they are *not so bad* as others. All who make this plea, manifest their extreme ignorance of the law of God, and the gospel of Christ. Yet such there are. And if we may believe what they say, this negative righteousness, if you will admit the expression, is esteemed a favourable circumstance, on the account of which they expect some indulgence. What a gross absurdity ! This comparative phrase, *not so bad*, carries in it a confession of guilt, at the same time that the sinner would extenuate it ; and the guilty, whether the degree of guilt be greater or less, are exposed to damnation. *The wages of sin is death.*

Suppose you should see two criminals arraigned at the bar, the one for highway robbery, the other for murder ; and the former should plead before the court, as a circumstance entitling him

to their mercy, that he was a highwayman, and not a murderer: you would look upon such a conduct preposterous; and be ready to assure the criminal, that the very thing he urged in his own favour would be the cause of his condemnation. And suppose you should find the same person, while under sentence of death, disposed to speak well of his own character, as differing from that of his fellow-criminal; doubtless you would ask him, what satisfaction could possibly result from a consideration of such difference, seeing he would as surely be executed as the other? Infinitely more unreasonable do those men act, who hope for mercy because they are *not so bad* as others. Sinners, as such, must be damned: the law and justice of God call for their execution. What pleasure therefore can it afford the sinner *now*, or will it afford *hereafter*, to think, that though he is condemned to lie in hell forever, his character is not so heinous as that of other sinners?

2. There are numbers whose *good life* is the ground of their confidence before God. Probably they have had a religious education, and have generally conducted with sobriety. And in their dealings with mankind have carefully adhered to the rules of equity. They have scorned to over-reach, or to keep back the wages of the hireling. Honest and punctual in the payment of their debts, they make no man call twice for his money, unless absolutely necessary; but promise with caution, and perform with punctuality; choosing rather to empty their purses, than to forfeit their word, or suffer a poor man to be impeded in his business, and distressed in his family. To which we add, in order to finish the character, their

*extensive liberality.* They are men of great humanity; soon affected with the calamities of others, and ready to relieve them.

These men are highly esteemed by others, and useful in the community. We heartily wish an increase of their number. Their general character bears some resemblance to that of Saul the Pharisee; and if the approbation of men would recommend them to God, they would not fail of acceptance. But after all, it must be said to such, *one thing is wanting*, and which is indispensably necessary, viz. to be brought to count this *good life*, and all those things which are *gain* to them, but *loss*, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. However strict they may be in their observance of both tables of the law, we may venture to affirm, that they do not exceed Saul, who, as touching the righteousness that is in it, was *blameless*. He, like his brethren the Pharisees in the present day, made a righteousness of his *good life*, and entertained no such notions of the Deity, as to suppose he would condemn a man that had so much to say for himself.

3. There are others, who make a righteousness of their submission to gospel ordinances, and thus run counter to their original design. Should a strict search be made among the professors of Christianity, we have reason to conclude that many would be found, who have no better foundation for their hope, than their having been church members for a number of years. They can relate the time of their baptism, and of their admission to the Lord's table; but cannot give any clear account of their having been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the King-

dom of God's dear Son ; which is an event infinitely more important than the former. They seem to be as ignorant of the new birth as Nicodemus; and are ready with him to say, *How can a man be born again when he is old?*

The principal difference between their plan of acceptance with God, and that of Saul, consists in this ; Saul was in pursuit of eternal life on mere law : they blend law and gospel together. They have been baptized, statedly partake of the Lord's supper, keep their place in the house of God, pray in their families, do justice between man and man, and sometimes give to the poor ; and are so fixed in their confidence in the flesh, that it is next to impossible to persuade them that they may be mistaken. He who tells them, that they must have a better righteousness than this ; and that they may lose heaven after their thirty, forty, or fifty years standing in the church, if they have no better plea, may expect to bring upon himself their displeasure. Surely they have forgotten the awful parable of the ten virgins ; and that it is written, *They are not all Israel that are of Israel ;* or, which is more likely, they have so closely wrapt themselves up in their own righteousness, and for so many years been persuaded of their good standing, that they ward off the most solemn scriptures ; and now, the only thing that leaves room to hope for their conversion is, that the residue of the Spirit is with God, and when he works, none can let it. He can strip them, as he did Saul, of all that is now *gain* to them ; and powerfully incline them to cast away all their *round of duties*, in point of dependence, though not in point of performance, and to glory only in the cross of Christ.

These are the very men, who have the form, but deny the power of godliness; and who are capable of treating with contempt the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; those happy seasons, when God is graciously pleased to pour out his Spirit upon the churches. Neither need we wonder, if they become warm in their opposition, and treat those things as profane, which Christ and his *real* disciples esteem *sacred*. For notwithstanding their shew in the flesh, they perceive not the things of the Spirit of God.

Here permit me to take notice of what, I apprehend, is an abuse of the Lord's supper, viz. persons, their hurrying themselves into the church of Christ, or their being hurried by others, upon some slight convictions of sin, or on account of their sober life. I have met with some, who, upon becoming uneasy in their minds about the state of their souls, have manifested a very great anxiety to be received into the church. But upon being asked the reason of the hope that was in them, appeared greatly ignorant of their own true character, and of the way of life through Christ; having no more to say for themselves, than that they had lived long in the neglect of their duty, and conclude they ought to join the church; at the same time were incapable of satisfying, either themselves or others, that they had known the truth as it is in Jesus.

Query—Is it *kindness* or *cruelty* to persuade such persons to come up to the ordinances? Should not their Christian friends inform them, that a submission to ordinances lays no ground for hope? That they must be born again; and justified freely through the redemption that there is in Christ?

By such an act of friendship, they might be instrumental of turning their solicitude to a matter of eternal consequence—Am I in Christ? Have I ever been renewed in the spirit of my mind? This is the grand point that every person, desiring admission to the Lord's table, should previously settle: for it is children's bread, designed for those who have a *good hope through grace*. The privilege is special, intended for believers only. Hence we read, that the Lord added to the apostolic church daily *such as should be saved*; i. e. real believers, as appears in the context. Such also were the persons who composed the church in Samaria.\*

Besides, the house of God is *spiritual*, and said to be built up with *lively stones*. Now the known character of unbelievers is, that they are *dead* in trespasses and sins: consequently, are very unfit materials, with which to build this *spiritual house*.

The church of Christ is chosen out of, and entirely distinct from the world. If therefore all persons of a sober life, or who may appear to be under serious impressions of mind, are to be admitted into it, it will unavoidably tend to confound the distinction; unless we take it for granted that all such are real Christians. This, I imagine, will be consented to by but few. If it should, what becomes of the important doctrine of regeneration, or the special work of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of a sinner? And wherein consists a difference, absolutely necessary to be made, between *morality* and real *Christianity*? For the holy scriptures, and our acquaintance with

\* See Acts ii. 47. with the preceding verses. Chap. viii. 12.

mankind, unite to convince us, that men may behave with external sobriety, and seem to be under very serious exercises of mind, who, notwithstanding, are ignorant of the power of godliness. A deist, who pours contempt on all revealed religion, may conduct unblameably; and many who live under the dispensation of the gospel, like Felix, may be made to tremble; or, with Agrippa, be *almost persuaded* to be Christians; or, like the stony-ground hearers, *receive the word with joy*; all this may be, and the persons remain in unbelief. If so, regeneration is something more than this: it is that work of the Spirit of God upon the sinner's mind, by which his native enmity is slain, the stubbornness of his will subdued, and he brought to believe with *all his heart*, and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh. The divine influence is certainly *felt*, of which, the subject of it is capable of giving some account. Strange, my brethren, that a man should *pass from death to life*, be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and know nothing about it! At least he will know, that whereas he was blind, he now sees. And I humbly conceive, that every candidate for church membership should be in good measure satisfied that he is the subject of this great change. He that can rush into the church, and rest easy without such satisfaction, is in a condition to be suspected.

Will you therefore bear with me, while I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, to be more anxious to fly for refuge to the hope set before you, than to fly into his visible church? for you

may be members of a church, and at the same time heirs of hell.

Let none think that I have a design to discourage the proper subjects from joining the church of Christ. God forbid! You yourselves, my hearers, have had repeated opportunities of knowing, that every addition to the church has added to my happiness. Would to God, that converts might come as the clouds, and as doves to their windows! All I have in view, is to keep out hypocrites and almost Christians; and to dissuade awakened sinners from substituting the ordinances of the gospel in the room of Christ and his righteousness. And such an attempt is necessary; because persons in these circumstances, like a man drowning, will catch at any thing; and have often been known to fly into the church for safety, like Joab to the horns of the altar.

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## S E R M O N    I I .

THE SINNER'S BEST RIGHTEOUSNESS PROVED TO  
BE ESSENTIALLY DEFICIENT.

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PHILIPPIANS, iii. 4—9.

*If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

I PROCEED to the second thing proposed, which is to shew, that a sinner's best righteousness is essentially defective ; therefore not to be mentioned in point of acceptance with God.

Righteousness is conformity to a divine rule : this rule is the law of God. If therefore our obedience answers to its requirements, it is accepted : if it fails in *one* point, it is rejected.

That the divine law is the rule of righteousness, will be readily granted. It remains then that we inquire into its nature, in order to assist us in bringing our obedience to the trial.

The law of nature, under which man was, in his primitive state, was inscribed on his heart. "That such a law was connate with, and as it were, implanted in the man, appears from the relicks, which, like the remains of some noble building, are still extant in every man; namely, from these common notions, by which the heathens themselves distinguished *right* from *wrong*, and by which they were a law to themselves; *which shews the work of the law written in their hearts*, their consciences bearing witness." \* By this law, man was required to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind; and as his love was to be *supreme*, so his obedience was to be *perfect*. That man in his state of innocence was under the most sacred obligations to love *supremely*, and to obey *perfectly*, none will offer to deny. But alas, he sinned and fell! The effects of this act of disobedience, at least some of them, became immediately apparent. Guilt, fear, and alienation from God, appeared in the behaviour of the apostate pair; of which their posterity, by virtue of that federal relation they stood in to them, became partakers; and as fast as the world was peopled, native corruption was propagated: and from this source actual sins proceeded.

After a number of years had elapsed, and the law of nature was almost obliterated by that flood of iniquity that had taken place, the Lord Jehovah issued an edition of the law from mount Sinai, with the most dreadful circumstances; the design of which was, to let mankind know, that though they had forgotten their obedience, Jehovah had not forgotten his law; and to inform them, that

\* Dr. Witsius, in his *Œconomy of the Covenants*.

though they had lost their ability *perfectly* to obey, the divine Lawgiver had not lost his authority to command. These commands were written on tables of *stone*, to denote their perpetuity; and deposited in the ark. And though the ark and the tables of stone are lost, the law remains, and will remain, so far as it is *moral*, a rule of righteousness. God forbid that we should once suppose that it has either been abrogated or relaxed! This would be to reflect upon its adorable Author. Its precepts are transcribed in the New Testament. When a Pharisee asked our divine Lord, *Which is the great commandment in the law?* instead of hinting that it was either relaxed or abolished, he readily replied, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. and thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* Compared with the following words of St. Paul; *Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* In these places, together with those referred to in the margin, there are parts of the moral law insisted on; which are a plain proof of its perpetuity. To which I add that memorable passage in Matt. v. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.*

Here our blessed Lord not only clears himself of a design to supersede the law, by the promulgation of his gospel; but also threatens the persons who shall dare to teach such a sentiment.

As to the nature of this law, which we have proved continues, I would observe,

1. That it is *holy*. This it must be, as it is the law of an infinitely holy God.

2. It is *just*. If it is the law of God, it must be so; because he, who ever acts agreeably to the strictest rules of righteousness, would never lay down as the rule of moral action, a law that is unjust in its demands.

3. It is exceedingly broad, reaching even to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Thus Christ explains it; *Ye have heard that it was said of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* A lustful look is heart adultery. If a man indulges in heart one secret lust, even suppose it is never actually gratified, such is the nature of this law, that he is deemed and treated by it as a transgressor. In this the *divine* differs from *human* laws. The latter having nothing to do with thoughts, only condemn for actions: the former condemns for the sins of the heart. And thus it is necessary it should be, because thoughts are as open to the view of Jehovah as actions, and when sinful, are no less abominable. A thorough conviction of the extent of the law, would make a man tremble. Suppose your breasts were transparent, and your thoughts visible; so that he who sits next to you, could observe all that passes within; who of you would not shudder?

And would you fear that man should know your secret imaginations? Tremble then, O sinner! for to God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, all things are naked, and even hell is said to be without a covering! This then is one of the requirements of the law, even truth in the *inward parts*; a conformity of soul to it in every instance without exception. A want of such conformity is a want of righteousness; on account of which the man is condemned by the law.

The law requires perfect obedience as the condition of life; that is, obedience that is *universal* and *uninterrupted*. Universal: for *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in ONE point, he is guilty of ALL*. Uninterrupted: for it is written, *Cursed is every one that CONTINUETH NOT in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*. By this rule our obedience is to be tried, in order to determine, whether we shall stand or fall in consequence of *doing* some good thing. The inquiry rests entirely on these two particulars: Are we in *heart* and in *life* what the law requires we should be? Are we satisfied before God, that we have a perfect conformity of soul to the nature and demands of his law? Have we never violated the law in heart, by indulging unruly passions; such as *covetousness, revenge, pride, &c.*? If we have swerved in heart from this perfect law, in a single instance, it neither admits repentance, nor accepts sincerity, but condemns us. If so, we are all condemned; for we are all conscious that naturally we are destitute of this conformity.

Again—Let the sinner examine the obedience of his *life*. Has it been *constant*, since he became

capable of distinguishing good from evil? Has he always delighted in the divine law, and never turned aside from the path of duty? Has his obedience been *universal* to every precept without exception? Has he not failed in one instance? If he has, the living oracles declare he is *guilty of all*. But it is unnecessary to enlarge, seeing every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Every man knows, that he falls short of the requirements of the law, both in *heart* and *life*; consequently, his righteousness is essentially deficient.

How unreasonable is it then, for men to introduce works of righteousness done by them, in order to recommend them to God, when his law requires and will dispense with nothing less than *perfect obedience* as the condition of his favour, and they themselves acknowledge that their obedience is imperfect? Should they not rather fear and tremble, seeing they fall so far short of what the law requires?

*Objection.* Perhaps it will be said, in opposition to the preceding sentiments, that it would be unjust in God to require more of us, than in our present circumstances we are able to perform; that the gospel is a "remedial law," designed to soften the rigour of the former constitution, and to render the terms of acceptance more easy, by substituting *sincere* in the room of *perfect* obedience; that Jesus Christ died to atone for the imperfections of our obedience, insomuch that we need not doubt of salvation, if we *sincerely* do as well as we can.

*Reply.* The law was given to man, while in his state of innocence, at which time his abilities

were equal in every respect to its demands. God required no more of him than he had power to perform. His present incapacity is an effect of his sin, and subsequent to the existence of the law; consequently it cannot be unjust in God to require perfect obedience of him, he being now morally unable to yield it; unless it can be supposed that with the sinner's loss of ability to perform, the Deity has lost his authority to command. A shocking supposition! Is not the authority of God over his creatures invariably the same, notwithstanding any alterations that may take place in them? Doubtless. Whose fault is it that we labour under a *moral* inability to yield perfect obedience to the divine law? Our own, surely. Shall we then plead that *impotence*, which is an *effect* of our *wickedness*, as a reason why God should be less strict in his demands? Suppose you should lend your friend in good circumstances, a thousand pounds, payable at a certain time; and he should spend his estate at a gaming table, and thereby become reduced to poverty; would his inability render it unjust in you to demand your money, or dissolve his obligation to pay it? Verily, whatever might be his condition, your demand would be indisputably just, and his obligation not to be called in question.

Many things might be insisted on, in answer to the objection, viz. that the gospel, instead of being designed to abate the rigour of the law, reveals a righteousness for the justification of the sinner, that is in every respect adequate to its requirements. If so, there is no necessity of a re-

laxation of it. This will be the subject of the next discourse.

Again—If the law of God in its original state, was perfect, and in every respect consistent with the perfections of the divine nature, such as became a God to give, and the creature to obey, how can it be relaxed? Can it be altered without injury? Is it possible that it should undergo a change, and yet retain its perfection?

Farther—If the law admits *sincere* instead of *perfect* obedience, in consequence of the introduction of the gospel, how comes it to pass, that Christ and his apostles taught the perpetuity of the law, and assure us that whosoever shall offend in one point is guilty of all? More than this it never required.

The friends of these opinions “run themselves insensibly,” says a late judicious divine, “into the grossest inconsistency. They hold that God in mercy to mankind has abolished that rigorous constitution or law, that they were under originally; and instead of it, has introduced a more mild constitution, and put us under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor infirm impotent circumstances, since the fall.

“Now how can these things be made consistent? I would ask, what law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law that we were ever under, then they are not sins. And if they be not sins, what need of Christ’s dying to satisfy for them? But if they are sins, and the breach of some law, what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their new law; for that requires no other than imperfect

obedience, or obedience with imperfections; and therefore to have obedience attended with imperfections, is no breach of it; for it is as much as it requires. And they cannot be a breach of their old law; for that, they say, is entirely abolished, and we never were under it. They say it would not be just in God to require of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just in God to require more than we can perform, or to punish us for failing of it. And therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need therefore of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? What need of his *suffering* to satisfy for that which is no fault, and in its own nature deserves no *suffering*? What need of Christ's dying to purchase, that our *imperfect* obedience should be accepted, when, according to their scheme, it would be unjust in itself that any other obedience than imperfect should be required? What need of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ's dying to prevail with God not to do unrighteously? If it be said that Christ died to satisfy that old law for us, that so we might not be under it, but that there might be room for our being under a more mild law; still I would inquire, what need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law, which (by their principles) it would be unjust that we should be under, whether Christ had died or no, because in our present state we are not able to keep it?"\* The glaring

\* President Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, page 158, 159.

inconsistencies which this author has judiciously pointed out, I apprehend, can never be reconciled upon these principles. I now proceed,

III. To shew that the sinner, upon his becoming experimentally acquainted with the grace of the gospel, is thereby led to renounce all confidence in the flesh; and to expect acceptance with God, *only* on account of that *righteousness which is through the faith of Christ*.

This observation is contained in, and proved by the text. *But what things were GAIN to me (while a Pharisee) these I counted LOSS for Christ, (upon my conversion to Christianity.) Yea, doubtless, and I (do now, as a believer in Jesus and an apostle) count all things (whether birth privileges, legal observances, submission to gospel ordinances, zeal, diligence, and fidelity in the ministry, &c.) but LOSS, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things (of all things as explained above; and of all temporal good things, such as the good opinion of my countrymen, the way to wealth and preferment, a fixed and quiet habitation; and instead of these I became exposed to bonds, stripes, and imprisonment: yea, and death itself;) and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, (who is alpha and omega, the sum total of the Christian's treasure) and be found in him (to such there is no condemnation; Rom. viii. 1.) not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

This passage is plain and striking. In it St. Paul assures us what his views had been, so long

as he remained ignorant of the glorious gospel ; and declares in the most explicit manner, that the high esteem he had long entertained for his own obedience was entirely removed, by an acquaintance with the riches of grace. Observe the pains he takes to explode his own, and extol the righteousness of Jesus. He views them in contrast, tramples on the one, and glories in the other. The eyes of his mind having been opened, he sees that all his attempts to obtain the divine favour, by a course of obedience, were *loss* ; a *loss* of time, and a *loss* of labour ; and that if God had not plucked him as a brand from the burning, he should have *lost* his immortal soul !

It is observable, that he does not only renounce his own righteousness, which he explains as being *of the law* ; but that he does it in the most positive manner, and with a high degree of contempt. *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss*—He came to this conclusion, upon the clearest conviction of its truth. In no principle was he more fully established, than that his own righteousness was *loss* and *dung*, or *dogs' meat*, as some choose to read the latter Greek word, σκυβαλα (*skubala*.) But the former translation conveys the apostle's idea in a more emphatic manner, it being what even dogs themselves would reject.

In language like this we find the church speaking, Isaiah lxiv. 6. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Rags* are insufficient to cover the body, and to keep it warm : so the sinner's best righteousness is absolutely insufficient to clothe his naked soul, and to secure it from the wrath of God, and the curses of his law. *Rags* are an evidence of pov-

erty: so man's righteousness, when compared with the law of God, manifest that he is poor, and wretched. *Rags* render a man slighted: so he who appears in his own righteousness will be set at nought. *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, (such a righteousness was Saul's, for he was a Pharisee) ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

But the prophet adds to the phrase, saying, *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* How loathsome must he be to you who appears in *filthy rags*? Infinitely more so must he appear to Jehovah, who introduces his own righteousness as the ground of his hope and the reason of his acceptance.

Here, my brethren, you observe an agreement in sentiment, concerning the sinner's righteousness, between a great prophet and a great apostle. The courtly Isaiah does not think it mean, or unbecoming, to use one of the lowest comparisons, when the nature of the subject requires it; in which he is followed by one of the most learned of the apostles.

It is equally obvious in the text, that the same grace which inclined St. Paul to renounce all confidence in the flesh, did also lead him to trust *alone* for justification before God to the finished righteousness of Christ; *not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* This righteousness is *through the faith of Christ, and of God by faith*; expressions of nearly the same import. It is *of God*, as he appointed it, and will accept it, as the *sole* reason of the sinner's discharge from condemnation, and admission to eternal glory. And it is *of Christ*, as he hath

manifested it; having made an *end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in EVER-LASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

The phrase *by faith*, is expressive of the use of faith in the business of justification, viz. that it is *by faith* in the word of God, that the sinner discovers the glory, suitableness and perfection of the divine righteousness, becomes persuaded that it is an infallible ground of hope, and is thereby influenced to venture his naked soul upon it. This is the righteousness in which the apostle prays to be found, while he peremptorily rejects all other.

The conversion of St. Paul will readily be allowed to be genuine; and he a pattern to them, who should after him believe in Christ to everlasting life. Consequently every true convert will be like minded. Like causes will produce like effects. All who are under the influence of the same grace, will glory only in the cross of Christ. And however they may differ in some things of less importance, they will not differ in the grand points of the gospel. While they meet in different places for the service of God, worship in different modes, and are distinguished by different names, they are still *one in Christ Jesus*. Their supreme wish is to win Christ, and to be found in him; counting their own righteousness but *loss and dung*. Such are the discoveries that are made to their minds, by the Spirit of God, of the extent and spirituality of the law, that they at once find it a *ministration of death*, and that their best obedience will not stand the trial. On the other hand, they have such clear views, *by faith*, of the adorable merits of Jesus, in their all-atoning

virtue, that they rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh.

I pass now to some practical improvement.

1. Having proved the universality and danger of this spirit of self-confidence, it seems necessary to caution you against it. Nothing, we find, is more natural to man, neither can any thing be more hazardous, than to trust in himself. This spirit, if permitted to govern, will lead you into inconceivable misery ; because under its influence you trust to something for acceptance with God that is essentially wrong ; a righteousness that will not bear the trial. And at the same time that you run this dreadful risk, you despise the riches of God's goodness in providing a better righteousness than your own ; and contemn the Author of eternal salvation. Such wickedness, depend upon it, will not pass with impunity.

2. From the preceding discourse it is plain in what sense the apostle renounced all works done by him, whether before or after believing, viz. in point of *dependence*. He had no intention to teach us that the law was relaxed, or that our obligation to obedience was in any degree weakened. Far be it from him to lead men to treat the divine law with indifference. The point he laboured in his several epistles, with the greatest perspicuity, is to beat men off, not from obedience to the law, considered as duty, but from *trusting* in it for justification, either in whole or in part. It was no grief to him that he had lived a sober life ; of this he did not repent : but he repented bitterly, that he had made so great a mistake in the matter of acceptance with God, as to look for

the divine favour on the footing of his own *doings*. By this conduct he robbed God of his honour, Christ of the glory of his complete righteousness, and entirely set aside the glorious plan of redemption revealed in the go-pel. In the same sense should every man absolutely reject his best obedience: and doubtless he will do it, if he is acquainted with the nature of the law and the grace of the gospel. As to the law, it condemns for *one* failure; consequently, he who is sensible of thousands in the course of his obedience, will not dare to introduce it as the reason of his acceptance. And as to the gospel, it reveals a righteousness for the justification of the ungodly, that was wholly finished by Jesus Christ, and to which no sinner has any claim, on account of what he has done or can do. *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

3. From hence I observe, that the real believer will as fully reject all self-confidence as open profaneness. A man may turn from swearing, uncleanness, drunkenness, &c. to the profession and practice of godliness, and remain at the same time warmly attached to his own righteousness. That very alteration of his conduct, of which he is sensible, and others observe, is a ground of his confidence. He is pleased with it, and secretly thinks himself better than others. Such were the Pharisees, in the days of Christ: they looked upon themselves as holy, and despised their neighbours. This self-confidence was their bane.

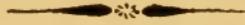
I beseech you, suffer the word of exhortation. Examine yourselves, whether you have ever been led to count all but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord? Ye old

professors, ye long established Christians, are you built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone? Do you rest infinitely satisfied with him? and is he dearer to you than every other object? Have you been brought to rejoice in the glories of his character, and his spotless righteousness? and are you anxious to place the crown on his head? Or have you some secret reserve? Do your hearts suggest some plea besides Christ? Paul renounced every thing for him; he had nothing to desire but to be found in him. May this be your case; may this be mine! For should we hold up both hands against the flagrant vices of the day, and bear open testimony against growing profaneness, and at the same time indulge this self-righteous spirit, we shall finally be placed with the workers of iniquity.

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## SERMON III.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS ONE OF THE GLORIES  
OF THE GOSPEL.



ROMANS, iv. 6.

*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*

ST. Paul's design in this chapter, and in a great part of this epistle, is to distinguish between justification by the deeds of the law, and by the righteousness of faith. The former sentiment he had early imbibed, and warmly promoted, till it pleased God to call him by his grace; after which he, with equal zeal and diligence, preached the very faith he had laboured to destroy. The text and context afford us a striking instance of his alteration of mind, and solicitude to propagate his new opinion; between which, and the principles of his education, there is an evident contrast. The language of one is, *Do and live*: the other speaketh expressly, *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*; q. d. the labourer is worthy of his hire. What a man receiveth as a reward for his industry, is not of *grace*, but of *debt*. He wrought for it, and may claim it. So,

if any man should insinuate that the sinner is justified before God in consequence of good works done by him, he destroys the doctrine of grace; and the testimony of David is introduced to confirm the important truth—*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*

The authority of Abraham and David had great weight with many to whom St. Paul was called to preach and write. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was justified by faith without the deeds of the law; and David, a man after God's own heart, and an inspired prophet, describes the blessed man to whom a righteousness is imputed without works, saying, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* This quotation is out of Psalm xxxii. The text is St. Paul's comment on it; who, as he was inspired by the same Spirit, must be allowed to understand the meaning of the royal prophet infallibly. So far then is our apostle from treating the doctrine of *imputed righteousness* as *novel, unscriptural, or absurd*, that he assures us it was an article of David's creed, and taught in the verses he had cited. David speaks of the *forgiveness of sin*, and of its *non-imputation*, but does not use the phrase *imputed righteousness*. St. Paul informs us, in his exposition of the words, that this is their import—*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.* Here we have,

- I. A righteousness spoken of,
- II. Which God is said to impute without works;

III. And *their* blessedness declared who are justified by this *imputed righteousness*.

I. A righteousness spoken of.

The subject of St. Paul's discourse is *justification* in the sight of God ; therefore the righteousness he pleads for is such as is calculated to justify in this sense. In the sequel he carefully excludes the sinner's obedience to the law, from having either part or influence in the matter ; and thereby leaves us but little room to wander in pursuit of his meaning, which must be, either that *our faith* is our righteousness, or the *obedience and sufferings* of Christ. The former was the sentiment of Arminius, and is still embraced by his followers. To prove which, they repeatedly urge those expressions of the apostle, *being justified by faith, his faith is counted for righteousness, &c.* (Rom. iv.) In which passages, and others of a like import, I humbly conceive, he cannot mean, that a sinner is justified before God by the *act of believing*, or that he is counted righteous because of *his faith* : for,

1. There is a *manifest distinction* between *faith* and that *righteousness* which is imputed for justification. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein (i. e. in the gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, Rom. i. 16, 17.* That St. Paul here speaks of justifying righteousness, I conclude from the connexion of the words with the preceding context. Verse 15, he declares his readiness to preach the gospel to those that were at Rome also. Verse 16, he glories in

it, and gives the reason why he does so. Verse 17, he explains the nature of the gospel, viz. that it is a revelation of *righteousness* from *faith* to *faith*. This is one of its glories, that it exhibits a righteousness as an article of faith, by which all who believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. The distinction between *righteousness* and *faith* in this verse is obvious. I therefore observe, if a sinner is justified before God by *righteousness imputed* to him, he cannot be said to be justified in the same sense by *faith*, which the apostle so carefully distinguishes from it.

2. That righteousness by which a sinner is justified before God, is *perfect conformity* to the divine law. The law is the rule of righteousness, by which Jehovah both condemns and acquits the sinner. If his righteousness, be it *personal* or *imputed*, answers the demands of the law, justice is satisfied : if it fails in a single instance, the sinner is condemned. *If thou wilt enter into life, i. e. by virtue of thine own obedience, keep the commandments. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Who then will say, that *faith* is such a conformity? or that the Lawgiver will depart from his just requirement of *perfect obedience* as the condition of life, and instead thereof accept *faith*?

3. The scriptures, when speaking of *justification, pardon, remission, &c.* ascribe them to Christ, to his *obedience, blood, righteousness, &c.*; but *faith* is properly the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. "No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state it were most absolutely

perfect, so as to exclude every thing of sin, could be any part of that righteousness that must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the offices of the Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost. It was Christ that was to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was never to merit for us. It was not the Holy Ghost that died for us, nor can his operations or productions in us have any *causative influence* to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They cannot make us *never to have sinned*, nor can they atone for our *having done so*. Suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin that very moment, by some extraordinary powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul; how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner?"\* Agreeably to this writer, whose words are according to truth, he that says we are counted righteous before God, on account of *our faith*, ascribes that to faith, or to the Holy Ghost, who is its great efficient, which properly belongs to Christ; and thereby confounds their offices, which are clearly distinguished in the word of God.

4. The sacred writings in many places militate against, yea, fully overthrow this notion, "that God accepts us as righteous in his sight, on account of *our faith*." A cloud of witnesses stand ready to vindicate this truth. We are said to be *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. If *through the redemption* that there is in Christ, then not for *believing*. The same apostle says, the sinner *is justified by his blood*. If by the *blood of Christ*, then not by *faith*.

\* Howe's Carnality of Religious Contention.

Christ is called *The Lord our righteousness*, and said to be made of God unto believers, *righteousness*. The reason of which expression is, that Christ is the author of a complete and spotless righteousness, by which all who believe are justified. It follows that if Christ is the sinner's righteousness, *faith* is not. I add but one passage more: *For as by one man's disobedience many were made (or constituted) sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*. If a sinner is made righteous in the sight of God, which is St. Paul's sense here, *by the obedience of Christ*, then he cannot be said to be accepted as righteous on account of his *faith*. Which leads me to observe,

5. That when the apostle says we are *justified by faith*, he does not mean the *act of believing*, as proved above, but probably the *object believed in*; even Jesus Christ, *who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. May not the expression be metonymical? We find in the sacred writings, that *sin* is put for the *punishment* of it; Christ is put for his own doctrine; *hope* is put for *the God of hope*.\* By the same figure *faith* may be put for its *object*. Or his meaning may be, that the sinner is *justified by faith*, as faith apprehends that righteousness, which is revealed in the gospel, and is the only matter of justification. *By faith* he understands that there is an infinitely excellent and suitable righteousness, finished by Jesus Christ, and which God will accept. It consists,

1. Of obedience to the precepts of the law. That Christ was made *under the law*, and perfectly obeyed it, is admitted. The present inquiry is,

\* See Levit. xxiv. 15. 2 Cor. xi. 4. Psalm. lxxi. 5.

whether his obedience to the law is any part of that righteousness which is imputed for justification ; or whether sin is pardoned, and the sinner accepted by God, on the account of Christ *alone*, exclusive of his obedience to the precepts of the law ? In answer to which, I would observe,

(1.) That it appears that the obedience of Christ through his life is a part, and a very essential part of the sinner's justifying righteousness ; seeing he undertook as a *surety* or in his behalf, to *magnify the law and make it honourable*, agreeably to Isaiah's prophecy concerning him. For this purpose he was *made under the law*, even that *he might redeem them that were under it, and that they might receive the adoption of sons*. In this passage the apostle first declares his incarnation, then the condition in which he was, *viz. under* or subject to the *law* ; and subjoins the reason of this subjection to the law, or the end he had in view ; that *he might redeem them that were under it*. Every person, while unregenerate, is under the law, both as to the *obedience* that it requireth, and the *punishment* that it threateneth. He who appears as a surety for such, or undertakes to deliver them, must fully answer these demands ; that is, he must perfectly obey its precepts, as well as fully endure its penalty. Without such full satisfaction to the law, it cannot be said to be magnified and made honourable ; and upon this it is that the sinner to whom it is imputed is accounted righteous in the sight of God.

(2.) "The reward of life is promised not to suffering, but to doing. The law says, Do this and live : it promises life not to him that suffers the penalty, but to him that obeys the precept.

‘There never was a law,’ as an excellent divine \* observes, ‘even among men, either promising or declaring a reward due to the criminal, because he had undergone the punishment of his crimes.’ Christ’s sufferings and death being satisfactory to the comminatory or threatening part of the law, are imputed to us for justification, that so we may be freed and discharged from the curse, and hell, and wrath. But these, as they do not constitute us righteous, do not, properly speaking, entitle us to eternal life; but that active obedience, or righteousness of Christ, being imputed to us, is our justification of life, or what gives us the title to eternal life.” †

The distinction made by this author between Christ’s obedience to the precepts of the law and his *sufferings* and *death*, with their different influence, is countenanced by the holy scriptures, and that too in several places. Paul, writing to the Galatians, ascribes our redemption from the *curse* to the *death* of Christ. (Gal. iii. 13.) Peter corroborates the sentiment, by saying that we are *redeemed* by the *blood* of Christ. (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) But when the apostle speaks of our being made *righteous*, he ascribes it to *righteousness* imputed, and to *obedience*; which is the particular next to be considered.

(3.) St. Paul assures us, in the plainest terms, that we are made righteous by the *obedience* of Christ. *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* (Rom. v. 19.) The apostle speaks, in

\* Dr. Goodwin.

† Dr. Gill’s *Doctrine of Justification*, p. 25, 26; to whom the writer acknowledges himself indebted for two or three hints enlarged on in this part of the subject.

this chapter, of Adam and Christ, as two public heads. Adam, by *actual disobedience*, involved himself, and all his posterity, whom he represented, in an awful scene of guilt and wretchedness. Jesus Christ, who was another public head, has made many righteous by his *actual obedience*, even all those who were given to him by the Father. The latter sentence is in opposition to the former, and gives us its true meaning: for as Adam's *disobedience* to the law constituted him and his posterity sinners, so the *obedience* of Christ to it is that by which many are constituted righteous. That the apostle in this place does not mean one act, but a course of obedience, may be learned by comparing it with the following words, (Philip. ii. 8.) *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death; or, until death*: meaning, that he was *obedient* to the precepts of the law through all his life; from which he was not diverted until he became a sacrifice for sin. The obedience of Christ is the subject of the apostle's discourse in both places: in one he assures us, that it was the business of his *whole life*; in the other, that by that *uninterrupted course of obedience* many are made righteous.

2. I pass now to observe, that this law, having been violated by man, became a *ministration of death*. He thereby fell under its curse; from which there was no way of deliverance, but by an adequate satisfaction, offered to the divine Law-giver. Hence it came to pass, that a law, which in its original state required obedience only, now called for suffering. He who broke it contracted guilt, for which neither men nor angels could atone. If he could, from this time forward to

the end of life, perfectly keep the law, as it would be no more than mere necessary duty, it could not expiate the guilt of one sin, any more than the punctual payment of debts that shall be contracted for the future will satisfy the creditor for those that have been contracted in time past. The guilt of sin is infinite, rising in malignity in proportion to the dignity of him against whom it is committed : consequently the atonement must be infinite. It is so : for God hath laid help on one *mighty to save*. *Through him is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins*. *We have redemption through his BLOOD*—that BLOOD that was shed for the priesthood and for the congregation, and without the shedding of which there could be no remission.

That the guilt of sin was to be expiated by *blood*, is a doctrine of the old testament ; from whence it is no less evident, that Jesus Christ was to be the sacrifice. We are abundantly taught the doctrine of atonement, by the numerous sacrifices of the law ; some of which were very significant ; and which St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews accommodatès to the great Antitype. That qualification of the victim, that it should be without *blemish*, is typical of the spotless purity of Jesus, *the LAMB without blemish and without spot*. His death with its circumstances and design, are all expressive of Christ our passover who was *sacrificed for us*. The death was violent : so was the death of Christ. The blood was received into a bason, to denote a value in it, not real but typical. This blood was to be applied either by sprinkling, or a touch to the person to be cleansed ; in allusion to the all-atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ, called the *blood of sprinkling*, and

said to *cleans*e from all sin. The imposition of hands on the beast, with large confession of sin, carried in it the doctrine of *imputation*, or the transferring of guilt to Christ; agreeably to the words of the prophet Isaiah, *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* The design of these sacrifices was to make atonement.\* These beasts were substituted in the room of the people, and their blood shed for the expiation of sin. So Jesus Christ put himself in the place of the heirs of promise; and though he knew no sin, God made him to be sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And now should we turn to the New Testament, we shall immediately observe it written as with capitals, *He died the JUST for the UNJUST, that he might bring us to God. He is the PROPITIATION for our sins.* By which we are not only taught that he died, but that he died as a *substitute.* Guilt was laid upon him. *He was wounded for OUR transgressions: he was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of OUR peace was upon him. He bore OUR sins in his own body on the tree.* It is evident, from these and many other passages of scripture, that Christ did not only die as a martyr, to confirm the doctrines he had taught, but as a substitute in the stead of others; and that his sufferings were primarily intended for the expiation of the guilt of sin.

That he was perfectly innocent, is allowed by all; yet we behold him dying, as one of the worst of malefactors, the cursed and painful death of the cross. Suffer on his own account he could not, because he knew no sin, neither was guile

\* See Exod. xxix. 26. Levit. xvi. 27, &c.

found in his mouth. Nor could he have suffered at all, if he had not been charged with guilt; it being incompatible with the justice of God, that the perfectly innocent should suffer. It will therefore follow, that guilt was laid upon him, that he was made sin for others: or, as an apostle expresses it in the strongest terms, *He was made a CURSE for us.*

To sum up this head—I apprehend we are to understand, by the *righteousness* which is spoken of in the text, nothing less than the perfect obedience of Christ to the precepts of the law, together with his sufferings and death. With it the Father is well pleased. It is perfect, spotless, and everlasting. It has infinite dignity, *being the righteousness of God.* It may be so called, because finished by him who is God as well as man; who *thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; and who, notwithstanding he appeared in the form of a servant, was possessed of infinite glory and perfection. Many striking circumstances proclaimed his glory, when he was crucified, and extorted from an enemy this frank confession, *Truly this was the Son of God*; and which was afterward declared, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by his resurrection from the dead.* By this event his deity was proved, and the truth of his important doctrines sealed: so that now it appears infinitely safe to make this glorious righteousness the ground of hope. I pass to consider,

II. That God is said to impute this righteousness without works.

The use of this phrase has given great offence to some, who, it is probable, were desirous of rejecting the doctrine with it. But why we should

reject the word *imputed*, rather than the word *righteousness*, is not easily accounted for ; unless it may be thought that mankind know there must be a *righteousness* in order to acceptance with God, but are unwilling that it should be an *imputed righteousness*, because that necessarily cuts off all boasting. Men are fond of *personal*, and therefore try to obscure *imputed righteousness*. It is however sufficient to countenance the use of this phrase, that we have it in our text, and find it several times repeated in this chapter and in other passages of holy scripture. We observe,

1. The person to whom this act of imputation is ascribed, God. On which we may remark, that there is a concurrence of the sacred persons of the Trinity in the work of redemption. The righteousness was finished by the Son of God : it is imputed by the Father ; and a discovery of it to the soul, as the reason of divine acceptance, is made by the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Jesus and shews them unto us. The act of justifying is elsewhere ascribed to the Father. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died.* (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) Here is a manifest distinction between *God that justifieth*, and *Christ that died*. The sinner, by the violation of the law, became obnoxious to divine wrath : Christ undertook for him, and satisfied divine justice. God the Father being well pleased with his righteousness, pronounces the sinner justified : he acquits him from every charge, *because Christ died*. And at the same time that the sinner is acquitted the Saviour is approved ; because the sinner is discharged on the foot of the Saviour's merits.

2. The manner in which the sinner is justified is expressed, viz. By *imputation*.—"God *imputeth* righteousness." The sense in which we are to understand the phrase may be learnt in the context. The apostle assures us, verse 5, that *God justifieth the ungodly*. This is their character at the very time when God justifies: if so, they have no personal righteousness, and consequently cannot be accepted by him for any thing that is properly their own: it follows that it must be on account of the righteousness of *another*. By *imputation* here, therefore, we are to understand the placing that to one which properly belongs to another; e. g. Jesus Christ was perfectly innocent: he had no sin either of nature, or of practice; yet guilt was so laid upon him, or imputed to him, that he became responsible to the justice of God; and it is said that he *bore it in his own body on the tree*. Though he was the Lamb without blemish and without spot, he was crucified on Calvary between two thieves. His sufferings could not be on his own account, because he was innocent, and therefore they must be on the account of others. In the same way is a sinner discharged by his righteousness.

Though no transactions among men can fully illustrate the doctrine before us, the following instance may be admitted as bearing some resemblance. A bondsman is frequently accepted in the behalf of a debtor. Now the debt that was contracted was not his personal debt; nevertheless, it becomes his by voluntarily putting himself in the debtor's place, and the creditor accordingly looks to him for payment. So it is in this case. The sins for which Christ died were not his own

personal acts ; but became his by a voluntary substitution of himself in the sinner's stead, and by the act of the Father, his laying them on him. On the other hand, the payment made by the bondsman was not the personal act of the debtor ; yet it is so viewed by the creditor that the debtor is released. So the righteousness of Jesus is not the personal obedience and suffering of the sinner ; yet it is so accounted his that he is discharged from condemnation, and shall be finally admitted to glory. This illustration, which has often been introduced by the lovers of this doctrine, tends in a degree to explain it ; and seeing Christ is called the *SURETY* of a better testament, there appears a propriety in this use of it. A *surety* is one who appears in the behalf of another.

I shall only subjoin, in order to prove the doctrine of imputation, the following ever memorable passage ; *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* It has been quoted before, but not with the same design. Now the sense of the apostle, in these words, is plainly this, that the righteousness of Christ becomes the sinner's, in the same way that Adam's sin becomes chargeable to his posterity ; and that is, by being derived, or reckoned to them. It at least deserves a serious answer—How *many* could be made righteous by the obedience of *one*, if that obedience is not placed to them ? or, how Christ's obedience should avail a sinner, especially in so high a sense as that he shall be discharged from guilt, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, if it is not *imputed* to him ?

*Objection.* It may be said, If Christ both obeyed the law, and suffered its penalty in the behalf of his people, that they have nothing to do with it. For, as by his sufferings and death they are freed from condemnation, so, by his perfect obedience they are dismissed from obligation to obey it.

To which I reply—The sinner can be freed from the law only agreeably to the design and engagement of his surety: no farther than he engages for him can he be benefited. Now the scripture expressly declares, that the design of Christ in becoming a substitute, was to procure a deliverance from the law so far as it tended to *condemnation*. *Christ hath redeemed us from the CURSE of the law.* Agreeably to which it is said, he was made *under* it, that he might *redeem* them who were *under* it. This is the current language of the New Testament. Hence observe, that the intention of Jesus Christ was to deliver his people from the *curse*. Evil is ever involved in the idea of a deliverance. We do not say, that a man is delivered from that which is *good*, but only from something that is *pernicious*. Now as obedience to the law is no evil, or part of the *curse*, consequently it is what the sinner stood in no need of a salvation from. The language of the law, as has often been observed, is, *Do thyself no harm*. The deliverance, therefore, which the justified obtain by Christ from the law, consists in these two things;

(1.) A freedom from *condemnation*. The sinner having transgressed the law, was condemned by it to lie under the wrath of Jehovah, in an eternal exclusion from heaven. From this awful calamity

all the justified are delivered by the interposition of the Divine Redeemer : in accomplishing which, it was indispensably necessary that he should both obey the law and endure its penalty.

(2.) They are freed from the law as a covenant of works : hence they do not expect eternal life upon the footing of their own obedience. Accordingly the apostle Paul says, *Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.* Again—*But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* They were dead to it, so as no longer to seek to be justified by the deeds of it ; or to look upon their obedience as a *condition* or *term* of their acceptance with God ; because *by the deeds of the law could no flesh living be justified.* Hence we observe, that as this was the extent of the design of Christ, even to deliver from the law only as it tended to *condemnation*, the justified are not delivered from it as a rule of life, any more than they are delivered from corporal death by his dying.

Could it once be made to appear that these sentiments are subversive of obedience, it would immediately characterize them, and prove that they ought to be rejected : but so far are they from this, that they establish it. St. Paul having discoursed at large on the doctrine of justification without the deeds of the law, asks the question, *Do we then make void the law through faith ?* i. e. the doctrine of faith. And then answers it with an emphatic *God forbid : yea, we establish the law.* As to the threatening and precepts of the law, what has been said already proves that it is established with respect to them ; seeing the

death of Christ was according to the sentence of the law, and his obedience to its precepts perfect. To which we add, that it is established, with respect to all who have been brought to believe in the Son of God: they look upon it as the rule of life, to which they are bound to pay a sacred regard, from love to God, whose law it is, and who gave his only begotten Son, that he might become the end of it for righteousness; from love to Jesus, who both obeyed its precepts, and suffered its penalty, and thus delivered the criminal; and from love to the law itself, as it is a transcript of the divine nature. Their obedience is truly evangelical, originating from *that faith* which is *of the operation of God*, and accompanied with *that love* which is *a fruit of the Spirit*.

3. There is one thing more to be considered before we proceed to the next head, viz. that this righteousness is imputed *without works*: i. e. without works in him who is the subject of justification; or to whom the righteousness spoken of is imputed. The obedience of the sinner is no cause why God justifies him. Neither is it any part of that righteousness by which he is justified. Justification is an act of the pure, sovereign grace of God, exercised toward *sinner*s and *the ungodly*. The design of this phrase, *without works*, is to exclude every thing from the matter and cause of justification but the perfect righteousness of Christ. I proceed,

III. To consider the blessedness of such, to whom this righteousness is imputed. *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will*

*not impute sin.* The blessedness spoken of may be comprised in these three things,

1. A freedom from the wrath to come. If sin be pardoned, there is no condemnation. And this, my brethren, is the immensely rich blessing, which God bestows on all to whom righteousness is imputed. *He pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage: he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.* The exceeding greatness of this blessing may be more fully discovered, by a consideration of that misery to which sin has exposed us. *Hell, damnation, everlasting torments,* are words that convey most shocking ideas. And thus saith the Lord, *The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God. They that have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.* Thus you see that the wages of sin is death, yea, eternal death; consisting, not in a loss of being, but of happiness. It is nothing less than a banishment from God, and all the glories of his kingdom, into the bottomless pit; there to be confined with devils and damned spirits, without the least glimpse of hope! This wretchedness is inconceivable as to its degree; consequently is inexpressible. How great then must be their blessedness, whose iniquities are forgiven, seeing they obtain an absolute deliverance from all this; and

2. Are entitled to the enjoyment of God in heaven. These are connected in one verse; *That they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.* God pardons none but such as he intends to admit into his everlasting kingdom. The connexion

between the several blessings of the well-ordered covenant is inseparable. *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* They are pardoned and sanctified, on purpose that they may be received into the presence of God and of the Lamb, where is fulness of joy. Oh infinite felicity ! There is the absence of all evil, and the fruition of all good. Jesus Christ will there be beheld in all his dazzling glories, while all the hosts of angels bow before him ; and the spirits of just men made perfect unite in one grand ascription of praise to him, who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his blood ! Glory be to God, for this astonishing display of his grace ; that these inestimable blessings may be conferred on guilty, hell-deserving men !

3. I would add, That God blesses those whom he justifies with a comfortable sense of their own interest in him, which the scriptures call *good hope through grace, the full assurance of hope, &c.* A privilege for which they are indebted to the Spirit of God, who is said to *seal* the believer unto the *day of redemption* ; to *witness with his spirit that he is a child of God* ; to abide in his heart as the *earnest of his inheritance*. In which places it is clearly taught us, that believers, at least some of them, are favoured with a sense of the pardon of their sins through the blood of Christ. The Holy Ghost witnesseth to their spirits that they are the children of God, and thus confirms the wavering, doubtful mind. He is also said to be an *earnest* of their inheritance. The design of an *earnest*, which is a part in hand, is to ascertain the whole : so the Spirit of God, at times, enables the believer, as he did St. Paul, to say, *I know whom*

*I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* Thus he rejoices in the prospect of the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and at times is ready to say, *Why tarry the wheels of thy chariot?* Verily, blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

I now proceed to some reflections.

1. Let us from hence learn to distinguish between faith, and the righteousness of Christ, in the great affair of acceptance with God. That righteousness which justifies, is altogether the work of Christ: it was finished by himself; and is properly his own. He had no coadjutor. He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him. Nevertheless, it becomes ours, by the gracious act of God imputing it to us.

Faith, according to the beloved disciple John, and the great St. Paul, is the *belief of the truth*; the *believing that Jesus is the Christ*; or a giving credit to the record that God gave of his Son. These definitions are all of the same import, and are all divine; being dictated by the Spirit of God, they cannot be contradicted by any, however some have glossed upon them, till they have brought in a sense diverse from the inspired writers. This faith, when it is *real*, as distinguished from that unessential assent to the gospel, which crowds who hear it profess to have, is an effect of the *divine influence in us*; hence said to be *of the operation of God*; and that it is *with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness. As the righteousness by which the sinner is justified, is the sole work of Christ *for him*, so this is the work of the Holy Ghost *in him*, and no less necessary in its proper

place ; it being that, without which a sinner cannot apprehend, receive, and rest upon Christ for eternal life. By faith, as before observed, he becomes acquainted with the glories of the character of Jesus, the fulness of grace in him, and the suitableness and perfection of his righteousness ; in consequence of this faith, he admires the Saviour's personal excellencies, flies to him, ventures all upon him, and rejoices in him. These, to speak plainly, are all so many effects of faith. The sinner must have a view of the Saviour's excellency, *before* he will admire it. He must be persuaded, that Christ is the only safe refuge, *before* he will *fly* to him. He must know that there is in Christ sufficient matter of consolation, *before* he will *rejoice* in him. Of all these he is entirely satisfied *by faith* in the testimony of God : subsequent to which is his *coming*, or *flying* to him, *trusting* in, or *venturing* all upon him, *rejoicing* in him, &c. e. g. Joseph's brethren heard that there was corn enough in Egypt ; they believed the report : this was faith ; upon this they went down for a supply. Doubtless this was an *effect* of their faith ; for had they not believed the tidings, they would never have gone. So a sinner must *believe* that Christ is a full and complete Saviour, *before* he will *run* or *fly* to him. Sense of misery, and faith in his sufficiency, are the main stimulus. Or, I am sick, I hear of an able physician, I believe him to be so, upon which I apply to him : my *application* to him, and my *belief* of his character, are as distinct as any two things can be : my *trusting* my life in his hands, is an effect of my *believing* him to be an able physician. This distinction is obvious in the sacred writings, as well as in the nature of things. *He that COMETH to God, must BELIEVE that he is.*

Here is a manifest distinction between *coming* and *believing*.

I apprehend that the same distinction should be observed, between *believing* in Christ, and *receiving* him. If so, it will follow, that “to receive Christ in all his offices, as a prophet, a priest, and a king,” is not properly *faith*, but an *effect* of it, and inseparably connected with it. It is certain that a man must believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that he sustains these offices, before he can or will receive him in this light. Christ *came unto his own* (meaning the Jews) *but his own received him not*. This refusing to *receive* him was not unbelief, but an effect of it. Hence should you be asked, why they did not receive him? The answer is ready, *because* they did not believe him to be the Christ. Nothing is more plain, than that unbelief was the grand *cause* why they rejected him. On the other hand, nothing is more evident, than that *receiving* Christ, is an effect of *believing* in him. And should you ask the man who defines faith, “a receiving Christ in all his offices,” why he thus receives him? he himself will be obliged to observe this distinction; for the only just answer he can give you is, “*because I believe* he sustains them.”

Thus we see that faith is entirely distinct from the righteousness which justifies; at the same time it is indispensably necessary, answering great and good purposes. Under its influence the sinner *flies* to Jesus, the hope set before him, and trusts his immortal interest in his hands, being perfectly satisfied with his adorable character. Faith is also the medium of peace and consolation. You may with equal propriety attempt to separate light and heat from the sun, as peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, *from the faith*

*of God's elect.* The degree of Christian consolation may be greater or less, according to the strength and influence of faith. At one time the believer may have an inward peace and tranquillity, which is exceedingly agreeable. At another time he may be favoured with what St. Paul calls *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* At another, guilt may rob him of his comfort, and separate between him and his God. Such are his exercises in the present state of things. But he is far from making a righteousness of his *frames, feelings, or experiences.* The distinction between these he well understands. The *righteousness* by which he expects to be justified, is the work of Christ alone; the *faith* by which he is enabled to receive it, is *of the operation of God*; the consolations that he enjoys are from this glorious Christ, in believing, or through faith: all as different as A, B, and C. His dependence for acceptance with God is neither on his faith nor experiences, but on Christ *alone.* At the same time he cannot conceive it possible, for a poor, wretched, undone sinner to be enabled to believe in Christ for eternal life, and not *rejoice.* A view of the glories of his person, and the fullness and freeness of his grace, cannot fail of introducing *strong consolation.*

*Corollary 1.* It follows, that believers may still talk of, and plead for *Christian experiences,* without the least injury to the "finished work of Christ," or without making a righteousness of them, seeing they clearly understand the distinction between them, notwithstanding what has been said to the contrary by some who have lately appeared among us.

*Corol. 2.* Those persons that have ever known the truth as it is in Jesus, must fall into an awful

state of supineness, before they dare affirm, as a term of admission into any religious society, that all their former acquaintance with religion was *delusion*; and by so doing, they cannot fail of grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

*Corol. 3.* That faith that is without a heart-felt sense of the truth, or unconnected with the consolation that there is in Christ, is essentially different from the faith of the apostles and primitive Christians: *believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

*Corol. 4.* They who seem to speak highly of the atonement, or the “finished work of Christ,” but say little, and indeed nothing to the purpose, about the Spirit’s work in regeneration, while they appear to extol one sacred person of the Trinity, do manifestly slight another.

2. From the preceding subject we are taught the antiquity of the doctrine of imputation; which was clearly expressed under the former dispensation, by the laying of hands on the head of the victim, with confession of sin: yea, we are taught that the doctrine of *imputed righteousness* is not to be confined to the New Testament; for St. Paul, in his exposition of the words of David, assures us that it is held forth in them. It was a doctrine of the primitive church, and much insisted on in the reformation from popery. Luther, that resolute reformer, looked upon it “an article of a standing or a falling church.” It was steadily embraced by the fathers of New-England, and is preserved as precious in many of their writings; and however it may at any time suffer an eclipse, as a truth of God it shall finally prevail to his glory and the comfort of many poor sinners. Doubtless it is calculated to do both. It gives

glory to God : for in this method of saving the guilty, there is an illustrious display of the divine perfections ; such as wisdom, love, grace, sovereignty, justice, &c. Wisdom shines, in that God has secured the honour of his law and government, while he justifies the *ungodly*. Love appears in the manner in which he hath done this, even by giving his only begotten Son to suffer and die. Grace is conspicuous in his pardoning the sinner's guilt, and accepting his person as righteous on account of the *obedience of one*. Sovereignty is manifested in his having mercy on whom he will have mercy. Justice cannot be hid, seeing rather than sin should be pardoned without satisfaction, the Son of God must die. It brings comfort to the sinner who is brought to believe in Jesus : for he sees that he is the author of a perfect, spotless righteousness, such as he finds he must have, or never be admitted to see the Lord ; and while he rejoices in it by faith, he ascribes the whole glory to God.

3. If only they are blessed whose iniquities are forgiven, it follows, that the wrath of God abideth on all the impenitent and unbelieving. This is an alarming consideration to such as have any sense of the nature of the divine displeasure. It will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? Who can dwell with devouring fire?* A state of guilt is awful ; the person in it is destitute of the comforts of the gospel here, and is liable every moment to be plunged into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone ! and this is the condition of every natural man. It becomes each of us to inquire, in the language of the disciples, *Lord, is it I?*

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## SERMON IV.

BELIEVERS EXHORTED TO CONTINUE IN THEIR  
OBEDIENCE.



PHILIPPIANS, ii. 12, 13.

*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*

ST. Paul was a zealous and an accomplished advocate for all the important doctrines of Christianity: these he inculcated with plainness and frequency, always laying them down as the foundation of obedience, and from them urging a sacred regard to every necessary duty. We have an instance of this sort in the context. The apostle introduces subjects of the highest consequence, viz. the divinity of Christ, or his equality with the Father—*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; his astonishing condescension—but *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*; his course of obedience to the will of God, and his submitting to the ignominious and painful death of the cross. These grand, interesting truths, are the premises on which he founds the following exhortation; *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my ab-*

*sence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling : for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure : q. d. Dearly beloved, I exhort you to labour to be like your Lord and Master ; let the same mind be in you that was in him ; behave with meekness and humility toward all men, and let it be seen that you delight in copying the most perfect example. And as Jesus became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; know ye, that the great design of this stupendous act of his was, that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify you to himself, a peculiar people, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. Be ye therefore, like him, obedient until death ; stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. In farther speaking to the words, I propose,*

I. To shew to whom they were addressed.

II. Inquire into their meaning.

III. Consider the necessity of the believer's continuing in his obedience.

I. It is expedient, in the first place, to know to whom these words were spoken ; this should be a first inquiry in all our investigations of divine truth, in order to find out the sense of the sacred writers. The want of a due attention to this maxim, has led many to mistake their meaning : from hence it is that many scripture exhortations are misapplied, and the text among others, which is manifestly spoken to believers ; this will appear from the following things :

1. The direction of the epistle, (chap. i. 1.) *To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.* The direction of a letter gives one man a right to open it rather than

another, and without any regard to its contents, determines whose it is. So in this case. St. Paul carried on a very extensive literary correspondence. If any thing in providence prevented his paying a personal visit to the places where he had been successful in preaching the gospel, he generally took care to write to them. This circumstance more immediately gave rise to his several epistles, which are so many religious letters, written to the churches or to particular persons, on matters of importance. Each letter is directed with the greatest care, the epistle to the Hebrews excepted, which is generally supposed to have been written by this apostle. Now it is from the direction that we judge for whom the contents are designed; accordingly, we are led to conclude that this epistle to the Philippians was intended by the inspired author for *believers*, because he directs it *to all the saints in Christ Jesus*.

2. In confirmation of the above remark, it is necessary to examine the contents of this letter, from the beginning to the text. I might with propriety transcribe the whole preceding part of it, but shall only select a few passages, because they are sufficient for the purpose. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* (chap. i. 6.) Here he expresses his confidence that the *good work* which had been begun in them would be *finished* by the same divine agent. To whom could such a passage be addressed, but to professed believers? He also speaks of their *furtherance and joy of faith*. (ver. 25.) Sure we are, that such as have no *faith* can neither expect its *furtherance* nor experience its *joy*. He does

not hesitate to tell them, that to them it was given to *believe* in Christ. (ver. 29.) All which exactly agree with the direction of the epistle. To which I will only add the text; *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.* Observe that the apostle styles the persons to whom he writes *beloved*, an expression only used by him when addressing *believers*; accordingly, after the conversion of Onesimus, he wrote a letter to his master Philemon, in which he exhorts him to receive him, *not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother BELOVED.* He also commends their course of obedience, both while present with them and in his absence from them; by which it became manifest that the gospel had not come to them *in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.* I proceed,

II. To inquire into the meaning of the apostle in this exhortation, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

1. I apprehend the apostle cannot mean, that salvation from the guilt and fatal effects of sin was to be wrought out by human endeavours, or that the salvation of a sinner from the wrath to come depends on any thing that he can do. Consider the being that is offended, the law that is violated, the guilt that is contracted, the circumstances of the offender, and the whole tenor of the gospel.

The being whom we have offended is the infinite Jehovah, *a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he.* To him all our sins are naked, which the eternal holiness of his nature obliges him to view with abhorrence; while his justice, another essential attribute, calls for condign pun-

ishment ; and which could never have been impeached, if he had damned the world of men, as he has the world of apostate angels ; because men have violated a law which is infinitely just and reasonable, the requirements and threatenings of which are perfectly equitable. As a murderer is justly condemned to suffer death, so every transgressor of the divine law becomes as justly liable to be punished with everlasting destruction.

Reflect on the nature of his crime, or the guilt that he hath contracted. We judge, in common, of the nature of an offence, by the dignity of him against whom it is committed. Should we admit this rule here, it will follow, that sin has in it infinite guilt, because committed against an infinite God. Infinite it must be also, seeing an infinite punishment is assigned to the impenitent and unbelieving. As the punishment is, which a most righteous being has determined to inflict, such must be the crime ; otherwise the penalty exceeds the offence, which would be an act of injustice ; this no man dare to insinuate of the Judge of all the earth, who ever has done, and ever will do right. That the punishment to be inflicted on sinners will be infinite, is manifest through the whole scriptures. It is said, *the worm dieth not*, (Mark ix. 44.) *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever*, (Rev. xiv. 11.) *the wicked shall go into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT*, (Matt. xxv. 46.) In the same verse St. Matthew declares, that the *righteous shall go away into life eternal*. It is readily granted, that *life eternal* in this place intends endless felicity, or is to be taken in a strict and proper sense. Why *everlasting punishment*, which is an antithesis to it, should not be taken in a like

sense, that is, to import an unlimited duration, no probable reason can be assigned. We find the evangelist makes use of the same word (*αιωνος*) in the original, to express both the duration of the punishment of the wicked and the happiness of the righteous; thereby informing us, that the *eternity* of the one is commensurate with the *eternity* of the other; meaning that it is without end. Seeing, therefore, that a most just God would never inflict a penalty that exceeds the nature of the crime, and has in this case declared that the finally impenitent and unbelieving shall be punished with an infinite punishment, it follows that the guilt of sin is infinite.

Consider the requirement of the law, even perfect obedience. Nothing less will be accepted as a condition of the divine favour, if we are to enter into life upon this principle.

Bear in mind the circumstances of the sinner: he is in a state of moral impotence; destitute of all moral rectitude; yea, dead in sin.

Thus you find, that an infinite God is offended by the violation of a law, holy, just and good; that the sinner has thereby contracted infinite guilt, and is reduced to a state of absolute poverty and wretchedness; while the law curses every one that continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of it, to do them. What can this poor creature do, in order to work out a salvation from such guilt as this? Can he make atonement for one of the offences that he hath committed? or satisfy divine justice for the violation of the law? Wherewith can the sinner, in such deplorable circumstances, expiate infinite guilt? Men and angels are unequal to the task;

and Jesus Christ alone *MIGHTY TO SAVE, ABLE TO SAVE TO THE UTMOST.*

Surely St. Paul better understood that gospel which he received by the revelation of Jesus Christ, than to address a sinner, poor, and blind, and naked, in such a manner. First tell him that he can do *nothing*, and then exhort him to do *every thing*. Paul was not such a preacher. He assures us that it is *by grace we are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, NOT ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS*, (be they of the law or of the gospel) *but according to his own PURPOSE and GRACE, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

2. Neither can the apostle mean by this exhortation, that salvation from the guilt of sin is wrought out partly by Christ and partly by the sinner; or that the sinner is to do what he can, in expectation that Christ will make up the deficiency. This sentiment is no less contradictory to the whole gospel, than the preceding; for it teaches us, that Christ is not a complete Saviour, and that our own arm in part brings salvation. It reflects grossly on the Redeemer, as though he were not every way able to save; and affords the sinner something to boast of before God. For suppose that part be ever so small, that he can perform, still it is a part; and for so much as he can do, by way of atonement for his sins, he may take the praise to himself.

Besides, what sort of a righteousness, suppose ye, must that be, that is wrought out partly by Christ, and partly by the sinner? The former, an infinitely perfect Being; the latter, a totally pol-

luted creature. It would bear resemblance to Nebuchadnezzar's image, the parts of which it was impossible ever to unite.

Again—The work of salvation was finished by Christ, and he had ascended to the glory of his Father, before these Philippians had heard the gospel. Nothing remained, when Paul went to preach to them, but the special application of its inestimable blessings. Accordingly, he took the greatest pains to persuade them, that all their own righteousness was loss and dung: and however warm he was in his exhortations to obedience, he would always have them to know that salvation was *alone* of Christ.

Farther—The persons to whom the words were immediately spoken, were believers; and at that very time in a state of actual justification. *By him all who BELIEVE are justified from all things.* They could not, therefore, with any propriety be exhorted to do something, by which they *might be justified* before God.

3. Neither are we to suppose, that St. Paul designed by this exhortation to teach these believers, that by virtue of a stock of grace already received, they were to persevere till they should obtain final salvation. This would contradict all those passages of holy scripture, which declare a believer's weakness in himself, and his dependence on Christ, the only head of influence, for *constant* supplies of grace. His having been enabled to believe in the Son of God does not render him self-sufficient. Still, if left to himself, he may fall foully, like David and Peter. It is not in consequence of any degree of grace already received, that the believer shall safely per-

severe to eternal glory ; but by virtue of a vital union to the Lord Jesus Christ, out of whose fulness he is said to receive, and grace for grace. This important and comfortable sentiment is beautifully taught us by our divine Lord, in the metaphor of the vine and its branches. (John xv. 4, 5.) *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches.* Observe, Christ first introduces the simile, and then accommodates it : q. d. It is thus between me and you : I am the vine, to whom ye as branches are united. The branches are united to, and one with the vine ; so are ye united to me, and one with me. The branches, by a full supply of sap from the vine become fruitful : so ye being continually supplied with grace, out of that fulness, which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in me, bear much fruit.

This sentiment is confirmed by numerous passages of scripture. Christ assured his disciples in the same chapter, that *without him they could do nothing.* Without his abiding in them by his Holy Spirit, and their abiding in him by faith, they could do nothing comfortably, successfully, or acceptably. Their consolation is in Christ, and if left by him, they drag on heavily like Pharoah's chariots, when they had lost their wheels. Their successful opposition to the world, the flesh, and the devil, is owing entirely to help from Christ. *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us.* And the acceptance of their persons, and their obedience, is only through Christ. He is the sole medium of access to God,

and of acceptance with him—*wherein he hath made us accepted in the BELOVED.*

But without multiplying quotations, I observe, that the latter part of the text militates against any such exposition of it. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. No exhortation could be better guarded. The apostle, with his usual caution, takes care that a false construction might not be put on his words; and that the people, to whom he writes, might not receive any wrong impressions. Instead of being self-confident, or of thinking that as *believers* they were amply furnished already for the duties and trials of the Christian life, he exhorts them to continue in obedience, *with fear and trembling.* Fear is often brought in by this apostle, as a necessary temper of mind for the Christian, while he abides in the flesh; because he has many enemies. It was expedient that these and that all other believers should be diffident of their own abilities, and fear to trust in themselves. No persons are in so great danger as they who apprehend none, or who look upon themselves sufficient to overcome every enemy. This remark is exemplified in Peter's denial of his Master. Had he entertained this necessary *fear*, it might have kept him from the place of danger. Being suspicious of himself, he would rather have chosen to stay a little behind, than to go among the servants of the high priest.

The believers at Philippi had also reason to *fear*, lest animosities and divisions should take place among them, to the great injury of the cause of Christ; lest they should be beguiled by false

teachers, who were then lying in wait to deceive ; lest they should be overtaken by temptation, or led away by their own corruptions, to sin against the Lord ; and lest they should be found to entertain a fondness for their own righteousness : all which would tend to hinder or mar their course of obedience.

The apostle adds, *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* This sentence is explanatory of the former part of the text, and immediately calculated to unhinge the Philippians from self-confidence : i. e. I do not mean to set you to do something, by which you may be justified, either in *whole* or in *part*, before God ; this is the sole work of Jesus : nor yet would I have you to think, that as believers, and justified persons, you are already furnished with grace, sufficient for all the duties and trials that are before you. Rather, *you are not sufficient of yourselves, to think any thing as of yourselves ; but your sufficiency is of God, who worketh in you to will and to do, those things, that are spiritually good.* The apostle does not say, who *hath wrought* in you, but who now *worketh* in you, as the called according to his purpose.

Here we are plainly taught, that a *will* to choose, and the *ability* to perform that which is good, are of God. The sinner, while in unbelief, is an enemy in his mind by wicked works, and continually under the influence of a principle of enmity against God. He sees no excellency in Christ, no beauty in holiness. The things that suit his depraved taste, are infinitely opposite to the Divine Majesty : if he therefore gratifies himself, he must offend the Deity. In this condition he acts freely,

choosing such things as are adapted to his corrupt mind. And in this manner would he continue to act to the end of life, however shocking the event, if God should not stop him in his career, as he did Saul the persecutor, or convert him, as he did the dying thief. For nothing short of *the exceeding greatness of that power*, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient to alter this depraved heart. And even after the sinner is enabled to believe in the Son of God, such is the law in his members; such the power of indwelling corruption, that the will is frequently embarrassed, and spiritual desires languid. Every Christian knows by experience, that he is too apt to forget his first love, and to drag on heavily from one duty to another. The world and the things thereof tend to divide his heart and affections. At such a time he is sensible what his duty is, and he attends to it; but he is conscious of a sad alteration in the temper of his mind; which he bewails in language like that of David, *My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.* He finds that he cannot quicken himself, nor remove this stupidity under which he groans: were it in his power, it should soon be done. But he feels that it is *God who worketh in him, by his Spirit and grace, to will,* and from the same source is his ability *to do whatever God calls him to.* *I have learned, says St. Paul, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.* But lest the Philippians should think he contradicted the doctrine he had before

taught them, he adds, *I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.* That is, by implication, I can do none of these things without help from Jesus. He tells us in another place, *to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.* From hence we learn, that what St. Paul here writes to the Philippians was a matter of his own experience, as well as a solemn truth.

It may now be asked, If neither of the preceding articles is the sense of the text, what does he mean? I answer,

4. That it appears to me that his design is to stir up the believers at Philippi, to a sacred regard to those duties he had been speaking of in the context; and besides these, to all the duties of the Christian life: or, in other words, as they had always obeyed, not as in his presence only, but much more so in his absence, he exhorts them to continue in their obedience, by studiously observing those things that *accompany* salvation; q. d. as ye have always obeyed, so continue to obey; remembering that *it is God who worketh in you.* While you are careful to attend to the *external* plan of duty that is before you, bear in mind that your sufficiency is of God; and let this be your encouragement, that he *worketh in you,* and that his Spirit is given to help your infirmities.

The immediate reason of this exhortation, and which confirms the above exposition of it, you have in the three verses that follow the text. *Do all things without murmurings and disputings:* meaning all the things that he had mentioned in the context, and that are included in the text; such as, that they *should be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; that nothing*

should be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than themselves; that they should not look every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others; that they should cultivate a mind like that which was in Christ Jesus, i. e. of humility and condescension. Having particularly mentioned these duties, he sums up the whole of Christian practice in this short exhortation, *Work out your own salvation*; and then proceeds to give the reason of it—*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.* Here the apostle tells us, in the most plain terms, why he so warmly exhorted the believing Philippians to obedience. Not that they might recommend themselves to God, and obtain the pardon of their sins, this being a thing impossible by any human endeavours; but that they might be blameless and harmless, as became the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. They were among a people who were in opposition to the gospel, and watched for their fall; the apostle therefore exhorts them to behave in such a manner that these their enemies might have nothing to lay to their charge. This he urges by the consideration, that Christians should *shine as lights in the world.* As God had shined in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ; so it became them to be as lights to others, in all holy conversation and godliness.  *Holding forth the word of life: meaning,*

that the bishops, or ministers of the gospel, who are mentioned in the direction of the epistle, should preach the doctrines of Christ, which are the *words of life*, in plainness and purity; and that both they, and all the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus of a private character, should *bold forth*, or publicly exhibit, the excellency of these doctrines, by a holy and exemplary behaviour; *shewing out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom*. Such a conduct would have given the apostle occasion to *rejoice in the day of Christ*, and have made manifest that he had *not run in vain, neither laboured in vain*.

It being now apparent, from what has been delivered, that the text is an address to believers, urging them to continue in their obedience, I pass to consider,

III. That such obedience is indispensably necessary. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.* (Tit. iii. 8.) And in verse 14th of the same chapter, the apostle adds, *And let ours also learn to maintain good works for NECESSARY USES, that they be not UNFRUITFUL.*

Let it be premised, that the plan of a believer's obedience is very extensive. He is bound to obey every moral precept, to imitate every divine example, and to submit to all Christ's new commandments. This is manifest in the commission Christ gave to his disciples—*teaching them to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU*. This is a part of the gospel ministry, and to be

frequently insisted on ; yea, as often as the gospel is preached, it should be urged, that they who have believed in God should carefully *observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded ;* which is necessary,

1. To evidence their faith in him. *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works : shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my FAITH BY MY WORKS. Thou believest that there is one God ; thou doest well : the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD ?* A vain man indeed is he, who pretends to be a believer in Christ, but at the same time has no regard to practical godliness. The faith of God's elect is a principle of life and action. And every man who is brought to believe the important doctrines of Christianity, will also be influenced to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world.* This, says St. Paul, that very *grace that bringeth salvation teacheth.* It is by their fruit we are to know them : for they shew their faith by their works ; living faith being invariably an influential principle. It may therefore be concluded, with the greatest propriety, that all who profess to have faith, and have not works, deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them : in all such instances faith lacks its external evidence.

2. Obedience is an evidence of love to God. *He that hath my commandments, saith Christ, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. If any man love me, he will keep my words.* He that loveth Christ, will be inquisitive to know and anxious to do his will. There is no incentive so powerful as love ;

that obedience that springs from it is both cheerful and extensive. A servant may be awed by fear, or induced by the promise of a reward, to obey his master; but there is a great difference between such obedience and that which springs from love. In the former case, he has no true satisfaction in obeying, but wishes his task was ended; in the latter, there is real pleasure. The servant loves his master, and therefore he loves to please him: his obedience is no task or drudgery, for his heart is in it; and while he pleases his master, he gratifies himself. It is thus with believers: the love they have to the Lord Jesus Christ makes them willing to do and suffer his will; and where this evidence is wanting, love should be suspected.

3. Obedience is necessary on account of the men of the world. Of this the apostle speaks in the context; and exhortations of the same import are numerous in the word of God; such is the following: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* These words were immediately spoken to the disciples, of whom all manner of evil was falsely said. Christ exhorts them to free themselves from these unjust reflections, by a holy and unblameable conduct; and so to make it evident, that the doctrines they preached were in no sense unfriendly to morality: for while they preached the gospel, and were careful to maintain good works, they left no room for any to insinuate that they made void the law; on the contrary, their good example might have a tendency to lead their very enemies to think favourably of the sentiments they taught, seeing that

under their influence their practice was unblameable. On the same account, modern Christians should be careful to regulate their conduct by the most excellent maxims of Jesus Christ : thus will they *adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour* ; and they who are of the contrary part will be ashamed, *having no evil thing to say of them.*

4. Christ taught his disciples the necessity of obedience, that God might be glorified. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples.* The glory of God should be a leading point with the Christian ; he should keep it in view as the ultimate end of all his actions, and readily do or suffer any thing by which God may be glorified. And seeing this end is answered, by having his fruit unto holiness, how should the consideration of it excite him to *give all diligence, to add to his faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness ; and to brotherly-kindness, charity.* And at the same time that God is glorified, by his bearing much fruit, he appears to be a disciple indeed. *So shall ye be my disciples,* i. e. so shall it be made manifest : for their fruitfulness does not “ constitute them disciples, but makes it appear that they are so ; just as good fruit does not make the tree good (the tree is first good, and therefore it brings forth good fruit) but shews it to be good.” So men are known to be the real followers of Jesus Christ, by abounding in the fruits of righteousness.

5. Though the plan of redemption was so laid, that the sinner should be justified through the blood of Jesus, without the deeds of the law ; the

Lord had respect unto obedience, and effectually secured it. To this men are *chosen, redeemed, and called.*

(1.) They were chosen to holiness *here*, as much as to happiness *hereafter*. That very purpose of the Eternal Mind that appointed them to obtain salvation, did also determine that they should be an obedient people. *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* With which agree the following words: *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.* In these passages it is evident beyond a reasonable contradiction, that the heirs of promise are chosen to holiness here, or to a life of obedience to their Divine Master: it is therefore necessary.

*Corollary.* How evidently do they misrepresent the doctrine of election, who say, "If we are elected we may live as we please," seeing the elect are appointed to be a *holy people.*

(2.) It was one great design of Christ in redemption, that the redeemed by his blood should be holy. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

(3.) For the same purpose they are effectually called by the Spirit of God. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* And it is the character of those who are openly in Christ by conversion, that they are *new creatures: old things pass away, and behold, all things become new.*

Thus we see that God the Father appointed his people to holiness; Jesus Christ redeemed them, that they might be holy; and they are called unto holiness by the Divine Spirit: they are a *peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

6. Let it be farther observed, that the Lord hath wisely connected the Christian's growth in grace, and his consolation, with his obedience. If he desires to enjoy, as doubtless he does, the consolation that there is in Christ, then he must walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. This is the divinely appointed method of nearness to God, and in which only the believer can expect to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; hence such sacred promises as the following: *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. Seek, and ye shall find.* And Christ said unto his disciples, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* Here he promises, as in many other passages, that he would be with and bless those who wait upon him, or seek him in the ways which he hath appointed; and which the faithful in Christ Jesus have often experienced: for *the Lord meeteth him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember him in his ways.* Neither hath he ever said to the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye me in vain.* It is therefore necessary that the Christian be diligent in his course of obedience, if he would enjoy the comforts of the gospel.

7. The glory to be revealed is promised only to such as shall persevere to the end. *He that*

*shall endure to the end shall be saved.* This is the grand encouragement to believers, under manifold temptations. Their trials shall have an end; and then such as shall have finally persevered shall receive a crown of life. Not that we are to suppose that our perseverance in duty gives a right to eternal life; no; this is founded on the Redeemer's obedience and sufferings: but it characterizes those who are the heirs of this inheritance. There are many, who once made a very showy profession, and did run well for a time; but having no root in themselves, endured for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arose because of the word, they were offended. Thus their proper character was discovered. Of such it may be said, *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* On the contrary, such as persevere to the end answer the character given to those who shall forever inherit the promises; and the word is plain, that none but such shall be saved. It therefore becomes all men professing godliness, to be *diligent, that they may be found of Christ in peace, without spot, and blameless.* For in the present circumstances, there are many things that unite to excite the Christian's fear. He has a law in his members, a tempting devil, and an alluring world; three very potent adversaries. It becomes him continually to watch and pray, lest he should fall from his own steadfastness.

8. In fine, the love of Christ lays the believer under a most agreeable necessity to continue in his obedience. No obligation more binding than

this. The believer reflects on that super-eminent expression of the love of God, in giving his own Son to die for sinners. He thinks with wonder and affection of the Saviour's grace and compassion, that he should so readily become a sacrifice for sins; and with an apostle he exclaims, *Herein is love; not that we loved him, but that he loved us. God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!* He saves from hell, from everlasting misery, to the eternal fruition of himself in glory! In this Redeemer, says the Christian, I see a ground of hope for me, and trust that I have been enabled to fly to him as the only refuge. To him I dedicate my all. I have nothing but I would freely give him. O that he would make my duty plain, and help me to discharge it! I would gladly make haste, and delay not to keep his commandments; seeing this is the only way I have to express my love to him. Thus the love of Christ constraineth him.

I pass to some suitable improvement.

1. It appears repugnant to the sense of this text, to insist upon it as an exhortation to unbelievers. The same may be said of a long catalogue of sacred passages, which have been frequently crowded into addresses to the unregenerate, in order to excite them to do their part, with a promise that Christ will make up the deficiency: a mistake that might have been prevented by a proper attention to such texts, with their connexion. To whom were they spoken? and with what design? are questions necessary to be answered, if we would understand the meaning of the inspired writers; but detached passages of scripture, without respect to their connexion and

design, are introduced to prove what every man pleaseth. Should you attend to the above maxim, in reading the Bible, I am persuaded you would think differently of many passages in it. St. Paul's words to the Ephesians, *Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, are repeatedly urged as an exhortation to unbelievers; but it is plain that the apostle here writes to believers: to such the epistle is directed, and to such only are its contents in general applicable; and in the exhortation itself he carefully distinguishes between believers and unbelievers. The persons addressed are such as *sleep*. Real Christians are too apt to *sleep*, as do others. It is said of the wise, as well as of the foolish virgins, *they slumbered and slept*. These he calls upon to *awake, and arise from the dead*; the *dead*, as distinguished from those who *sleep*. By this phrase the condition of unbelievers is expressed: they are *dead* in trespasses and sins. In many other instances, it would be easy to shew, from their connexion, that they are misapplied; but this subject is too copious for the improvement of a discourse.

It may now be asked, whether unbelievers are not to be addressed? Doubtless they are. The gospel is to be preached *to every creature*, (Mark xvi. 15.) for faith comes by hearing. What is it to preach the gospel? is the grand inquiry. Does it consist in assuring sinners, "that Christ has finished his part of redemption, and that now what remains on their part is to *comply* with the *terms and conditions* of the new covenant?" Here the sinner will be naturally led to inquire, if he has any concern about the matter, what are

these *conditions*? Perhaps it will be said, faith and repentance. He may still ask, in what sense are these *conditions*? An Arminian will tell him, that they are so in a *proper sense*. That his *compliance* with these will give him a *right* to spiritual blessings. For the *conditions* of a covenant, are those parts of it, that are to be performed by the party, or parties covenanting, in order that he or they may have a *right* to the thing covenanted for. Does not this representation of the gospel manifestly destroy the grace of it? For if its blessings are only conferred on such as have a *right* to them, by virtue of their own *compliance* with certain *conditions*, where is grace? If you employ a labourer, he agrees on his part to work so many hours in a day; and you on your part agree to give him such a sum of money. Is it an act of *grace*, or is it not rather an act of *justice* in you, to fulfil the condition on your part, when he has fulfilled his? So, if the blessings of the gospel are bestowed *conditionally*, it follows, that he who has performed the *conditions* may *demand* them. How will this correspond with being *saved and called, not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace*? It may be said, that it is grace in God to confer such immensely rich blessings, on such *easy terms* as faith and repentance. But according to these sentiments, the way to heaven by the gospel is as hard to fallen man as by the law, because the *terms* (as they are called) are equally impossible to him, by means of his universal depravity. Hence said our Lord to the Jews, *No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him*. And the apostles teach us that faith is the *gift of God*: and

that Christ *is exalted to give repentance*. By these expressions they lead us to understand that faith and repentance are as much blessings of the new covenant as remission of sins, and as freely given. Surely the *blessings* of the covenant are distinct from the *conditions* of it.

That faith and repentance are indispensably necessary, or that the sinner, agreeably to the economy of redemption, cannot be saved without them, is not to be contradicted. This is the divine constitution. Faith and repentance are connected with eternal life, and make up a great part of the gospel ministry: but their being *necessary* by no means supposes that they are *conditions*, in the sense above explained; for effectual calling, pardon of sin, justification, and sanctification, are all *necessary*; therefore, upon the same principle, they are all *conditions*.

But however consistent the men of these sentiments are with themselves, such as profess to befriend the pure doctrines of grace appear to be guilty of a glaring contradiction in the use of this mode of expression; which has often been the subject of severe animadversion, in order to shew that their system of doctrines can never be reconciled. At one time, say some, we are told that all men are naturally at enmity with God, and dead in sin; that they, as such, are morally incapable of doing any thing toward their own recovery to the divine favour; that faith is of the operation of God; that Christ has finished salvation; that it is altogether of grace; and that the application of its blessings is made to the soul by the Spirit of God. At another time the same persons tell us, that faith and repentance are the

*conditions* of the new covenant ; and that in order to have a *right* to the blessings, we must *comply* with these. Here is a contrast. Man dead in sin can *do nothing* toward his own recovery ; yet man dead in sin must *comply* with *terms* and *conditions*, in order to his being accepted. Faith is the gift of God ; at another time, it is something within the power of man. At one time it is said, Christ hath brought in an everlasting righteousness, which, by a gracious act of God, is imputed to the sinner for justification ; at another time, he must do something to entitle him to the blessings, &c. Thus do some men catch at every inconsistency, with a design to overthrow the doctrines themselves.

It may be said that these phrases are sometimes used in a good sense, viz. that faith and repentance are those things, without which, according to the gospel constitution, a sinner cannot be saved. This is a truth that must be allowed : but are not the phrases very exceptionable ? Do they not want an immediate explanation, in order to remove or prevent that false notion of the gospel which they are calculated to encourage ? May not the necessity of faith and repentance be insisted on with as much zeal, and much greater propriety, by the use of other expressions ? *The preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.*

The inquiry again returns, how are unbelievers to be addressed ? I answer for myself, that as their conversion is the great point in view, every method should be pursued that seems calculated to accomplish it. Now the sinner is alienated from God, in a state of total depravity ; and as a transgressor of the law, he is every moment

exposed to its curse. He who wishes to be instrumental of the conversion of such an apostate, must first try to convince him of his proper character. The method adopted by the apostles, was, to set before sinners the law of God, in its extent and spirituality, for their conviction; *for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* By the law they become sensible that they are in a state of condemnation; that their own obedience, when compared with that rule of righteousness, is essentially deficient; and under such conviction, are made to cry out like St. Peter's hearers, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Thus *the letter killeth*; i. e. the law: it consigns the sinner over to eternal destruction.

On the other hand, the gospel should be preached to mankind universally. Christ should be exhibited in the dignity of his person and characters; in the greatness of his love; in the infinite virtue of his atonement, as matters of faith. The following is an epitome of the gospel, given by Jesus Christ himself: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* In the same manner his apostles preached. They tell us, that *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*; that *there is redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace*; that *God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Thus, in a variety of instances, they propose the grand encouragement, and set Christ forth, as the precious object of faith and love.

But after the clearest exhibitions of the divine law, the most solemn declarations of the glorious

gospel, the most evangelical discourses concerning the nature and necessity of faith and repentance, and the most proper and pathetic addresses to the consciences of men, which by all means should be made use of, there will be no success attending them, unless the Spirit of the Lord takes of the things of Jesus, and powerfully applies them to the sinner's mind. Paul *planted, and Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase.* But as soon as the truth is brought home to the sinner's conscience, he becomes anxious to flee from the wrath to come. His dangerous condition alarms him ; for he now finds that he is condemned by the law of God, and shut up under an awful load of guilt. And while this conviction of his wretched circumstances excites him to search the scriptures, to attend the preaching of the gospel, and to cry, *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,* he can find no encouragement, unless he is under a great mistake, from any thing but the GOSPEL, which reveals a *fountain open for sin and for uncleanness,* a perfect and an everlasting righteousness, which is brought in by Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. And upon his being enabled to believe in this Divine Redeemer, he sees a ground of hope for him, and rejoices in Christ without confidence in the flesh. Under such a conviction of the truth, and thus inquisitive about the way to Zion, glad should I be to see this and every congregation in New-England. For if a man is not convinced that he is condemned by the law, he will not rejoice that salvation is brought to light by the gospel : if he is not sensible of his want of righteousness, he will not esteem it good news,

that God *justifies the ungodly*. May the Spirit of God convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment !

2. I shall conclude this discourse by observing, that there are two classes of men, whose general conduct is incompatible with their professed sentiments.

(1.) The first of these are such as plead warmly for the dignity of man in his present state, his noble powers and capacities, and the influence of his obedience in recommending him to the Deity ; but at the same time are guilty of the most sordid vices. They swear on every trifling occasion, by the awful name of God ; indulge themselves in drunkenness, uncleanness, &c. Thus, while they try to persuade us of the dignity of man, their own conduct, which is much more persuasive, leads us to conclude, or confirms us in the conclusion, that he is an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works. No person can degrade them, so much as they degrade themselves.

(2.) The second sort are they, who are very sound in the faith, and very careless in their lives and conversations. You will scarcely be able to discover a single error in their creed ; but you may easily find thousands in their practice. Of this class, there are many professors of Christianity, who are enemies to the cross of Christ. *They profess that they know God ; but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* Mark these men, ye who are the real disciples of an ascended Redeemer, and have no fellowship with them, that they may be ashamed. And be ever careful to continue in

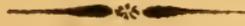
your obedience : thus will you shew your faith by your works.

*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ : to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

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## SERMON V.\*

YOUNG PEOPLE CALLED UPON TO CONSIDER, THAT FOR THEIR CONDUCT HERE THEY MUST BE ACCOUNTABLE HEREAFTER, AT THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST.



ECCLESIASTES, xi. 9.

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

THE youth make a great part of our stated worshipping assemblies, are the flower of a community, and on them we naturally place our expectations of future supplies in the Church and in the State. If they shew an early regard to religion, and behave with duty and affection to their parents, they become the support and comfort of their age; and they think themselves amply compensated for all that care and cost with which they have conducted them through their state of infancy and childhood to youth. But when they despise reproof, and betake themselves to vicious courses, the parents sink under discouragement, and fear their ruin both of soul and body. The joy of the parents on the one hand, and their grief on the other, can only be fully known to

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them, who sustain the affectionate relation. Parental affection is of a most delicate nature ; much of which appears in the conduct of Jacob, when he received the pleasing but unexpected tidings, that Joseph was yet alive. Though enervated with age and infirmity, he said, " It is enough : I will go and see him before I die." And when Joseph presented himself to him, he cried, " Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

The same affection influenced David, when the troops marched in pursuit of Absalom, and those who had joined him in the conspiracy. A fear that they would not treat his son with that tenderness he desired, made him anxious to head the army. And when through much persuasion he was prevailed on to abide at home, " he stood by the gate side, and commanded Joab, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." After they had marched, the king remained in painful solicitude about the event. At length Ahimaaz came in haste from the camp, and as he approached the king, he cried, " All is well." His majesty immediately asked, " Is the young man Absalom safe ?" Scarce had Ahimaaz delivered his message, before Cushie appeared also with news from the army, who addressed David with, " Tidings, my lord the king." The king, supremely anxious for the safety of his son, asked as before, " Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is," i. e. dead. Struck with the sorrowful news, he went up into his chamber, and wept :

“and, as he wept, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” Here we have a striking instance of paternal love; the warm affection of a fond father. Absalom’s rebellion did not make David forget that he was yet his son. He could not but be sorely afflicted by his death; hoping that had his life been spared, he would have seen his error, and returned.

Here, ye thoughtless youths, you have a specimen of your parents’ warm affection to you. They are interested in all your conduct; rejoice when you rejoice; and mourn when you mourn. More especially are they solicitous for your eternal salvation; yea, they travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you, provided they themselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Many times have they admonished you, wept over you, and prayed for you, and even now are sending up their silent ejaculations to the throne of grace, that God would speak to your consciences in the following awful address of the wise man: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

It is thought by some, that Solomon designs, in the former part of the text, to teach young men, that there is a degree of cheerfulness which is lawful: but knowing how apt they are to run into extremes, he subjoins this solemn sentence—“know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

But I rather think, as is commonly observed on the passage, that the wise man speaks ironically, and means the reverse of what he says. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth," &c. That is, do as thine evil heart will dictate ; indulge thy lusts and inclinations, if thou darest, in the prospect of a judgment to come.

This figure is not unfrequent in the holy scriptures. The Lord says to rebellious Israel, (Judges x. 14.) "Go and cry unto the gods ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation ;" when it is certain he designed to reprove them for their idolatry, and to show them the absolute impossibility of obtaining help from any but himself. Elijah uses the same mode of expression to the false prophets, (1 Kings, xviii. 27.) "Cry aloud ; for he is a god : either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." The words, taken in this sense, lead us to reflect,

I. On the vices young people too commonly fall into ; and

II. That awful account they are to give hereafter to God the judge of all.

I. The foibles and sins of youth come first under consideration.

1. Young people are too apt to give the preference to their own understanding ; or to imagine that they are better acquainted with men and things than they really are. Hence they are led to treat with indifference, if not with contempt, the advice of their parents, and others who have lived longer in the world than they have. It is an old proverb, that 'young folks

think old folks to be fools.' But who should know the dangers that more immediately belong to the several stages of human life, if they do not, who have passed through them, and made observations as they went along? However, many of both sexes, inattentive to the most seasonable and useful advice of parents and others, seem determined to walk in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes, whatever may be the consequences: and it has often happened, that the consequences have been fatal; for therē is no period of life more dangerous than that of youth. Then the passions are strongest, and the temptations to indulge them almost innumerable; against which they will not be cautioned, if they think they know as well already as any one can inform them. Should the anxious parent embrace a private opportunity of conversing with his child, in order to guard him against evil company and practices; to lay before him the danger of his conduct and connexions, how will his enmity rise, and he think him his enemy because he tells him the truth. And having caught him once alone, he will be careful not to give him, if he can prevent it, a second opportunity. He will make any excuse to get out of the way, when he imagines the old man his father designs to give him a private lecture. Thus many young people, being reproved, harden their necks; and by a course of sinning sear their consciences, and become at length ready to comply with every temptation of Satan.

2. We too often find in youth a prevailing fondness for company; in the choice of which they are determined by their most predominant

passion. They prefer those who think as they do, and pursue the same course of gratification with themselves; and the connexion once formed acquires strength by its continuance. Hence young persons linked in with the sons of vice, find it hard to forsake their company. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." You may form connexions with profane youth much easier than you can break them. I doubt not but there are some in the present assembly, who are ready to testify to the truth of this remark. Alas, the fatal tendency of bad company! "Evil communications corrupt good manners." We have seen the promising youth, the father's favourite, the hope of the family, who was naturally sedate, and averse to atrocious vices; by falling in with a company of young prodigals, led to cast off the restraints of education and conscience, and to commit iniquity with greediness. At first indeed he might discover a certain fear of complying with the temptation; but being prevailed on once, his mind was prepared for the commission of that, or of a greater sin; till at length, getting rid of all tenderness of conscience, and being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, he could indulge every vicious appetite without remorse.

Should I descend to a consideration of the particular evils to which bad company often leads, they would be found to be numerous. Such as,

(1.) Impatience under restraint, however necessary. If youth who are under age fall in with a set of vicious companions, they are never easy but when they are among them. Hence, should

a parent or master attempt to restrain them, they esteem it a very great hardship ; especially if some of their associates are allowed greater liberty than they. The most serious and rational persuasions are insufficient to convince them, that he who restrains them, thereby seeks their advantage. Thus fretting and restless, they wear away the years in which they are obliged to obey. But no sooner are they at an end, than they let loose the reins of lust, and sin without control ; saying, " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Now, says the unhappy prodigal, I will go when I please, and come when I please ; and who shall call me to an account ? And thus setting out in the full career of sensual gratification, he seldom stops, till he has by his voluptuousness and debauchery ruined his character and constitution, and become a vagabond in the world.

Restraint, it must be acknowledged, may be carried to an extreme. Great wisdom is requisite in those who have the care of youth in any capacity, to direct when and how far to restrain, as well as to indulge. It may be of singular use in this matter, to consider their tempers and dispositions, the place in which they live, and the company they seem to prefer. As they have different natural tempers, they should be dealt with in different ways. The maxims that would be good in one case would be bad in another.

(2.) Disobedience to parents is another of those evils which their own refractory tempers, and the baneful influence of bad company, lead them to commit. This is a vice which reason explodes, and revelation condemns. Under the law of Moses, the disobedient to parents were to

be stoned to death.\* In the New Testament, the inspired writers often inculcate the duty of filial obedience; from whence we learn the necessity and importance of it. Disobedience may first exert itself by opposition of heart to a parent's just commands. It may then shew itself by looks and gestures, a frown, or some indecent behaviour, and at length burst forth in the language of contradiction and abuse; not only deny the parent a most reasonable desire, but treat him with unkindness to his face. More especially have some parents met with such treatment, when through age, infirmity or poverty they have become dependent on their children. Unmindful of every favour they have received from them, and the binding obligations they are under to them, their conduct declares that they wish them dead; murmuring from time to time on account of the trouble they occasion, and the expense of their support. Thus they add affliction to the afflicted.

Should there be any children present of a character so abandoned, give me leave to say, you act incompatible with the dictates of reason, and the oracles of God. The aged parent, whom Providence hath cast upon you, and you treat unkindly, hath been the help and support of your infancy. He provided well and carefully for you, when in the most feeble state: he hath reared you from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, and supplied, as far as he was able, your many wants. He hath nursed you many tedious hours in sickness; was always at your service, whether by day or by night. He hath done that

\* See Deut. xxi. 18—22.

for you which no one else would have done. When you knew nothing of it, he hath wept over you, and prayed for you ; anxious for your body, but supremely anxious for your soul. And is this all the return he may expect from you ? Is no regard to be paid to his relation to you, his care over you, his love for you, his multiplied kindnesses ? Have you no heart to pity him in his trouble, who has always borne a part of yours ? Is not his affliction great enough already ? Is he not now in the view of death, and loaded with infirmity and sickness ? Why will you add to his distress ? O base ingratitude ! Think not that God will prosper your undertakings. Rather look for the reward of disobedience ; or that a just God will blast your endeavours. Know thou that for this thing he will bring thee into judgment.

(3.) Profane swearing is another odious vice which young men are too prone to learn from their companions. It is not easy to converse continually with those who scarcely speak a sentence without an oath, and not to learn the shocking language. That this iniquity prevails among us, will not be denied by him who is in the least degree observant as he walks the streets of this metropolis. Your little ones, who have but just learned to speak plain, are heard to utter blasphemy against the God who made them. Whether they learn it at home or abroad is not for me to determine : but certain it is they have learned it. Verily we shall find children, young men and fathers uniting in this heaven-daring practice. But who will appear to vindicate it ? Who will not condemn it ? What is it but making sport with

Omnipotence ; a profanation of that name which is exalted above all blessing and praise ? What can you think of that person, who in an apparent fit of good humour can call on God to damn his own soul, or the soul of his companion ? If we judge of him by this part of his conduct only, we must suppose him to be beside himself ; consequently that he ought to be confined till he can speak and act agreeably to reason. If any of this detestable character have found their way here this evening, they would do well to attend to the solemn declaration of him who cannot lie ; who hath said, that he “ will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

(4.) Gaming is to be placed among those vices, by which the youth are liable to be led away through the influence of evil company. Some follow the gaming table as a diversion, others for a livelihood. The former will be convinced sooner or later that it is attended with many evils ; and the latter that it is an uncertain method of supporting himself or family. It is a consumption of precious time, and tends to introduce neglect of business, dishonesty and want. If a man has a fondness for gaming, it is not a small matter that will keep him at home. The hurry of business, the importunity of customers, and the prospect of an honest support, will not be sufficient to suppress his favourite passion. It must be indulged, come what may. The consequence therefore must be, neglect of business ; which will soon issue in the want of it. For who will employ a man on whom he can place no dependence ? And if the man is without employ, he must soon come to poverty.

If he be a youth who has no interest to support his folly and extravagance, but yet determines to maintain his place in the club, what method think ye will he take? He' must either run in debt without a prospect of ever making payment, which is a species of robbery, or he will be tempted to take that as his own, to which he has no right. Vice will be supported; and one vice is often made the means of maintaining another. In this respect gaming sometimes leads to dishonesty.

If the gamester be a man of fortune, he may maintain his extravagance for a course of years; till, alas! unhappy man, his indolence has grown into a habit, his constitution is destroyed, and his money spent. Then his companions in vice will cast him off. While his money lasted, they could fawn upon him; but as soon as that is gone, he is no more company for them. Thus the man becomes completely wretched in a temporal sense, being despoiled of character, interest and friends. Men of sobriety will have no connexion with him, looking upon him as the cause of his own wretchedness. His old associates now reject him; and his family, if he has one, attribute their poverty to his folly and madness. He lives unbelov- ed, and die when he will, few will mourn his exit; unless it be on account of his immortal spirit: for in his death the world sustains no loss.

(5.) Those persons who are connected with evil company, are frequently led to excessive drinking; a vice which depreciates the character of man, and makes him like a beast. Of this class there are different sorts. Some are private sots. In company they are seldom overtaken; but at home they are often muddled. Others

commit this iniquity in the face of the sun, and care but little who sees them. On the other hand, there are some who fall into this vice only on certain occasions, but do not make a practice of it. The first has no uneasiness about the criminality of his conduct, it being a secret sin; the second has a conscience seared as with a hot iron; and the latter may think themselves excuseable, because they are but seldom guilty of it. But know thou, that for this violation of the divine law, God will bring you into judgment.

3. Another of the foibles of youth is, they think that they shall live yet many years. They seem to take it for granted that they shall live to settle in the world, and to carry into execution some favourite scheme. The evil day of death they put far off; persuading themselves that God will not cut them off in all their bloom and vigour. Hence to such, lectures on mortality seem unseasonable. But on what do they found their expectation of long life? On, it may be, the bare consideration of their age and constitution. But disease and death pay no regard to either. We of this congregation have had recent and repeated proofs of this. Four or five who were the flower of this assembly, have been cut down within a few months of one another. They are gone the way whence they shall not return. If youth, constitution, or friends could have secured them from sickness and death, they had still been of your number. But death came inexorable, and would neither be denied nor delayed. They were obliged to submit to the king of terrors; and are now confined in the land of darkness, waiting the summons of the last trump, the trump

of God. If they were not exempt from the fatal stroke, what reason have any of you to think that you shall escape it, till old age come upon you? The expectation is groundless. You stand as ready victims to the destructive hand of death as any person present, or as those whose death we have not yet ceased to mourn. Indeed it often happens, that the finest flower is soonest plucked: and many times the promising youth, who seemed, according to the course of nature, to have many years to live, falls a sacrifice to the hand of death, while the man who is obliged to say, the days are come in which I have no pleasure, remains. But however obvious this truth is, we find that youth of both sexes are unwilling to admit it.

4. Hence they lay schemes for many years to come. Determine, it may be, to attend with uncommon diligence and activity to business in the younger part of life, in order to acquire a competency; upon which they propose to step aside from noise and hurry, and to enjoy the fruit of their industry. The plan is laid, and they enter on its execution with sanguine prospects. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways. We have seen the amiable youth launch forth into trade, with every possible encouragement, and proceed for a time in high spirits, flushed with repeated successes; but just as his hopes were greatest, death stepped in, and forever stopped the process: as if on purpose to convince survivors of this too prevalent mistake. Or if life was spared, and he permitted to carry on his designs with growing advantage, he hath never known when he had a competency;

or when he might drop his eager pursuit of earthly things, saying, I have enough. For the love of money in common increases as fast as a man's interest, let that grow as fast as it will. Hence it is that some old men, who have one foot in the grave already, are as anxious about adding to their estates as ever, though they possess thousands. The truth of the matter is, that there is no created object calculated to satisfy the vast desires of an immortal mind. The poor man thinks he shall be happy, if he may but acquire riches : and many rich men have found themselves less happy upon becoming opulent, than they were when they had but half their present estates. Riches do really spoil some men's felicity. If they keep their interest in their own hands, they fear that thieves will break through and steal. And if they think of putting it out to use, they suspect the security ; and conjecture that the man may fail, and they lose all. And verily a man had need to hold fast, whose life consisteth in the abundance of the things that he possesseth ; for riches are extremely slippery : they often make themselves wings and fly away as an eagle towards heaven. But allowing that a man retains his estate, death will finally overtake him ; then he must leave it to another, but whether a wise man or a fool he cannot tell. These are facts which will not be controverted ; yet how many are pleased with the delusive prospect of worldly happiness ; but none more so than the youth. Consequently they look upon

5. Religion in a disagreeable point of light, as being incompatible with their pursuits and gratifications. Religion indeed is a sacred thing, which can never have fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness ; one of its first lessons is, “ Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me.” Without which no man can be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is a hard saying to unregenerate men, who receive not the things of the Spirit of God. They imagine that the life of a Christian is a constant scene of gloominess ; that on earth he is continually obliged to do penance, in order that he may finally be admitted to heaven : therefore that all his happiness is future : so ignorant are unbelievers of the consolation that there is in Christ. Hence they say unto God, “ Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” Yet it deserves to be observed here, that when threatening sickness seizes these despisers of things that are good, and death appears nigh, they, like Balaam, cry out, “ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his ” They who, through the enmity of their carnal hearts, set at nought a crucified Saviour, and trampled on his glorious gospel while in health, no sooner apprehend dissolution at hand, than they wish to be in the condition of that man of God, whom probably they had often ridiculed. It is said, that when godly Ambrose was dying, there happened to be present two abandoned rakes. The good man, knowing in whom he believed, rejoiced in the prospect of death, because he should be with Christ, which to him was infinitely better than to abide in the world. Upon this, one of them turned to his companion, and said, ‘ O that I could live with you, but that I could die with Ambrose !’ What say ye, young men ; in like circumstances would you not choose as he did ? Has he not spoken the

language of your hearts? I doubt not but he has. You would fain live in sin, yet die in the Lord, and go to heaven. But know ye that the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God!

6. Against this solemn consideration you may probably be hardened by infidelity; which is dishonourary to God, destructive of virtue, the parent of vice, and damning to men. Where is the country, where the city, in which may not be found without much inquiry, the men, who, though they profess to credit that prime article of faith, the existence of a Supreme Being, contemn that glorious revelation, which, in kindness to a world enveloped in sin and blindness, he hath vouchsafed to give them? Such there are, no doubt, among us, who read the holy scriptures for no other purpose than to collect what they are pleased to call contradictions; which, together with their mysterious truths, they bring forth from time to time, on purpose to shew the absurdity of the Christian revelation. Upon this account they fain would be called men of sense. But their conduct rather discovers the badness of their hearts, and reflects not a little on their understanding. "He who continues a deist in a land enlightened by the gospel, must be wanting in goodness or reason; must be either criminal or dull. None therefore can be more mistaken than they that profess deism for the credit of superior understanding, or for the sake of exercising a more pure and perfect virtue."\*

But shocking as the cause of infidelity may seem to a sober mind, and subversive of morality,

\* Dr. Young's Centaur, page 28.

it meets with great encouragement: it owes its origin to Satan, and receives continual aid from the corrupt hearts of men. None are more liable to be fatally injured by it than our young men; who, without much difficulty, may be persuaded that the doctrines of Christianity are absurd, and its maxims for the regulation of life too severe. This persuasion will be the more easily admitted, because it so exactly coincides with the native and total corruption of their hearts. "For the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God." And the more vehement their desires of sensual gratifications are, the more readily will they receive every thing against revealed religion, that has the least appearance of argument; because, having arrived so far as to think it a cunningly devised fable, they will have greater liberty to indulge their appetites. But only suppose Christianity should be true—then the infidel will be found among them who make God a liar, by not believing the record he hath given of his Son. To such it will be a fearful thing to fall into his hands!

Let us for a few minutes suppose, what a Christian will by no means allow, viz. That Christianity is doubtful; even then his condition is far preferable to that of a deist. For to him who really believes the gospel of Christ, there is a tranquillity of soul, a peace of mind from time to time, which passeth all understanding; which peace ariseth from Christ alone, the author of his religion. Besides this peace, the doctrines of Christianity are happily calculated to support him, and do actually support him, under the many trials he meets with in this vale of tears.

They have also a powerful influence on his practice, not only teaching, but inclining him to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. And when the solemn hour of death arrives, and he stands on the threshold of another world, he may rejoice in the glorious prospect which it affords him of an immortal happiness. In these respects Christianity is of eminent service, though it should fail him in another state. It carries him through life well, and supports him till he has passed the valley of the shadow of death. Should it be a delusion, it is a very pleasing one. The deist has not these supports in life and death. And when the Christian shall meet him in another state, he will stand as fair a chance as he, if they are to be happy or miserable there, according to their behaviour in this life, without regard to the death of Christ; for faith in the religion of Jesus, makes the Christian virtuous in his conduct. But shift the scene; and suppose that Christianity will then be found a reality; a scheme contrived by Infinite Wisdom, and revealed to men for the salvation of their souls; where, my hearers, will the deist, where the sons of vice appear, “who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?” An answer to this question is given in the following tremendous sentence,

II. “But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Meaning at that day when he will judge the world in righteousness. At which period, the secrets of all hearts will be revealed.

That there will be a future reckoning, or that man is an accountable being, is a doctrine both

of reason and revelation. Reason gives her testimony to the awful truth. For that there is a God we know ; “ the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy works.” “ The invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which he hath made.”

We cannot behold this astonishing universe, vast and complicated, the infinitely various parts of which do so exactly coincide to subserve one grand end, even the good of the whole, without being fully persuaded that there is a God, though no eye hath seen him. And as there is a God, he must be holy, just and good ; a friend to virtue, and an enemy to vice ; who takes cognizance of the actions of men, in order to punish or reward. If so, how shall we reconcile his conduct with this part of his adorable character ? We see that all things come alike to all in the present state ; or that there is an apparent unequal distribution of things in this world. It is no uncommon event for the wicked, who live in sin, and trample on the laws of equity, truth and justice, to have all and abound. Their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart can wish. While the man of real virtue, who lives devoted to God, and inoffensive to mankind, suffers hunger, cold and nakedness. This truth is indisputable. How then shall we solve that difficulty which results from it ? In what does God discover his love of virtue, and his hatred of vice, when the wicked live in affluence, and the righteous are reduced to want ? A solution of this difficulty can only be found in the doctrine of a future state ; in which human actions will be fully weighed, and rewards

and punishments most righteously distributed. Then the happiness of the wicked will come to an end, and his complete misery commence; but the good man will receive his good things.

But the Holy Bible, that blessed book of God, by which the deist is often plagued, fearing lest, after all his attempts to invalidate its truth, it should be found divine; I say, that glorious volume in many places assures us, that God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man (Christ Jesus) whom he hath ordained." Both the Old and New Testament declare this. In the text you are solemnly called upon to consider, that for all your conduct here, God will bring you into judgment; a plain and moving account of which solemn scene you have Mat. xxv. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c. And these shall go away into *everlasting punishment* ; but the righteous into *life eternal*.” Solemn description this is indeed, of the last great day ! He who admits the truth of revelation will tremble while he reads it. “ It shall come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” And “ the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and the trump of God :” then “ all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Thus the scriptures not only assure us that there will be a day of final retribution, but acquaint us with many of its circumstances. That it will come, is certain ; but when, no man knoweth, no, not the angels which are in heaven. It may be in a few days, or hours ; for it shall come like a thief in the night, i. e. suddenly and unexpectedly. Then Jesus Christ, to whom God the Father hath committed all judgment, will appear enthroned, clothed with glory and honour, surrounded with the whole hierarchy of heaven, and all the world of mankind standing before him to receive their decisive sentence. This vast congregation will then be divided into two classes ; the sheep and the goats, or the righteous and the wicked. The former will lift up their heads with joy, having washed their robes and made

them white in the blood of the Lamb, or in consequence of their being clothed upon with the spotless, complete and everlasting righteousness of Christ. The latter, amongst whom are the self-righteous and the profane, shall stand condemned, with horror in their appearance, and the keenest anguish in their hearts; wishing that they had never been born, and calling for rocks to fall on them, and for mountains to cover them from the wrath of him who sitteth on the throne. Then, ye sons of vice, the debauchee, the voluptuary, the blasphemer of the Lord of hosts, the infidel, the disobedient to parents, the night-ramblers, the spendthrifts, with all those who have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Then will they find no place for repentance, but remain forever under the wrath of an offended Deity, and the gnawings of a guilty conscience, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never can be quenched! Who may abide the day of his coming? who shall stand when he appeareth? or whither shall any flee from his presence? for his eyes are like a flame of fire!

Before I dismiss you, give me leave to take notice of some of those reflections which the subject naturally suggests.

1. The youth of both sexes are reminded in the preceding discourse of the vices they are prone to fall into; against which they are cautioned in most solemn language. How far you who are present have been described, or what part of the subject more immediately belongs to

any of you, God and your own consciences know. Far be it from me to charge you indiscriminately with the sins that have been mentioned. I mean only to accuse the guilty, or to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If the vices which have been exploded this evening are not applicable to any of you, you will not think that you were pointed at. But should any of you be guilty, the language of conscience will be like that of Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." And happy Boston, if not one prodigal, one voluptuary, one young man or young woman who are breaking a parent's heart, could be found amidst this numerous concourse of blooming youth. But there is reason to fear that there are many such present. Who you are, God knows, your own souls know, and when you shall be arraigned at the judgment-seat of Christ, the world shall know. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; &c.—but know thou that for all thine iniquities God will bring thee into judgment. Solemn consideration! May it have its due weight. When the devil, your corrupt hearts, and your vicious companions tempt you to sin, let that awful sentence be at hand—God will bring you into judgment. And if this event should take place to-night, to-morrow, how will you appear? What plea will you be able to make in your own vindication? Are you not dead in trespasses and sins; enemies to God in your minds by wicked works? Have you not hardened your necks, and many times despised reproof? Are you not in a state of unbelief, without God, and without Christ in the world? If so, it had been better for you that you had died in embryo, than in this condition

to appear before "God the Judge of all:" the consequence of which will be everlasting misery.

2. To a number of you, these considerations have been so far influential, as to alarm your consciences, and lead you to ask, "What shall we do to be saved?" This inquiry is of the last importance, seeing you have ruined and destroyed yourselves. You came into the world sinners, and have grown up under the influence of a heart of enmity against God; and had you broken the divine law but once, for that one transgression Jehovah might have condemned you most righteously. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." What an awful condemnation then, must every sinner be exposed to, whose iniquities have risen to the clouds! If you are convinced of this by the Spirit of God, no wonder that you are made to cry out in bitterness of soul, "A wounded spirit who can bear?" But bear it you must, both here and hereafter, if you are not relieved by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." His righteousness is complete, his blood infinitely efficacious: he justifies from all things, from which you could never be justified by the law of Moses. This is the grand truth of the word of God, which being really believed, gives peace to sin-burdened souls. They may try many things to heal the wounds of conscience, but all will fail, till they are brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Search the scriptures, ye heavy laden sinners, the best book in the world for persons in your condition; and pray God, if perhaps the

thoughts of your hearts may be forgiven you. To this you may be encouraged by the consideration of the fulness and sufficiency of Christ; the divine character, "gracious and merciful;" and that Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

3. Though Solomon addresses himself particularly to youth, yet the latter part of the text may with equal propriety be applied to you, who are farther advanced in life. God will most surely bring you into judgment. You have lived many years already, which are gone forever. Consequently you are not far from death. In what condition are you? Have you ever been translated out of darkness into marvellous light? or, do you still remain alienated from the life and love of God? It is high time to determine this interesting question; for the graves are ready for you, and when a few days, perhaps a few hours are come, you shall go the way, whence you shall not return. Then your condition will be unalterably fixed. For in hell there will be no redemption, no gleam of hope. Look round, ye parents, and behold many of your children supremely anxious about their eternal salvation, while you, who ought to go before them in every thing commendable and praise-worthy, are entirely secure in sin, on the very brink of everlasting ruin.

I shall conclude with an address to the young men, at whose request we now appear in the house of God.

My dear young friends, whom I view as the fruit of my ministry, my joy and crown, you will not think hard that I have taken up so much of your time in attempting to expose the folly

and misery of profligate youth. Perhaps a discourse of this nature may be more generally useful, than had it been wholly confined to you; the bare possibility of which, I doubt not, will reconcile you to the manner, in which you have been addressed this evening. Such were some of you; but you profess to have been washed, to have been justified, to have been sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; and to glory only in the cross of Christ. The single consideration of being early called, or brought to an experimental acquaintance with the gospel in the prime of life, lays you under additional obligations to love God, and live to his honour. At the same time you ought to remember, that it is a most dangerous period. Also keep in mind, that a profession of Christianity, without Christ in you the hope of glory, will do you no service. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Hence the necessity of frequent, solemn self-examination, that ye may know whether you are in the faith, and whether Jesus Christ is in you.

Many eyes are upon you; and some may say that your goodness will be like the morning cloud, and early dew, which soon goeth away: that so many of you have at this time professed religion, in conformity to one another: that one does it because another does; and that a little time will discover it. It may be so; but God forbid it should. The worst will be to yourselves. It is a truth, that in all times of revival of religion, there have been some deceivers; some who finally turned apostates. And though I have no sus-

picion of any one of you in particular, I fear for you, because you carry about with you a body of sin, have warm passions, and are surrounded with numberless temptations. Yet I hope better things, than that you, who have set your hands to the plough, will ever look back. Great has been, and still is our satisfaction in you. And it will continue, yea, increase, provided you hold out to the end. Guard against self-confidence; and remember that your standing is on Christ, out of whose fulness you must receive, and grace for grace. For as the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in him. And by virtue of constant supplies of grace from Christ, your path will be like that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Carefully attend to all the duties of the Christian life. Make much use of the living oracles; neglect not the religion of your closets, neither forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. Each of you should studiously endeavour to promote the religious society, in which you are at present happily united. If rightly conducted, by prayer, reading, and free conversation on matters of experience, it may prove of special advantage to you. Watch over one another with all diligence, and reprove, if necessary, with meekness and love. Opposition you are to expect in your Christian course; for "he that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Endeavour to set your faces like a flint; to be stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. In due time you shall reap, if you faint not. Verily, true re-

ligion is accompanied with present peace and consolation. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Thus will you, having believed in the Son of God in a proper sense, rejoice in your youth; your hearts will cheer you in the days of your youth: for "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Go on and prosper, and the Lord be with you. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified."

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## S E R M O N VI.\*

APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

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### 1 CORINTHIANS, i. 21.

*For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

THE best method, in my judgment, of determining with accuracy, how far the light of nature is sufficient to lead mankind to the knowledge of the true God and their duty to him, is, to attend to the condition of the heathen world: not of the most barbarous and ignorant, but of the inhabitants of Greece and Rome, at the periods when they were most celebrated for learning and refinement. Even then they were gross idolaters; and many of their sentiments and practices were shocking to decency and common sense. †

\* This and the two following Sermons were delivered in November, 1790.

† “The sports of the gladiators, unnatural lusts, the licentiousness of divorce, the exposing of infants and slaves, the procuring abortions, the public establishment of stews; all subsisted at Rome, and not one of them was condemned, or hinted at in Tully’s offices. The most indecent revelling, drunkenness, and lewdness were practised at the feasts of Bacchus, Ceres, and Cybele; and their greatest philosophers never remonstrated against it.

“The heathen philosophers, though they have advanced fine sayings and sublime precepts, in some points of morality, have grossly failed in others; such as the toleration or encouragement of revenge, slavery, unnatural lust, fornication, suicide, &c. For ex-

Whence it appears, that with all their wisdom and learning, they quite mistook the nature of God and religion : hence divine revelation became absolutely necessary. “ For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God.” The meaning is, that although “ the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, the world knew him not ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”

It has been the method of the infinite God, both before and since the fall, to leave mankind to act out their own characters, and not to interpose until the necessity of his interposition became evident. Thus it was in the case of our first parents : he could have prevented their apostasy, but did not. After they had sinned, and were distressed with conscious guilt, he revealed to them

ample : Plato expressly allowed of excessive drinking at the festivals of Bacchus, Maximus Tyrius forbid to pray, &c.

“ Aristotle and Plato both direct that means should be used to prevent weak children being brought up. Cato commends a young man for frequenting the stews. Cicero expressly speaks of fornication as a thing never found fault with. Plato recommends a community of women, and advises that soldiers should not be restrained from sensual indulgence, even the most unnatural species of it. Xenophon relates, without any marks of reprobation, that unnatural lust was encouraged by the laws of several Grecian states. Solon, their great lawgiver, forbid it only to slaves. Diogenes inculcated, and openly practised the most brutal lust. Zeno and Cato both killed themselves.”

*Bishop of Carlisle's reflections on the life and character of Christ,—Appendix.*

Jesus Christ, under the idea of the seed of the woman. And when the world was overspread with sin and ignorance, and by wisdom knew him not, having had the fairest trial, he was pleased, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. Let us

I. Account for Paul's use of this expression, "the foolishness of preaching."

II. Ascertain what kind of preaching he had in view.

III. Prove that God hath been pleased to put the most distinguished honour on it, by making it the means of saving them that believe.

I. Our first inquiry is, why does the apostle use the expression, "foolishness of preaching?"

We are confident, my brethren, he does not speak in his own, but in borrowed language. He must have been a fool indeed, to have engaged in a service which he knew would reproach his own understanding. Rather he has respect to the common opinion of the Greeks, who are said to "seek after wisdom;" meaning, the wisdom of this world. "We preach Christ crucified," says this apostle, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." This single passage accounts for Paul's use of the expression. The preaching of Christ crucified was foolishness to the learned, unregenerate Greeks.

II. We pass to consider what kind of preaching it was, the apostle had respect to.

There are certain sentiments that the world can hear with patience and approbation: there

are others to which the hearts of natural men rise in opposition.

1. Few, if any, object to moral subjects, because it is a just and general opinion, that all men ought to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Neither Jews nor Greeks would take offence at this kind of preaching, nor even men of vicious characters, unless the preacher should happen to fix on the vices of some of his friends, and censure them with severity : in that case resentment would naturally be excited, and he might expect to be charged with being too pointed or personal in the pulpit, especially if he had previously known on whom the reproof would fall.

In such circumstances, what shall a preacher do ? Shall he cease to expose vice, because some of his friends are vicious ? God forbid ! Far better will it be for him to lose the attachment of the best parishioner he has, and to make a sacrifice of his whole temporal interest, than to be unfaithful to his God, to his conscience, and to the people of his charge. The way for mankind to secure their feelings from injury on such occasions, is for them to be virtuous. But if they will violate the laws of God, and injure society by their wicked examples, they must bear the reproach.

No prudent man will introduce personal matters into the pulpit ; nor will an honest man be afraid of commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. However, as moral subjects are generally approved, because agreeable to the reason and nature of things, he has but little to fear on this head, except he should be too evangelical in his manner of treat-

ing them ; for the law may be handled evangelically, and the gospel may be preached legally.

2. We may also insist freely on the Christian tempers without giving offence ; because, like moral subjects, they command respect from mankind in general, who readily acknowledge that all men ought to be meek, patient, charitable, ready to forgive, &c. And it is confessed that these are very important subjects, and should frequently be brought into public view, as evidences of the truth of personal religion ; for, “ if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

3. We may also pass without reproach, perhaps, if we touch lightly on the sinfulness of mankind, and assure them, if they do what they can, God will co-operate with their endeavours, and grant them salvation. Such a representation of things is flattering to the pride of man, because it extenuates human depravity, and divides the glory of salvation between Christ and the sinner. In this case the offence of the cross ceaseth.

4. It seems to be a very popular opinion, ‘ that articles of faith are of no great importance, provided a man’s life be good.’ If so, it follows, that it was not necessary that Jesus Christ should come into the world to teach and save mankind ; because, according to the above proposition, their salvation might have been accomplished without it. For whether we believe in Jesus Christ or Confucius, is of no consequence, provided the life be good. It amounts therefore to a rejection of divine revelation, particularly of Christianity.

Some persons, upon pretence of the sufficiency of the light of nature, avowedly reject all revela-

tion, as in its very notion incredible, and what must be fictitious; and indeed it is certain no revelation would have been given, had the light of nature been sufficient in such a sense as to render one not wanting and useless. But no man in seriousness and simplicity of mind can possibly think it so, who considers the state of religion in the heathen world before revelation, and its present state in those places which have borrowed no light from it.

“There are other persons, not to be ranked with these, who seem to be getting in a way of neglecting, and as it were overlooking revelation, as of small importance, provided natural religion be kept to.” With little regard either to the evidence of the former, or to the objections against it, and even upon supposition of its truth, “the only design of it,” say they, “must be to establish a belief of the moral system of nature, and to enforce the practice of natural piety and virtue. The belief and practice of these things were perhaps much promoted by the first publication of Christianity. But whether they are believed and practised upon the evidence and motives of nature or of revelation, is no great matter.”\* This way of considering revelation, though it is not the same with the former, yet borders nearly upon it, and runs up into it,† that is, into deism. This, I apprehend, will appear by comparing the principle we oppose, with our Lord’s commission to his apostles, (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damn-

\* Aug. in Psalm xxxi.

† Bishop Butler’s Analogy.

ed." To which may be added the following solemn passage of Peter concerning Christ, delivered by him when filled with the Holy Ghost : (Acts iv. 12.) "Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

If we deny the truth of these scriptures, the charge of deism is fixed on us : if we admit it, we can no longer treat Christianity with indifference, but must confess that it is of infinite importance to mankind, both in its principles and practices.

To ascertain what Christianity is, as taught by Christ and his apostles, we must search the New Testament.

The "foolishness of preaching" mentioned in the text, the apostle explains by saying, "We preach Christ crucified." (verse 23.) This general expression comprehends, I suppose, the various subjects of the ministry of the apostles ; which I proceed to consider.

More cannot reasonably be expected under this head, than that the preacher should give a sketch of the plan of apostolic preaching. A full discussion of the subject would fill volumes, and will employ the whole time of the ministers of Christ, provided they are properly attentive to the duties of their profession.

1. The apostles insisted frequently on the great principles called natural religion ; such as the being and attributes of God, his creation and government of the universe, his love of virtue and hatred of vice, and that he will finally render to every man according to his works. These

principles are fundamental to all true religion, and are blended with Christianity, which “is a republication of them: and, which is very material, it teaches natural religion in its genuine simplicity; free from those superstitions with which it was totally corrupted, and under which it was in a manner lost.”\*

If so, natural religion owes much to Christianity. Besides, it comprehends all the great principles of natural religion, and makes us acquainted with the method of our redemption by Christ, concerning which the light of nature leaves us in total darkness.

Thus viewed, Christianity may be considered as a new edition of natural religion, with additions of the greatest importance to the world. Let mankind determine then, which has the preference, natural religion detached from Christianity, or Christianity as comprehending all the great principles of natural religion in their most pure state, and at the same time revealing to us God’s eternal purpose of mercy to sinners through Jesus Christ.

2. The universal corruption of the world is another part of apostolic preaching. In Rom. iii. Paul considers this subject in a most explicit and decided manner, where he takes a comparative view of Jews and Gentiles. “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” And after he had quoted several passages from the Old Testament in support of the affecting truth, he adds, “Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith

\* Bishop Butler’s Analogy.

to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." "For all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God." And so far as our reading and observation extend, we find the melancholy truth exemplified.

3. The sacred writers assure us that all men, considered in unbelief, are in a condition of total depravity. Gen. vi. 5. we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that *every imagination* of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*." Jesus Christ declares, "For out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." If so, the heart of man is the fountain of iniquity. In John iii. 6. after Christ had spoken of the new birth to Nicodemus, he adds, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" that is, altogether sinful. Thus Paul uses the term flesh repeatedly. "For they that are after the flesh," that is, influenced by a sinful nature, "do mind the things of the flesh." "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God;" because the "carnal mind is enmity against God." This short sentence is remarkably descriptive of the total sinfulness of the human heart.

By this depravity inspired writers do not mean, that there is any loss of the natural faculties of the soul; these remain entire amidst the ruins of the fall: man has reason, understanding, will and affections; but he is destitute of a spiritual taste, and under the constant influence of aversion to God. If the sinner's heart was right in a moral sense, I can conceive of no remaining

inability to love God for his own sake, and to live to his glory. The essence of religion is love; and the essence of depravity or wickedness is enmity of heart to God. And in this awful condition the sinner is, as long as he remains in unregeneracy.

4. In connexion with this representation of human nature, the apostles endeavoured to awaken the attention of their hearers to the infinite danger in which they were. Often did they thunder in their ears the terrors of the law; saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe—in that day."

We see that they considered mankind as consisting of two classes, the righteous and the wicked; and addressed them in language adapted to their respective characters. They did not preach to a promiscuous assembly as if they were all saints; but assured the ungodly that they were in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity; and that should they die in that condition, the wrath of God would abide upon them forever. But if any of the people were pricked in

the heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"----

5. They preached Christ to them as the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "For I determined," says Paul to the Corinthians, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." This was their darling theme, and the only remedy for sin-sick souls.

Had a sermon been delivered in the apostolic age, to a Christian assembly, that had but little of Christ in it, they would at once have concluded the preacher had forgot his errand; and with the disappointed woman at the sepulchre, have cried out, "They have taken away my Lord out of his place, and I know not where they have laid him." Where should Jesus Christ be as the object of affection, if not in the hearts and conversation of his disciples? where indeed, if not in the preaching of his ministers?

The apostles preached Christ in his true and proper Deity as essential to the Christian scheme. This great truth they had learned from his own mouth. "I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him. Jesus saith unto them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Here was a most favourable opportunity for Christ to have disclaimed all pretensions to the Godhead. He had only to inform them, that they had mistaken his meaning; that he laid no claim to divinity; but meant

to assure them, that he was one with God his Father in design and operation, not in nature. Shocked at the idea of blasphemy, would he not at once have acquitted himself of the charge? Would not any of his apostles, or any good man on earth, who had been so grossly mistaken, have rectified the mistake as soon as possible? Our Lord's not doing it, when every circumstance called for the frank acknowledgment, is in my judgment no inconsiderable proof that he was a divine person.

If we consider him in no other light than as a teacher sent from God to instruct and to reform mankind, it seems to have been his duty to remove the prejudices which the Jews had imbibed against him, that so he might answer the design of his mission. Instead of this, he makes an appeal to his miraculous works, as proof that he was in the Father, and the Father in him. The Jews still believed that he made himself God; therefore "they sought to take him; but he escaped out of their hands." He left them, my brethren, under the influence of a very important error, provided he was not really God. "Nor did our Lord give any intimation," says one, "that they had misunderstood him; nor yet the evangelist, as he does in several other instances of much less importance; which silence is a strong presumptive proof, that they were not under a mistake about the sense of the words: for such a mistake, on the principles of our opposers, might have been an occasion of idolatry in them; and a mistake of that kind not remarked by the historian, would be calculated to answer the same pernicious purpose in succeeding generations. But

if he refused to correct so dangerous a mistake on their account, yet was it not necessary that he should have done it on ours? that when we read his gospel we might not entertain the detestable thought that he equalled himself with the Most High? If, however, he thought it proper not to explain himself at that time, yet it might have been expected that his disciples should have given us the true sense of the mysterious words, when they reported them.”\*

\* Dr. Abbadie's Treatise on the Deity of Jesus Christ, &c. in which this important subject is handled in a most masterly manner; and well merits the attention of both the friends and opposers of the doctrine.

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## S E R M O N VII.

APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

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1 CORINTHIANS, i. 21.

*For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

THE language and conduct of the disciples of Christ prove, that they received him as a divine person. John tells us, (chap. v. 23.) that it is the will of God, “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, who hath sent him.” Compared with Heb. i. 6. “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” The best comment on such passages will probably be found, in the conduct of his immediate followers. If they, who were favoured with divine inspiration, actually worshipped him, we may safely believe that they received him as very and eternal God. This then really was the case with Stephen. “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Here we see a pious martyr in the hour of dissolution, addressing himself to Jesus Christ in a solemn act of religious worship: therefore we conclude Jesus Christ is truly God.

In 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. we observe that Paul prays to Christ when there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him : “For this thing, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” What follows proves that by the Lord whom he addressed, Christ is intended. “Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” The Lord had promised him that his grace should be sufficient for him ; this grace he calls the power of Christ ; signifying, that the Lord Christ, to whom he addressed himself, had given him this gracious answer.

Though there are many other texts in the writings of the apostles that are of the same import,\* I shall only mention the following plain, decisive passage : “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

I appeal to every unprejudiced mind, whether there can possibly be a more solemn act

\* John xiv. 1. Rom. x. 12, 13. Rom. xv. 12. 2 Cor. ix. 1. Acts ix. 14, &c.

of supreme worship than this, which is ascribed equally to the Lamb that was slain, as to him that sitteth upon the throne? And will any man, after reading this passage, hesitate a moment, whether he ought to pay the highest honour to the Son of God, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person?

What idea would a man of common sense form of the character of Jesus Christ, upon reading Philip. ii. 6. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God?" Would he not naturally think, either that Jesus Christ is a divine person, or that he was guilty of the most horrid impiety? It would have been a robbery of the most blasphemous kind, for a creature, however exalted, to claim equality with Jehovah: and instead of his being celebrated for his humility, he ought to be considered as a monster of pride and wickedness. But if we admit the idea of his true and proper deity, we are at once led to admire his unparalleled condescension. He, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The moment we deny the divinity of Christ, I conceive we destroy the apostle's argument.

"The following words, as they stand in our translation, go on to describe the excellency of his glory, which was so real and transcendent a glory, that 'he thought it not robbery to be,' i. e. he thought himself entitled to be 'equal

with God.' But I shall not insist upon this translation; for it is more agreeable to the apostle's argument and to the language made use of, to suppose him to intend in these words to express the first degree or instance of his humility, and that the verse should be rendered by words to this effect: Who being in the form of God, was not fond or tenacious of appearing as God, but made himself of no reputation. I shall not trouble you with the particular reasons of this rendering, which would lead us too far into critical inquiries; but which way soever the text be understood, the  $\tau\acute{o}$  εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ will be found to belong to Jesus Christ. If he thought it not robbery to assume this equality with God, (whatever is meant by it) undoubtedly he was equal; or if it was the effect of his humility that he did not hold or insist upon his equality with God, then certainly he had such an equality; for where is the humility of not insisting on, or not retaining an equality, which never did or could belong to him."\*

It was in the contemplation of this astonishing truth, that our apostle thus exclaims, "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." That it was so, is a truth revealed, but the manner of it is past finding out.

To what hath been said on this subject I will only add, Col. ii. 9. "For in him," i. e. Christ, "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." It seems that Paul could say no more than this to establish the deity of his Master. What

\* Bishop Sherlock's discourses on this passage, Vol. IV. P. 24, 25.

a striking gradation is here ; in Christ dwells the *Godhead*—the *fullness* of the Godhead—yea, *all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*. Then surely he is very and eternal God. Let us then, my brethren, amidst the numerous attempts that are made to rob Christ of his essential glory, without any secret reserve or double meaning, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour.

It would be easy to prove by the sacred scriptures, that the same divine names, titles, attributes and works are ascribed to Christ, that are ascribed to the Father ; but I hope enough has been said to make it evident, that his true and proper deity was an essential part of apostolic preaching.

Several of the passages of scripture that we have been considering prove also the incarnation of the Son of God ; or that the divine and human natures were united in him. For instance, “God was manifest in the flesh.” He that was in the form of God was found in fashion as a man. Also Heb. ii. 16. “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” The person spoken of is Christ, who existed prior to his birth of Mary, in a nature different from that which he assumed. “Verily he took”—here we have a personal action : he who was properly divine, “took on him the seed (or nature) of Abraham.” Thus the word was made flesh ; i. e. became united to the nature of man..

I pass to observe, that the apostles preached Christ as the all-atoning sacrifice for sin. Peter declares that “he bare our sins in his own body

on the tree." This language he borrowed from Isaiah liii. 4, 5. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," &c. Such is the current language of the Bible.

It is observable that inspired writers lay the principal stress on his death. Paul says, "We have redemption through his blood," that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, that he died for our sins, not for his own, for he had none: "he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

"Christ's satisfaction for sin was not *only* by his last sufferings, though it was *principally* by them; but all his sufferings, and all the humiliation that he was subject to from the first moment of his incarnation to his resurrection, were propitiatory or satisfactory."\* All that he did and suffered make up that righteousness by which the believing sinner is justified. Through the whole he acted voluntarily; for he had power to lay down his life, and he had power to take it again; but he knew that it was necessary that he should suffer these things and enter into his glory; therefore he became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross:" not as a martyr only, to seal the truth of his own religion, but

\* President Edwards's Hist. Redemp.

that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself : hence he is said to be “ the propitiation for our sins ; ” ( Rom. iii. 25. ) not metaphorically but really.

6. Jesus Christ having finished his part of the work of our redemption, ascended to the Father, and sent the Holy Ghost, whose peculiar office it is to take it up where he had left it, and to carry it on until the glorious plan shall be all accomplished. “ It is expedient for you,” said Christ to his disciples, “ 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. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

The work of Jesus Christ is for, or in the room and stead of a sinner, that God the Father might justify him consistently with his whole character. The work of the Holy Spirit is carried on in the sinner, in order to reconcile him to God, and fit him for eternal life. Jesus Christ opens the way for his discharge from the curse of the law ; the Spirit of God makes him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Both are absolutely necessary ; the latter no less than the former, because “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

It hath been proved already in a preceding part of the subject, that mankind are in a condition of total depravity : if so, their final condemnation is certain, unless the heart be changed ; because a mind at enmity against God cannot be happy in his presence.

It may, perhaps, be said, that those persons only who are abandoned to wickedness are thus de-

praved; but this is not the case with all mankind. It is confessed, that all men do not discover their depravity by open wickedness. Many persons are under the restraint of education, sense of honour, or a fear of wrath to come; whose hearts at the same time remain disaffected to divine things. Let such persons ask themselves, as in the presence of that God who looks through them, and knows every thought afar off, whether they do not restrain prayer before him? prefer a crowd of fabulous publications to the sacred volume? whether they are not strangers to the duties of private religion? Is not God in great measure forgotten by them? Do they not lie down and rise up, without any proper sense of him who holdeth their souls in life? Are not their hearts wholly attached to the riches, honours and pleasures of the world? Will not a small difficulty detain them from the place of public worship? Would the like difficulty prevent their going to an evening's amusement? Why not? The reason is obvious; they hate the one and love the other. If a preacher happens to exceed his usual length in preaching, are they not quite out of patience with him; though they allow the sermon was good, and his manner not disagreeable? Yet would not these very persons be willing to remain until midnight at some fashionable entertainment? Are they not fatigued with the one, and in raptures with the other? I ask these questions, my friends, that you may determine what your prevailing taste is. You certainly know what you love most. If the world and the things thereof have the preference, can you believe that you shall be happy in heaven,

where all is holy? Be not deceived; for however amiable you may appear in the eyes of the world, one thing is wanting: your hearts must be changed by a divine influence, or you are undone forever.

It is a clear case with me, that should God leave the sinner to himself, and not inflict on him any positive punishment at all, the depravity of his own heart would make him entirely miserable, because the very nature of sin separates the soul from God. It follows then, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3.) In the fifth verse of the same chapter, this change is represented as being born of the Spirit; because he effects it. Sometimes it is called a translation, a passing from death to life: but in 2 Cor. v. 17. we have this striking passage; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things pass away; behold, all things become new." His views, his joys, his company, his conduct are all new. His heart is broken for sin, as committed against God; he loaths himself, and repents in dust and ashes. The divine character appears glorious to him; Christ is precious; sins of heart his constant burden; holiness the thing he longs for. He feelingly adopts the language of David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." The greatest pleasure he has, is in communion with God. His conduct is changed also: for having believed in God, he is careful to maintain good works. His religion begins in his heart, and extends its influence over all his behaviour; so that his acquaintance take knowledge of him, that he hath been with Jesus.

Thus the Holy Ghost accompanies the dispensation of the gospel with the exceeding greatness of his power, and enlarges the Redeemer's kingdom. And thus will he continue to do, until all the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: then sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

7. The preceding observations relative to the deity and incarnation of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, and the influence of the Spirit of God in the regeneration of the sinner, naturally lead me to remark, that the doctrine of the Trinity appears to me to be so interwoven with Christianity in general, and the plan of apostolic preaching in particular, as to make an essential part of it. The Father is represented as choosing, the Son as redeeming, and the Holy Ghost as calling and sanctifying. "According as he (the Father) hath chosen us in him." Of the Son it is said, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." And the apostle assures us that we are "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Thus different parts of the work of salvation are attributed to different persons in the Godhead.

Before Jesus Christ left the world, he gave the following commission to his apostles, and to their successors in the ministry: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here we observe in an act of religious worship, equal honour paid to each person in the Godhead.

According to this commission the apostles and primitive preachers acted. They could not do otherwise without being disobedient to the command of Christ; consequently, wherever they preached the gospel and baptized the converts to Christianity, they maintained the doctrine of the Trinity: nor does it appear that they had any apprehensions that it would prevent the success of their mission. They knew it to be their duty to pay a prompt and implicit obedience to their master's orders, and to leave all consequences as to themselves and his cause with him, being fully persuaded that he would never command them to believe or propagate any sentiment that was not perfectly reasonable, although they could not fully comprehend it: nor do we find that they ever made a single attempt to explain how it is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three persons yet one God; nor how the divine and human natures were united in Jesus Christ. They maintained this threefold distinction in the Godhead, and assure us that "God was manifest in the flesh;" but confessed the mystery, and submitted their reason to divine revelation; in which God's "design is to make known realities and facts, not the manner of them.

"Almost every thing in the system of nature, notwithstanding the great improvements in modern philosophy, is attended with difficulties. If you look up to the heavens, you stand astonished at their greatness, and feel yourself incapable of comprehending that immensity which lies beyond those vast spaces which surround us. If you cast your eyes on the earth, you meet with as many mysteries as there are animals,

plants, and creatures inanimate. You meet with innumerable difficulties in explaining, the sensation of the one, the vegetation of another, and the motion of a third. If you consider material nature in its wide extremes, of immense greatness, and invisible minuteness, you are struck with amazement, and imagination is non-plussed. If, to the consideration of bodies, you take in that of their duration, time will shew you incomprehensible wonders; both in the succession of ages past, and in that which is future. If you turn your thoughts to spiritual essences, every thing surpasses your comprehension. You cannot comprehend, either their manner of existing, or their manner of acting. Even the human soul is so great a paradox to itself, that it long since despaired, not only of comprehending, but of knowing itself.

“ And if so, is there any reason to assert, as our adversaries do, that there are no mysteries in religion? Or have they sufficient ground to refuse their assent to our Lord’s eternal Divinity, so clearly revealed in the Bible, because it is attended with such difficulties as are insuperable to the powers of reason? Is it any wonder if the difficulties with which we meet in the Christian religion, and especially those that regard the Deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, should be found greater, much greater, than those which attend a philosophical inquiry into the system of nature? It would, indeed be a wonder if it were not so; because the constitution and capacities of our minds bear some proportion to natural objects, which are created and finite; and are much better qualified to inquire

into their causes and properties, their connexions and uses, than into those of religion, which are of a spiritual kind, and particularly what relates to the infinite Godhead.”\*

This threefold distinction in the Godhead is mentioned by Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.” This is evidently a prayer of the apostle addressed to the sacred Three, that all spiritual blessings might be granted to his Christian friends at Corinth: he could bless them in no other sense than by praying for them.

To what has been said, I shall only add, 1 John v. 7. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.”†

“I freely grant,” says an excellent writer, “that had I consulted my own reason only, I could not have discovered some mysteries of the gospel. Nevertheless, when I think on the grandeur of God; when I cast my eyes on that vast ocean; when I consider that immense ALL, nothing astonishes me, nothing stumbles me, nothing seems to be inadmissible, however incomprehensible it may be. When the subject is divine, I am ready to believe all, to admit all, to receive all; provided I be convinced that it is God himself who speaks to me, or any one on his part. After this, I am no more astonished that there are three distinct persons in one divine essence; one God, and yet

\* Dr. Abbadie on the Deity of Christ.

† Those persons who wish to see the authenticity of this text excellently vindicated, are advised to read Travis’s Letters to Dr. Gibbon.

a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. Either religion must tell us nothing about God, or what it tells us must be beyond our capacities; and in discovering even the borders of this immense ocean, it must needs exhibit a vast extent in which our feeble eyes are lost. But what surprises me, what stumbles me, what frightens me, is to see a diminutive creature, a contemptible man, a little ray of light glimmering through a few feeble organs, controvert a point with the Supreme Being; oppose that Intelligence who sitteth at the helm of the world; question what he affirms, dispute what he determines, appeal from his decisions, and, even after God hath given evidence, reject all doctrines that are beyond his capacity! Enter into thy nothingness, mortal creature! What madness animates thee! How durst thou pretend, thou who art but a point, thou whose essence is but an atom, to measure thyself with the Supreme Being; with him who fills heaven and earth; with Him, whom heaven, the heaven of heavens cannot contain! Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? High as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?"\*

\* Mr. Saurin's Ser. Vol. I. p. 78, 79, Robinson's translation.

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## S E R M O N    V I I I .

APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

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I CORINTHIANS, i. 21.

*For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

I PASS to observe, that the apostles plainly and repeatedly preached the doctrine of divine sovereignty; or, that God has an absolute right to dispose of all things according to his own pleasure.

It has often been objected to this truth, that it represents Almighty God partial to his creatures, by making a distinction among them. But this ought not to be an objection, because it is a fact known and read of all men, that he hath placed some in a far more eligible situation than others. In creation we observe the most palpable distinction among the creatures of God.

Angels are first in the order of created intelligences; they are said to excel in strength, continually surrounding the throne of God, and are employed in the most exalted and important services: they are dignified in nature and office.

Men form the next link in the chain of intelligent agents, whom Deity hath created with a nature less dignified, endued with inferior mental powers, and employed in a manner less noble

and interesting. Among mankind there is also a very obvious distinction. One man is extremely handsome, another extremely homely; one has all his parts, another is deformed, maimed, blind, halt.

They differ in mind likewise, no less than in body. One person has great sagacity and penetration, another is an idiot, or but a small remove from him. All minds, though formed by the same Almighty hand, are not of the same dimensions. God himself hath made this difference.

They differ in place or station in life. They are not fitted for, nor employed with equal dignity. All are useful in their place, but not equally so.

This being the case, I ask, will any man dare to censure Jehovah for making such distinctions among his creatures? "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?" Shall the idiot, or the man of small powers of mind, say to his Creator, why was I not made equal to Sir Isaac Newton? Or shall that great philosopher say to his Maker, why was not I created an angel? We tremble at the idea of thus arraigning the divine conduct. God hath done what he had a right to do, and hath exercised that right under the influence of infinite wisdom and goodness.

We observe that the like distinction runs through God's whole economy of providence. Some persons have all and abound; others are depressed with poverty. Two men shall set out in life with equal prospects and advantages; one of them shall be successful in almost every thing

he undertakes; the other shall meet with repeated losses and become poor.

Some persons enjoy a constant and confirmed state of health; others are always sick, knowing scarcely one day in which they are free from pain, though equally virtuous and temperate. One passes through the most imminent dangers, and escapes uninjured; another loses his life by the most trifling occurrence. One lives to a good old age; another is cut down from the birth. One continues till he becomes a burden to himself and friends; another in the bloom and vigour of his days is arrested by the last enemy.

The Deity hath made a difference among mankind with respect to the means of knowledge. Some people remain in the savage state; while others, favoured with every advantage of information both divine and human, have arrived at a surprising height of knowledge and refinement. Yet they all belong to the same great family, and are under the government of the same infinite God, who, for wise reasons, makes these distinctions among them. He could easily have placed all men in circumstances equally agreeable, had it been his will; or have made an entire reverse of condition. He might have ordered your soul or mine to have animated the body of a Laplander, a Hottentot, or an American savage; but he hath been pleased, as a sovereign God, to place us in a more pleasing condition.

These are some of the distinctions which God hath made in the course of his moral government; and who shall say unto him, what doest thou?

The sovereignty of God is equally apparent in his conduct towards sinners. He hath passed by

the fallen angels; “and the angels which kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” Their nature the Son of God did not assume, because their salvation was not the end he designed to accomplish: accordingly we are told, that hell is “prepared for the devil and his angels.” Whence it appears that they are passed by.

God hath made a very important difference among mankind, by sending the gospel to some of them, and withholding it from others. Those persons who are disposed to raise objections either against the benevolence of the Deity, or the truth of divine revelation on this account, would do well to consider that God himself hath made this distinction, and that he can do no wrong. He is a rock, his way is perfect; nor doth he give account of his matters to any.

Besides, it is evident that there is a striking analogy in all his conduct in creation, providence and redemption. He hath not in either case distributed his blessings on all men alike. This hath been proved already in the preceding observations. If it is necessary therefore to vindicate his conduct in this instance, it is no less necessary in the others: “But who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?”

Among those persons who are favoured with the gospel, there is also a difference. He takes one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Zion. “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will

have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," not by positive influence, but by leaving the sinner to act out his own character, or follow the wickedness of his own heart. And as mankind universally have by sin subjected themselves to everlasting condemnation, they that are lost will have no just cause of complaint against God, but will be obliged to acknowledge his justice; and they who are saved will ascribe their salvation wholly to his sovereign grace. God condemns none but the guilty, nor will he save any that had any claim upon him; otherwise salvation would not be by grace.

In the chapter in which the text is, this distinction is most clearly declared. The same gospel that was the wisdom and power of God to some, was a stumbling-block and foolishness to others: hence Paul thus addressed himself to the Corinthians; "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh might glory in his presence." Remark, my brethren, God is here said to choose some and to leave others. Some persons were

brought to receive the gospel, while others were left in their unbelief.

Paul always ascribes his conversion to the grace of God. "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." In another place he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am." If so, it follows as an undeniable truth, that God made a difference between him and many of his countrymen, the Jews. He was converted to Christianity by divine power, while crowds of other sinners were passed by. God could as easily have converted the whole nation as one man, had it been his sovereign pleasure; but you all know he did not; therefore he made a difference.

We see in our own day, when the Lord revives his work among us, that one is taken and another left. The same sermon that is the means of awakening or comforting one person, leaves others in a secure condition. Under the same religious advantages, some are hopefully wrought upon, while others maintain their opposition to Jesus Christ.

That the success of the gospel, or the conversion of sinners, is owing to divine influence, is proved by the current language of scripture. They who believe in Christ, are said to be "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Paul says, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." We may safely conclude then, that under the dispensation of the gospel, God confers a favour on some, that he does not confer on all.

Our blessed Lord teaches us this doctrine of divine sovereignty in the following passage, as well as in others that might be mentioned. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

9. The nature and necessity of faith and repentance were important parts of the preaching of the apostles. They assure us, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" "the belief of the truth," or, a giving credit to the record God gave of his Son. And that we may be capable of distinguishing between living and dead faith, they inform us, that the faith of God's elect works by love, purifies the heart, esteems Christ precious, and produces good works. "Faith without works is dead, being alone."

The importance of faith appears from various circumstances, such as, that without it we cannot please God, enjoy the consolations of the gospel, nor enter into the kingdom of heaven. "If ye believe not that I am he," said Christ to the Jews, "ye shall die in your sins;" that is, under the curse of the law, and perish forever. The language of the commission needs no comment; "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." According to this commission, the apostles constantly urged on sinners the necessity of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.

They also insisted, wherever they went, on the nature and necessity of repentance, as implying a change in the disposition of the mind, without which no man can see the Lord. Peter said to the anxious multitude, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And Paul assured the Athenians, that "God commanded all men every where to repent, because he had appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness," &c.

The most likely method of bringing mankind to repentance is to hold up to their view the nature, extent and perpetuity of the divine law, as holy, just and good; reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, requiring truth in the inward parts, and condemning the sinner for a single inordinate desire, or wrong temper; which law is perpetually and universally binding. Until heaven and earth pass away, Christ assures us, one jot or tittle of the law shall not fail. Now by this law is the knowledge of sin; and when it comes home in its true nature on the conscience, sin revives, and the sinner dies, i. e. he stands justly condemned by it as a transgressor, but sees no way of escape. In this condition he remains till Christ is revealed in him; for the law can do nothing but condemn him. It will not accept repentance as a condition of his pardon; nor can it discover the atonement. Its language is, "Pay me what thou owest." At length the sinner is brought to look on him whom he hath pierced, and to mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and to be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness

for his first-born. He adopts the language of the prophet, saying, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

10. The apostles dwelt much on the Christian tempers, and the whole circle of moral and evangelical obedience; such as, supreme love to God, benevolence to men, meekness, patience, resignation to the divine will, forgiveness of injuries, readiness to relieve the poor, &c. Jesus Christ had taught them these important lessons in his most excellent sermon on the mount,\* which contains an immense treasure of most precious truths and exhortations, after which they copied in their own preaching. Hence they thus address us, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." "Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." These are mentioned as a specimen of their zeal to promote personal holiness among the disciples of Christ.

They also persuaded believers to give themselves up to the Lord and to his church, by a public submission to the two leading institutions of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper; that they might become witnesses for Christ, and enjoy the special privileges of his house. In a word, they urged with constancy

\* See Matt. v. vi. vii.

and zeal the great importance of good works, as evidences and fruits of faith; and that others seeing them, might be excited to glorify their Father who is in heaven.

11. They often brought into view the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the final states of men. On the first of these, Paul enlarges with great strength and propriety of reasoning, in 1 Cor. xv. to which I refer you.

They also assure us, in language calculated to awaken all our attention, that Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; that the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved; the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up. Then they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. O how solemn will be this concluding scene! The last trump will awake the sleeping millions; the sea give up the dead that are in it; death and hell give up the dead that are in them; and all crowd around that throne on which the Judge is seated, from whose sentence there will be no appeal! Amazement all!

The different characters of men are marked; all carry their destination in their countenances. The righteous fly to meet their glorious Judge, their Saviour and their Friend, and bid him welcome ten thousand times. Their hearts beat high with joy and praise. Each eye beams peace; and all the innumerable multitude of redeemed sinners sing, "Lo, this is our God, we have wait-

ed for him ; we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation." These he shall place on his right hand.

But the ungodly approach with horror and despair ; for their consciences at this fatal moment more than ever anticipate their doom ; hence they "say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?" These the Judge shall place on his left hand. The critical and decisive moment is arrived ; all nations are before him ; they are separated the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. To them on his right hand he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal." Thus the solemn scene is closed. "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut."

“Eternity, the various sentence past,  
 Assigns the sever'd throng distinct abodes,  
 Sulphureous, or ambrosial! What ensues?  
 The deed predominant! the deed of deeds!  
 Which makes a hell of hell, a heav'n of heav'n,  
 The goddess, with determin'd aspect, turns  
 Her adamantine key's enormous size  
 Through destiny's inextricable wards,  
 Deep driving ev'ry bolt, on both their fates.  
 Then, from the crystal battlements of heav'n,  
 Down, down she hurls it through the dark profound  
 Ten thousand thousand fathoms; there to rust,  
 And ne'er unlock her resolution more.”\*

III. I pass to shew, that God hath put the most distinguished honour on these doctrines, by making them the means of saving those who believe.

They were not only remarkably successful during the first age of the church, when thousands were converted to the Christian faith,† but have been so at different periods since, down to the present day.

“Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the gospel was not only preached in the less Asia, and Greece and Italy, the great theatres of action then in the world, but was likewise propagated as far northward as Scythia, as far southward as Ethiopia, as far eastward as Parthia and India, as far westward as Spain and Britain.”§

During the three first centuries, the gospel was preached with great success, notwithstanding the violence of persecution. The more the Christians were oppressed, the more they grew; hence it became a maxim, that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

\* Dr. Young's Night Thoughts. † See Acts ii. 41. iv. 4, &c.

§ Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. II. page 237.

From the time of the death of Constantine till the reformation from popery, the church passed through various dark and trying scenes. Sometimes she appeared to be near destruction. "This is the darkest and most dismal day that ever the church saw, and probably the darkest it ever will see." Yet through all that period God raised up some faithful witnesses for his cause; among whom, by general consent of ecclesiastical writers, we are to place the Waldenses,\* who are said by some authors to have preserved and handed down the apostolic doctrines pure, from primitive times to the days of Luther.†

Reinerus, their violent enemy, tells us, "that of all sects that ever were, none were so pernicious to the church of Rome as the Leonists or Waldenses; and that for these reasons: 1. For their antiquity and long continuance, even from the time of pope Sylvester, who was made pope in the year 316; or, as others have affirmed, from the time of the apostles. 2. For the universality of that sect, because there was scarce any country where they were not. 3. When all other heretics, by reason of their blasphemy against God, were abhorred, the Waldenses had a great appearance of piety, because they lived justly before men, believed all things well of God, and had the articles of the creed, only they blasphemed the church and clergy of Rome."‡

After this long night of error and persecution, during which period the witnesses were

\* For a full account of these pious people, see Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.

† The confession of their faith shews their attachment to the apostolic doctrines.

‡ Gillies' Success of the Gospel, Vol. I. p. 30.

few, and were obliged to prophecy in sackcloth, the reformation took place. Wickliff appeared in England, whose disciples became numerous, Luther and Melancthon in Germany, John Huss and Jerome in Bohemia, Zuinglius and others in Switzerland. It would be almost endless to mention the names of the worthy men in different parts of the world, whom God raised up to befriend the truths of the gospel, many of whom sealed them with their blood.

If we consult the history of the church since the reformation, we shall find that God hath set his seal to the apostolic doctrines in different parts of the world, by making them the means of great reformations among mankind. In England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, America, &c. there have been remarkable revivals of religion; at which times crowds of sinners have been turned from darkness to light: whole towns and villages have become serious and reformed: places of public worship, at such seasons, were crowded with anxious inquirers; and converts have come like the clouds and the doves to their windows.\*

It is readily granted, that the great end of the preaching of the gospel is to make mankind wiser and better. When therefore the wicked are reformed; churches filled with members who adorn their profession; and the youth especially are made willing to become the followers of the Lamb of God, at a period of life when they are most capable of enjoying the pleasures of sense, we may safely call this the work of God. And blessed be his name, such have been the effects of the faithful ministry among all denominations

\* Christian History.

of Christians, who have maintained the apostolic doctrines. You must be sensible, my brethren, if you have been observant, that those men have been the most successful, who have been most engaged in preaching the humbling doctrines of the cross. God hath put distinguished honour on them, by giving them many seals to their ministry, as their joy and crown. Whence we infer,

1. That the ministers of the gospel have the greatest encouragement to preach the same doctrines in every age of the world.

Those persons are quite mistaken who think, that the gospel can be rendered agreeable to natural men, as such : they may be changed into the spirit of it by the power of God, but the gospel remains the same. Or the preachers of it may leave out, or explain away its most exceptionable parts, and thereby obtain the character of rational and moderate men : but let it be remembered in that case, it is no longer Paul's gospel, or Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles, they preach ; rather something quite different from it, by which they may amuse mankind ; but they have no just reason to believe it will be the means of their conversion.

The nearer we come in preaching to the sentiments and manner of the apostles, I humbly conceive, the greater reason we have to expect success. The sentiments have been considered ; of the manner I beg leave to say, they preached plainly, that all who heard them might understand them ; and faithfully, that God, their own consciences, or the people, might not reproach them. They did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, nor use ambiguous expressions, to prevent its being known what their real senti-

ments were ; but took a side like faithful men, nor feared any consequences, while engaged in what they believed to be the cause of God and truth.

Every man has an undoubted right to think for himself, and to publish his principles to the world ; and in this enlightened and liberal age he has nothing to fear as to his person. And though his sentiments may be opposed, his fidelity will entitle him to respect from mankind, who continue to revere an honest man.

The apostles were also diligent in the work of the Lord ; were instant in season, out of season. " I have taught you publickly," says Paul, " and from house to house." Their hearts glowed with love to God, and to the souls of men ; hence they were willing to spend and to be spent in the sacred service. In public and private life they were examples to the flock.

They preached with a pathos that arose out of the infinite importance of the subjects of their ministry ; which had a natural tendency to fix the attention of their hearers, and to convince them that they were in earnest. They felt their subjects, and they made others feel. Felix, a Roman governor, trembled before Paul his prisoner, while he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. King Agrippa was forced to acknowledge, that Paul had almost persuaded him to be a Christian.

2. What has been said, suggests to them who have been long in the ministry, and have had but little success, the serious inquiry, whether they have plainly and faithfully preached the apostolic doctrines ? or, whether they have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ ? If the latter has been the case, no wonder they have drag-

ged on heavily in the work, and with very few, if any, seals to their ministry; for God will reprove such unfaithfulness in his service.

True indeed, it sometimes happens that the faithful ministers of the gospel are for a season unsuccessful; yet they ought not to be discouraged, for in due time they shall reap, if they faint not. They who go forth weeping bearing precious seed, shall finally return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. But suppose they should not see the fruit of their labours in this life, they will have the testimony of conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world. Let them who sow, sow in hope; the word shall not return void, but it shall accomplish that which God pleaseth, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it.

3. Should these discourses fall into the hands of any young men who wish to engage in the work of the ministry, they will excuse me if I say, they ought first to ask themselves whether they have ever felt the transforming power of the gospel on their hearts. Ministers of Christ ought certainly to know the truth by a happy experience, or they will be blind leaders of the blind. "A preacher's first and supreme quality, that which must give life and vigour to his compositions, and just scope to all his talents, lies in his being a good man, I mean a lover of God, and a friend of men. A preacher who has not felt the power, and imbibed the spirit of Christianity, is the most unfit person in the world to teach and recommend it to others."\*

\* Fordyce's Art of Preaching.

In such a condition he will find it a very hard service, to be always engaged in praying, studying, preaching, answering cases of conscience, visiting the sick and dying, &c. because, whatever he may be in appearance, his heart is unfriendly to the work. If, on the other hand, he has felt the gospel coming with power, the Holy Ghost, and much assurance, he will love it, because it tends to advance the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners. Having been made happy by the gospel himself, he longs that others should taste and see that the Lord is gracious. With such a temper, it becomes his meat and drink to be daily engaged in the various parts of ministerial duty. He puts on no forbidding airs, is easy of access, and by his benevolence, affability and piety, invites the distressed of every description, to enter into the freest conversation with him; and enjoys a most sensible pleasure, when he is the means of lessening the distresses of mankind, whether of soul or body.

4. In fine, we infer, that while the ministers of the gospel are obliged to maintain all the parts of the sacred system, so far as they understand them, they ought to insist most of all on those that are immediately calculated to promote the greatest good of mankind: such, for instance, as tend to awaken the stupid conscience, direct the anxious sinner to Christ, and edify and build up believers in their most holy faith; i. e. to enlighten and reform the world.

The positive institutions of religion are secondary objects; and though good in their place, ought by no means to be set in competition with the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and the various Christian tempers.

A pious man of a liberal mind is anxious most of all that sinners should be converted to Jesus Christ. This end accomplished, he feels happy, and is willing that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind, with respect to what are called the circumstantials of religion. He can truly say, "Send, Lord, by whom thou wilt send." If the Redeemer's kingdom is advanced in the world, he rejoiceth, let who will be the instruments of it; or let it be among what denomination of Christians it may.

It is to be lamented, my brethren, that those Christians who are united in the most essential truths of the gospel, should contend so much as they do about rites and ceremonies. Such conduct tends to create animosities, separate friends, and is very injurious to the general interests of religion. It looks as if we were more engaged to convert sinners to our party, than to Jesus Christ. Let us walk together as far as we can agree; and when we are brought to a stop by different opinions or practices, let us agree to differ, and by no means fall out by the way. We are embarked in a common and glorious cause; let us then contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Iniquity abounds, the love of many waxeth cold, and false doctrines of extraordinary magnitude prevail. Let us then stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

"Now unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

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## SERMON IX.\*

GOD'S COMPASSION TO THE MISERABLE.

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PSALM cii. 19, 20.

*For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary : from heaven did the Lord behold the earth ; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those who are appointed to death.*

THE youth on whose account I have chosen this passage, for the last time appears in this assembly. Before we shall meet here again for public worship, he will be numbered with the dead ! That body, now bound in chains, will be committed to the dust, and his immortal spirit have passed to the throne of God, to receive an irrevocable sentence ! This circumstance cannot fail of promoting an uncommon solemnity through this great congregation, and of exciting compassion towards the prisoner in every humane breast. A smile on any countenance on this occasion, will be looked upon as an evidence of a want of humanity. And I take it for granted, that those of you who have believed in Jesus, who know the consolations which his religion affords, and are acquainted with the value of an immortal soul, will assist the preacher by your prayers, that the word may be spoken as becomes the oracles of God, and prove of infinite

\* Preached at the desire of LEVI AMES, who attended on the occasion. He was executed for burglary, Oct. 21, 1773, aged 22.

advantage to the multitude, and especially to this poor young man. If ever plainness, zeal, and an artless address were necessary, it is now; when, amidst a crowd of dying men, there is one, who knows not only the day, but the hour, yea, minute of his dissolution. In such a situation, where shall support be found? Only, my brethren, in the religion of the Bible; which amply declares the grace and condescension of Jehovah, who “looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those who are appointed to death.” The very title of this psalm discovers its suitability to the present occasion; it is said to be “a prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his soul before the Lord.” We may well suppose, that this unhappy youth never knew before such an affliction as the present; which he hath indeed brought upon himself, by repeated instances of theft and robbery: yet is he the object of our pity and prayers, and may be the subject of the free forgiveness of God in Christ; seeing the abounding of sin has been exceeded by the superabundance of divine grace. And admitting that the prisoner has a just sense of his guilty condition before God, he will passionately adopt the language of the context, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread,” &c.

After the psalmist had thus described the case of the afflicted, he brings to mind the following comfortable considerations; such as the eternity

and kindness of the Lord, who will “regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This (says he) shall be written for the generation to come; and the people who shall be created shall praise the Lord.” Meaning that God’s readiness to hear the cries of his people shall be duly remembered; and that all such as are created in Christ Jesus shall praise him for this instance of his condescension. And in the text he enlarges on the same subject, which he had mentioned in verse 17, in order to shew that the Lord is so far from disregarding the prayer of the destitute, that he listens attentively to their cry, and will grant deliverance. The Lord takes a general notice of the earth, and its inhabitants, but is particularly attentive to the mourning of Ephraim; or to the afflicted state of his people: for the comfort of such, the text is evidently designed. In the following discourse I shall not strictly confine myself to the primary sense of the passage; but expect your indulgence, while I introduce such reflections as may be pertinent to this solemn scene.

I. Let us attend to the instance of complicated affliction described by the strong terms, the groaning of the prisoner, and those appointed to death.

II. The truths which are here recorded for the support of such. The Lord beholdeth the earth, &c.

I. The instance of keen distress described by the psalmist.

David, as one observes on the place, has a particular respect to the condition of believers under

persecuting princes; by whom many have been imprisoned and put to death, for their attachment to the Lord and to the testimony of Jesus; who, according to sacred and profane history, have been sensibly supported, and have thereby triumphed gloriously, to the confusion of their enemies. But there are different senses, in which it may be said that mankind are prisoners, and appointed to death.

1. This, O AMES, is your unhappy case in a literal sense. You have been tried by the law of your country, found guilty, received sentence of death, and are now waiting in close imprisonment, the day of your execution. In this view your condition is gloomy: my soul feels for you; and the crowd who behold you, evidently discover their sympathy with you.

2. But there is a more awful sense, in which it may be said, that you and all mankind, as sinners, are prisoners, and appointed to death: I mean as transgressors of the law of God, holden by the cords of iniquity, and led captive by the devil at his will.

When Jehovah created man, he gave him a law to be the rule of his temper and conduct, the requisition of which was perfect conformity; which conformity involved the tempers of the heart, and the actions of the life. To this law were annexed rewards and punishments. He who doth the things required shall live by them; but he who fails in a single instance shall be condemned. However some may trifle with the extent and spirituality of the divine law, it is as true as God's existence, that he who "looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed

adultery with her already in his heart." A lustful look, observe, is heart adultery. Hence said Paul, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." If we admit the truth of revelation, we shall find no method of evading this plain but awful conclusion, that the law of God is exceedingly broad, reaching to and condemning for the irregularities or sins of our hearts; and that too, not only for many such instances of transgression, but for one. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them." To which add, "that whoever keepeth the whole law, and offendeth in one point, is guilty of all;" i. e. he who hath broke one command, is certainly a transgressor of the law; though we should suppose that there were other precepts which he had not violated. The apostle explains himself in this manner in the verse following the words just read. "For he who said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

Thus from the current language of the holy scriptures we learn that the law of God reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that mankind stand condemned by it, for thinking evil, as well as for committing it openly. And this circumstance essentially distinguishes the divine from human laws. The latter can never accuse us for wrong tempers, but only for actions; the former have as much to do with dispositions of the heart as with any external behaviour. And thus it is right it should be; thus it must be, if we admit that the law of God is the trans-

cript of his own nature, and that he as surely requires truth in the inward part, as that we should obey him in our lives. This we cannot possibly deny, while we consider that the infinite God is of purer eyes than to behold evil with the least approbation: it is the thing his soul hateth. And he is said to "know our thoughts afar off."

Thus it appears that all mankind are shut up under the law, to the curse of which they are most righteously exposed; for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Besides their unhappy case on the preceding account, they are "holden by the cords of their iniquities." Scripture and experience unite to convince us that sin has dominion over the sons of Adam. Hence it is that they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. The power of sin over the fallen race, is most manifest in its universal prevalence. In every age and in every country vice has prevailed, while but a few have appeared to be under the influence of right tempers.

The sacred oracles repeatedly assure us of this truth; and it is the plain meaning of the prophet's words, (Jer. xiii. 23.) "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The former is naturally impossible, and the latter morally so; because the principle of sin has such power over the minds of men, that they love it, and after it they will go. This shocking truth has been experienced by many, in the following respect, viz. when conscience has been alarmed, and the sinner obliged, in order to quiet its clamours, to make the most solemn res-

olutions against his former conduct; he has no sooner met with a temptation to the same iniquity, than he hath complied with it. Such power has sin had over him, that he hath many times sinned against the light of his own conscience and all his solemn resolutions.

This powerful principle of indwelling sin is represented by an inspired apostle in the following terms; “a law in the members—the old man—the body of death.” And I may safely affirm, that the experience of all real believers has been the same with St. Paul’s in this matter; they feel that sin has the force of a law, and that they are too often led into captivity by it, to their own unspeakable sorrow.

The existence of this powerful principle in the minds of believers, is the great cause of that spiritual warfare which they are daily carrying on, and of which they abundantly complain. In fact, while the Christian is at home in the body, he is in a state of imprisonment; he groans earnestly for deliverance, nor will he ever be satisfied till he awakes in the image of his God.

Now the great difference between the believer and the unbeliever in this matter is, that the former feels and laments his body of sin, and opposes it; the latter is in love with sin, and complies with its dictates. He yields to its power to his own ruin, unless the arm of the Lord is revealed to slay his enmity and deliver him from the law in his members.

To which I add, as that which completes the sinner’s sad condition, that he is “led captive by the devil at his will,” who is said to “walk about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may

devour ;” and to “work in the children of disobedience,” with this malevolent intention, even to “blind their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Nor will he ever release the captive, till he who is stronger than the strong man armed shall appear to dispossess him.

In thus representing mankind, I am fully authorized by the oracles of God ; at present it may suffice to mention Isa. lxi. 1. where the prophet describes the office of Christ in the following manner ; “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek—to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them who are bound” In these words, sinners, while in unbelief, are considered as bound in prison.

The same persons are appointed to death.

1. To the death of the body. The original threatening was, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die ;” which has been verified from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to this time, in the dreadful havoc which death has made among the inhabitants of the world. “The fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live forever ?” No, they have seen corruption, and so must we who now appear in this house. That youth is not the only one amongst us appointed to death. We are all to die, though not in the same ignominious way with him.

But death, simply considered, is of small consequence. It is sin that gives death his sting, and makes the guilty tremble, when he anticipates his appearance before God, the Judge of all. For such are,

2. Appointed to an eternal death, provided they should abide in a state of unbelief. For all who are under the law, are under the curse; and the curse of the law is nothing less than an everlasting banishment from the presence of God, and a being shut up forever with infernal spirits!

No sooner does the sinner become sensible that he is in this condition, shut up under the law, under the dominion of sin, led captive by Satan, and morally incapable of delivering himself, than he breathes out his soul before God, with "Wo is me, for I am undone." "O Lord, shouldst thou be strict to mark iniquity, who could stand?" This conviction of guilt will make the prisoner groan; for a wounded spirit who can bear? In this respect, the heart knoweth its own bitterness: bitterness it is, emphatically, for any sinner to feel the law coming home to his conscience in its extent and spirituality, (by which is the knowledge of sin,) and at the same time have no just apprehension of the atonement, or the one glorious and efficacious sacrifice for sin, Christ Jesus. Distress like this he never knew before, nor could he form any idea of it; for now the commandment comes, sin revives, and he dies.

We have this conviction of sin exemplified, and the uneasiness of mind which results from it, in the conduct of the three thousand, the jailer, &c. who no sooner saw what they were, than they cried out, "What shall we do?" Which leads me

II. To consider the truths which alone are calculated to comfort those who are in this situation. He "looketh down from the height of his sanc-

tuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those who are appointed to death."

The Lord is said to behold the earth. Earth here, by a figure, is put for its inhabitants, whom the Lord continually observes. Though he possesses infinite perfection, and would have been eternally happy in the enjoyment of himself, if there had never been either angels or men, yet he condescends to behold human affairs. The creatures of his power are, and ever will be, the subjects of his laws. These laws men have broken, and by so doing, have entirely cut themselves off from any claim on God. Yet has he, moved solely by his own unmerited love, and a supreme regard to the display of his glory, adjusted a way of deliverance for the guilty, consistent with all the perfections of his nature. And in the fulness of time, "he sent forth his Son, made of a woman." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." Herein is the love of God manifested; and by this astonishing act of grace it is apparent that he beholds the earth.

Jesus Christ, who was in the bosom of the Father before time, upon his incarnation, proceeded with unremitting diligence to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. To accomplish which, he was made under the law, obeyed its precepts, and endured its penalty in the behalf of his people. "He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And now "through him, all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

This is the only truth that can give relief to a person under a full view of his guilt and misery; and by it all real believers are enabled to rejoice, accounting all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

I might observe that the Lord beholds the earth in a way of providence, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, &c. Thus in the case of Joseph, when his brethren had determined to take his life, the Lord interposed, and delivered him from their cruel designs. Thus it was in the deliverance of David from the repeated attempts of Saul to kill him. Also in loosing Jeremiah, when cast into a dirty dungeon, for his fidelity in delivering the Lord's message. And in the remarkable instance of Peter, to whom the doors and gates opened of their own accord. In these instances and many others of a like nature, we have the text exemplified, that the Lord heareth the groaning of the prisoner, and looseth those who are appointed to death. But I shall rather endeavour to accommodate this part of the text to what hath been already said, relative to a sinner, his being shut up under the law, sin and Satan; who, sensible of his condition, or fully convinced that he is justly appointed to eternal death, groans out his soul before God.

The truth which only can relieve him, as just suggested, is the completeness of redemption in Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth." Here it is of great importance for us to inquire,

1. How the Lord looseth those who in this respect are appointed to die.

2. What are the effects of their being set at liberty.

1. How doth the Lord loose those who are appointed to death? Sensible of their true condition, they stand condemned before God, crying *guilty, guilty*. They have no recommending qualifications, no appendages to their characters, which recommend them as objects of the divine favour. God appears a sovereign, and his grace is free, having mercy on whom he will have mercy; and the person's sense of his condition makes him cry, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner: but God is just, whether he saves or rejects him.

The question still returns, how is he delivered from this wretched condition? I answer, by the *truth believed*. The inspired writers, by way of emphasis, distinguish the doctrine of atonement by this phrase, *the truth*. Says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 26. "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of *the truth*, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," &c. i. e. if we reject the doctrine on which he reasons in the context, and comprehends in verse 14, "for by one offering he hath perfected forever them who are sanctified," we cannot be saved; because Christ hath once suffered, and there will be no other sacrifice but his; no other Christ to die.

The word truth is often used as a general term, including the whole gospel of salvation, or the complete character of Jesus Christ; and whenever it is spoken of as connected with eternal life, it involves the propitiation of Christ, or his one complete sacrifice for sin.

As this truth is the ground of the sinner's hope, or cause of rejoicing, it must be observed,

that the truth must be believed, or known, in order to present peace and future happiness. Hence says Christ, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth," thus known, "shall make you free." This sentiment is of great importance, and repeatedly urged by the inspired writers. Accordingly, when Christ gave the commission to his ministers, this was a part of it; Preach the gospel—he who believeth shall be saved. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness only to them who believe. And this is the invariable tenor of the word of God. The truth is the ground of hope, as it reveals a complete redemption; and it is by faith that we understand its glory and importance, and derive peace from it. "Believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

In a word then, the sinner is relieved from his painful sense of guilt, by the truth which he is enabled to believe; by which he is fully convinced of the glory of the person of Jesus, and the fulness of grace in him; and he now sees that God is just, and the justifier of them who believe in Christ; because he hath brought in everlasting righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all them who believe.

Here a very interesting inquiry arises, viz.

2. What follows a real belief of the truth as it is in Jesus; or the sinner's being loosed from his former unhappy state?

(1.) That pleasing view which the person has when brought to believe, of the excellency of Jesus, and the infinite sufficiency of his merits, is attended with the highest approbation of him, and an immediate flight to him. He appears to such a soul to be infinitely deserving of supreme

affection, on account of his essential glory: or as being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. To such an one, he is altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousands.

At the same time the sinner has such an apprehension of his complete redemption, that he flies to him, and trusts his immortal all in his hands. However his sins may rise like mountains, or appear to reach to the clouds; he is made to know, that where sin hath abounded grace hath much more abounded; and that it is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save the chief of sinners. On him with all his guilt, he rests; fully persuaded, that if God should be strict to mark iniquity, he could not stand; but that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.

(2.) He whom the Lord delivers from spiritual bondage, immediately upon believing, is set at liberty from that load of guilt which lay upon his conscience; and he passes at once into a state of joy and peace. This event is not progressive, or brought about gradually; but takes place at the very time when the soul believes in Jesus. For the truth of this remark, I appeal to believers of every denomination. When you were set at liberty, my brethren, from the distress of a guilty conscience, was it not by a discovery made to your minds, by the Holy Ghost, of the consistency and sufficiency of salvation by Christ? Did not the belief of that truth at once calm your minds, and lead you to rejoice in the only begotten Son of God? And have you not always found, in your life of faith, that your comfort

only can spring from looking to Jesus, by whom the law is magnified and made honourable, and in whom all the heirs of promise are complete?

This sentiment is abundantly taught us in the holy scriptures. Thus, according to the words of Christ, which were mentioned before, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth," thus known, yea, and as soon as it is known, "shall make you free." This spiritual freedom takes place in a degree at the instant that the sinner experimentally knows the truth. We read, that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." As the divine righteousness is the sole matter and cause of justification before God, I conclude that the apostle speaks here of faith as justifying, in no other sense than as it apprehends the righteousness of Christ, and derives peace to the mind from it. Hence an eminent divine supposes that the comma in this text should be transposed thus; "being justified, by faith we have peace with God," &c. In thus reading, peace with God is an effect of faith. But I mean not to insist on this matter, seeing the scriptures continually assure us that peace of conscience stands connected with the belief of the truth; and this sentiment is plainly taught us in the text above cited, let what will be the apostle's meaning in the sentence, "justified by faith."

I might run over a number of passages which confirm the above remark; such as "joy and peace in believing;" if in believing, the person must rejoice on the spot where God met with him, and the very minute that he believed the truth. The apostle Peter represents the matter

thus : “ Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Besides, if this grand truth concerning the person and righteousness of Christ, is not sufficient to give peace to a conscience wounded by a sense of sin, why did the apostles always propose it to such, as we find they invariably did ?

Upon the whole, when any sinner is really brought to believe in Jesus, he will have an experience of that peace which passeth all understanding ; for “ God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ.”

(3.) He who really believes in the Son of God will have extensive views of the malignity of sin, and its opposition to a God of infinite perfection ; from which will arise absolute hatred of it, and unfeigned sorrow for it. No person can understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin like the believer, nor sorrow for it as he does. He looketh on him whom he hath pierced, and mourns, as one mourneth for an only son ; and is in bitterness, as one who is in bitterness for a first-born. The very secret corruptions of his heart, which are unnoticed but by God and his own soul, give him keen distress. He mourns his felt unlikeness to the divine character, and many times cries out in the language of St. Paul, “ O wretched man that I am : who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

(4.) Connected with which are his fervent longings after perfect sanctification. He who has obtained this spiritual deliverance is led to dis-

cover the real beauty of holiness as it is an essential perfection of the Deity; without which he feels that he must be forever unhappy. That rectitude in which God first created him, he lost by his connexion with the first Adam, and became vain in his imaginations; his evil heart being darkened. So long as he remains under the ruins of the apostasy, he must be unlike to God, therefore miserable in himself, and unfit for heaven; into which nothing shall enter that defileth, worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie. The man who believes in Jesus knows this, and can never be contented while he is unholy. Hence he often breathes out his soul before God in the language of the psalmist, "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness." Welcome heaven, says the believer at certain seasons, because I shall there be near and like my God!

(5.) Love to the children of God is another evidence of this spiritual deliverance, or of our faith in Jesus. For, says John, "he who loveth him who begat, loveth them also who are begotten of him." In another place the same apostle speaks still stronger, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Observe, the brethren are the persons loved; and this religious affection is fixed on them, solely because they are so; or because they appear to be the real disciples of Jesus Christ, who have drank into his spirit, and are studious to be like him in temper and conduct. It matters not whether they be rich or poor, bond or free; if brethren in the Lord, the real

believer will love them in their poverty, or meanness of outward condition, for Jesus's sake. And it has always been remarked, that love to the brethren has most prevailed, when religion has flourished most.

(6.) Every person who knows the truth as it is in Jesus, will be careful to maintain good works. True faith is influential, and leads him who has it to search out the will of God, and to yield obedience to every known part of his duty. "Faith," says James, "without works is dead."

(7.) Another effect of this spiritual deliverance is, readiness to distribute to the relief of the brethren, when in our power. This we shall surely be ready to do, if we love them for Christ's sake, and see that they are reduced to necessitous circumstances, while we ourselves have all and abound, or at least have enough for ourselves, and something to spare for a suffering brother. "For whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

(8.) In fine—All such as are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, find the truth sufficient to support them under the heaviest afflictions. They have, in many instances, overcome the world, and rejoiced in death. The army of martyrs, animated by the gospel of Christ, suffered with patience and greatness of mind, knowing that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with that glory that should be revealed in them. And many believers of later date have resigned to death with peace

and calmness of soul, which the truth of Christ only could inspire, knowing that to die would be gain.

Having thus enlarged on those truths, which, in my view, are of infinite importance, because they stand connected with our present peace and future happiness, I shall omit those reflections which arise naturally from the subject, and address myself to the prisoner, who must very soon appear at the judgment-seat of Christ.\*

Unhappy AMES, how cutting is your condition! A youth but little more than twenty-one, having filled up the measure of his iniquity, bound with fetters, appointed to death, and on the verge of a vast eternity! Who can bear the thought? The solemn day is just at hand, when you must make your exit. Time, which stays for no man, is on the wing, and will speedily introduce Thursday, the last of days to you; then you will go whence you shall not return, and be unalterably fixed either in bliss or wo! See what sin has done! It has brought you, in the bloom of life, to ignominy and death, and has exposed you to eternal condemnation hereafter. All prospect of living longer than the time appointed is cut off. I hope you will not flatter yourself with longer time. That which most concerns you is, how you may escape the wrath to come? Where is there a ground of hope for the guilty? In answering this question every circumstance demands solemnity, faithfulness and truth. I would therefore attempt it, as in the presence of that God at whose tribunal I know I shall

\* What was delivered in the conclusion of this discourse, by way of solemn caution to the youth, is deferred to the next sermon.

shortly meet you, with the whole congregation of the living and the dead. May the Spirit of the living God accompany plain truth to your and every man's conscience! AMES, as a sinner you are lost; the law of God condemns you, for it curseth every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of it, to do them. You have gone astray from God, even from the womb. From the fountain of corruption in your heart have issued all those sins in life, which have been repeated and inconceivably provoking to Jehovah. The law is exceedingly broad, and reaches to the thoughts of your heart. It demands perfect obedience, and will accept no less. And as the requirement is just, so will be the punishment which will be finally inflicted on all unbelievers. You are wholly in the hands of a sovereign God, without a single personal circumstance to plead in your favour. If he condemns you, his justice will remain perfect. Nor do I mean by thus addressing you, to single you out as the only guilty individual: no; "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Perhaps you are saying, who then can be saved? Authorized by this inspired volume, I assure you that there is peace on earth, and good will to men. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, hath made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. He, by his obedience to the law in life, and his death upon the cross, hath finished such a righteousness as lays a ground of hope for the chief of sinners. This is the matter and cause of acceptance with God. "By this, all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by

the law of Moses." "We have redemption through the *blood of Christ*, the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of his grace." On this glorious foundation I have long rested all my hopes of eternal life; nor can I act a more faithful, friendly part, than by setting before you, in your present prospect of speedy dissolution, the same ground of hope.

But what will it avail either you or me, to hear of a complete redemption, or an all-sufficient atonement, if we are not interested in it, or have no part in the matter? Remember what is written, "all who *believe* are justified:" "He who *believeth* shall be saved; but he who *believeth not* shall be damned." No person can derive real peace from the doctrine of atonement, but the believer; nor shall any but such enter into the kingdom of heaven. And no sooner is a sinner brought to see his guilt, and to believe in Jesus, than he will repent and abhor himself in dust and ashes; for faith and repentance are inseparably connected. Such is the well-ordered plan of salvation, that all who are made partakers of the Redeemer's benefits, are the subjects of that faith which is the gift of God, and of his operation, and of that repentance which never shall be repented of. Of how much consequence is it then, that you inquire how matters stand between God and your soul? Whether you have ever believed in the Lord Jesus, and have had that repentance which is unto life? If you have, the truth has come with power, and the Holy Ghost, and much assurance; you have been convinced of its reality and glory, and entered into the spirit of it. Christ has appeared the only way,

the truth and the life ; and from a full view of your infinite unworthiness and guilt, you have been enabled to cast yourself at his feet, and to trust your all in his hands ; knowing that you can be saved only upon the plan of free forgiveness. And if you are a real believer, you are made to hate sin, heart sin as well as the sins of your life, because hateful in the sight of God ; and to long that God would make you holy as he is holy. Some things like these you have declared to me, and to others in your confinement, as the exercises of your mind. May God forbid that you should deceive yourself ! May he manifest himself unto you, as a God pardoning iniquity ; yea, your iniquity ; then will you triumph over death, the last enemy. Into his hands I commit you, wishing you an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. And as I expect to address you no more in this public manner, I bid you a most affectionate farewell !

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## SERMON X.\*

### THE CHARACTER OF A FOOLISH SON.

PROVERBS, xvii. 25.

*A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bare him.*

SOLOMON's universal acquaintance with men and things was one of his great accomplishments, by which he was fitted to write those maxims, which have been found of unspeakable advantage in life. He had sustained the different relations of son, parent, and prince; the duties which belonged to each he well understood, and carefully discharged; nor could any man paint vice, with its consequences, so much to the life as he.

All who read his writings find in them the dangers of a course of sin, and the secret methods by which the thoughtless are ensnared. The hazards which surround the path of youth are pointed out, and they are called upon to avoid them, lest they fall. The tender connexions which we form in this state, and the pleasure and pain which attend them from a diversity of circumstances, he was thoroughly acquainted with. As a son, he knew the feelings of filial affection; as a father, the yearnings of a parent's

\* Preached the Lord's day after the execution of LEVI AMES.

heart. Consequently he was qualified to describe the grief of a parent, when his children justly merit the character mentioned in the text : “ A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bare him.” This declaration implies,

I. Parental affection.

II. In consequence of which, parents in a peculiar sense are interested in every part of the conduct of their children ; from whence arises either pleasure or pain : the latter always, when they deserve the character of foolish sons.

III. The import of which character I shall consider, and pass on to some suitable reflections.

I. Let us animadvert a little on the nature and necessity of parental affection.

The great Author of all things hath endowed the human mind with the most important and delicate passions, such as love, fear, pity, hope, &c. which, when duly governed by reason and religion, prove not only a private but a public blessing. Excited by these, we seek not only our own good, but the good of others.

By love and sympathy, which are public affections, we become interested in the sufferings of others, and are strongly urged to fly to their relief ; and never fail of receiving a heart-felt pleasure, when, by acts of kindness, we have reduced that load of misery, under which a friend, a relative, yea, a stranger groaned. For as we became partakers of his infelicity, so we share in the satisfaction which arises from his relief.

Suppose we should meet with a person of an amiable character, who had been reduced by the

frowns of Providence, from affluent or competent circumstances, to penury; whose modesty and fear of troubling his friends had inclined him to hide his suffering condition; in this case, every man who possesses the social affections would, the instant he became ascertained of the above object of distress, hasten to relieve him.

Nor would I confine these passions in their exercise, to amiable characters; for it is a matter of experience and of fact, that they who possess them in the greatest degree of delicacy, have the most painful sense of the miseries, which mankind by imprudence or wickedness bring upon themselves. This remark has been abundantly exemplified, in the late conduct of many serious and respectable characters in this town, towards the unhappy youth who was executed on Thursday last; who, while they detested his horrid and repeated acts of iniquity, which brought him to disgrace and death, heartily pitied him; and by various methods discovered a strong inclination to make his few days as easy as possible.\*

The passions are distinguished by writers on this subject into public and private; by the former are meant those, which lead us to seek the public good; by the latter, such as principally respect personal happiness: among these we find the strong affections of a parent's heart.

\* I should lay myself under a disagreeable restraint, were I not to take public notice of the remarkable tenderness, with which the criminal was treated, from the time of his condemnation to his death, by the gentleman, who, by the nature of his office, was obliged to see the law executed; together with the many kindnesses he received from the particular family in whose more immediate custody he was, of which I was an eye and ear witness.

“Man is born a weak, helpless, delicate creature, unprovided with food, clothing, and whatever else is necessary for subsistence, or defence; and yet, exposed as the infant is to numberless wants and dangers, he is utterly incapable of supplying the former, or of securing himself against the latter. But though thus feeble and exposed, he finds immediate and sure resources in the affection and care of his parents, who refuse no labours, and forego no dangers, to nurse and rear up the tender babe. By these powerful instincts, as by some mighty chain, does nature link the parent to the child, and form the strongest moral connexion on his part, before the child has the least apprehension of it.”\*

This affection, like the other passions of the soul, is known by experience better than by description. The parent needs no definition of it; and those who never sustained that affectionate relation, cannot, by the most accurate description, form an adequate idea of it. Its necessity results from the feeble, helpless state of human nature on its first appearance; and the nature of it may be best learnt by others, from its various and striking expressions. For,

II. It is in consequence of this affection that parents in a peculiar sense become interested in all the circumstances and conduct of their children.

1. The first discovery of this tender passion is emphatically described by our blessed Lord, John xvi. 21. “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as

\* Fordyce's Moral Philosophy.

soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." The fondness of her affection for the little stranger causeth her to forget all that she feared, and all that she felt.

Now the parents' hearts begin to glow with this pleasing passion, and they anticipate their future satisfaction in the life and conduct of the child; not thinking that the mother has brought forth for the destroyer, or that the object thus beloved may break the parents' hearts, and bring their heads with sorrow to the grave.

But God hath wisely hidden the future from us, that we may rightly discharge the duties of the present, and leave what shall be to the direction of unerring wisdom.

Had Adam known that Cain would prove a murderer, or David that Absalom would have rebelled against him, with what grief must they have beheld their advances to manhood, and with what reluctance discharged paternal duties. Or had the afflicted mother\* of the late unhappy youth been ascertained that the son of her womb was to make his exit on a gallows, with what uneasiness would she have observed his increasing years, and how often felt in prospect that complicated affliction which now distresses her! May the greatness of her present trial effectually secure her from all unkind reflections.

It is a matter of gratitude, that such awful events are hidden from us; if they were not, parents, instead of rejoicing, would have reason to mourn and weep on the birth of such a child. But as the matter is now circumstanced, they

\* His father died when he was two years old.

give a loose to their tender affections ; which become apparent,

2. By a prevailing anxiety for the welfare of their children, who make a great part of domestic happiness. If they are attacked by threatening sickness, with what inexpressible solicitude do the parents watch every motion, and dread the consequence, willing to bear a part of their affliction, were it possible. With what concern do they attend them by day and by night ; never easy to leave them, lest any thing should be omitted that might tend to give them ease or relief. And when death hath appeared inevitable, how have they agonized in mind, and have been ready to cry out in the passionate, though unjustifiable language of David, O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom : would God I had died for thee.

3. This affection is also discovered by all that cost and care with which they conduct them through the successive stages of life to manhood. It is with the most sensible pleasure, that the indulgent parent provides for the support and education of his children, sparing neither pains nor expense, in order to accomplish them for some useful sphere in life ; who thinks himself amply compensated, when they conduct with propriety at home and abroad.

Parents indeed should always be upon their guard in this part of their conduct, lest excessive affection should lead them to too great indulgence, and to exceed their ability in the manner of providing for them. The danger in this respect is certainly great.

4. Children may also be convinced of the truth now before us, by adverting to the readi-

ness of their parents to pass by many improprieties of behaviour, on which they put the best possible construction, and cover all with a mantle of parental love; hoping that with advancing years they will see their folly, and do better. It is not one nor two disappointments that can cause a tender parent to deny his children a part in his affections, or his help in distress. Though Absalom's crime was greatly aggravated, the heart of David yearned towards him; and when Ahimaaz approached him with a message from Joab, the first question the king asked was, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The safety of a rebellious son was the principal concern of David's heart.

Parental affection is still the same. Hence, though a son may act the part of the prodigal, leave his father's house, and spend his substance in riotous living, he shall no sooner appear sorry for his conduct and ready to return, than the father, while he is yet a great way off, will run and fall upon his neck and kiss him; saying as he goes, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." Such, my young friends, is the nature of that love which your parents have for you; and,

5. Which leads them to watch the connexions you form in life, and to approve or disapprove of them, as they apprehend them calculated to serve or injure you. It is an indisputable maxim, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." Much depends, with respect to moral conduct, upon the company which youth keep. It must therefore be the parents' duty to guard them as much as possible against such as entertain bad sentiments, as well as bad practices; for there is a certain connexion between the two.

Actions arise from principles, and when the cause is bad, we may reasonably suppose that the effect will be so too. As the tree is, such will be the fruit; we never expect to "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." Parents therefore cannot be inattentive to the company which their children keep, but will solemnly caution them against those, whose opinions and practices are unreasonable and wicked; and the warmer their affections are, the more abundantly will they use every method of persuasion to inspire their children with a detestation of bad company, the bane of multitudes.

6. But I shall dismiss this part of the subject, which has respect to mere natural affection, by observing that it commonly runs parallel with life. Hence we see the parents, even when advanced in years, rising up early and sitting up late, and pursuing their business with unremitting diligence, in order to acquire a sufficient fortune to distribute among their children at the close of life: at which solemn period this affection has generally appeared in the most moving terms, in the last wishes and affectionate farewell of the tender parent.

7. Under this head I have only to add, that those parents, who know the truth as it is in Jesus, while they are duly concerned for the temporal interest of their children, are supremely anxious about their everlasting salvation. This we cannot expect of those who have never tasted that the Lord is gracious. But such as have been made sensible of their own danger out of Christ, and have been enabled to fly for refuge to the hope set before them, cannot be satisfied though their children enjoy wealth and honour, if at the

same time they have reason to believe that they are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Remaining thus, they know that they must be miserable forever. A thought like this pierces the believing parent to the heart, and animates him in the discharge of his duty to his children, whom he labours to instruct in the great things which belong to their peace. He is always careful to accompany his instructions with solemn prayer to God, that they may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

From all that has been said, we see that in consequence of these strong affections, parents in a peculiar sense become interested in all the conduct and circumstances of their children. We shall therefore readily admit, that "a foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bare him."

III. The character of a foolish son is now to be considered.

By whom we are not to understand an idiot, or one who is destitute of common sense. Many a parent would have been much more contented if the child who has occasioned the greatest bitterness, had been born a fool, rather than to possess a sagacious mind, and abuse it to the purposes of sin, by drinking down iniquity like water, and glorying in his shame. Such persons justly merit the character of foolish sons, and are evidently designed by the wise man.

Any one who will take time to examine his writings, will find that he frequently uses the words 'fools' and 'foolish' in the above sense; that is, as descriptive of a wicked man, who despises God and religion, and gives a loose to his vicious

passions. "Fools," says he, "make a mock at sin:" nor can the wicked discover more flagrant folly, than by making a mock at that which will one day find them out to their eternal confusion. In another place he assures us that "the wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools." By the wise, such are intended who are wise unto salvation; they shall inherit that glory which God will ultimately reveal: and by fools he means those persons who are profane, despisers of them who are strictly religious, and who are determined to gratify their vicious inclinations at all events. Shame shall be their promotion, i. e. their iniquities in this life shall bring them to reproach, and reproach shall lift them up to the public view; and in the world to come they shall be forever separated from that glory which the wise are to inherit.

In order, if possible, to bring the matter home to conscience, I shall mention particular instances of the conduct of a foolish son, and point out his egregious folly therein.

1. The character most surely belongs to him who rejects parental instruction and admonition. Children while young are more easily brought to submit to family government, and to listen to the instruction of parents, than after they are farther advanced in years: consequently, in common, they occasion much less grief and anxiety to their parents at that period of life, than when they begin to extend their acquaintance by forming new connexions, and to put on the character of men and women; which many do too soon, or before they have wisdom and prudence to support it.

At this time of life they are in the utmost danger of being captivated by their giddy, thoughtless companions, who flutter full of life from thing to thing, in pursuit of various scenes of dissipation. A youth who finds his associates left to their own discretion, will feel uneasy under restraint, and with reluctance listen to the advice of parents. For such an opinion has he of his own understanding, that he believes himself the best judge of his own conduct, and that he is sufficiently qualified to govern himself. His parents he firmly believes are too rigid in their discipline, and too scrupulously nice about the mode of conduct; that a greater latitude of behaviour can do him no harm, and that he may indulge himself as his companions do, without hazard.

No sooner does he adopt the above sentiments, than he will treat his parents with a degree of neglect. The delicacy of his natural disposition, the fear of incurring their displeasure, and thereby sustaining a loss by his father's last will, or a sense of his obligation to his parents, arising from their indulgence, may prevent his behaving rude to their face. But at the same time he determines to allow himself greater liberties than they incline to give him. And the parents must be either very inconsiderate or void of discernment, not to foresee the fatal tendency of such behaviour, unless the Lord prevent it. For though his connexions may be of the politer sort, and his gratifications fashionable, his folly is no less evident, and his destruction no less certain.

There are others who are ruder in their behaviour, and more open and affrontive in their dis-

obedience to their parents; who treat them with unkindness to their faces, and resolutely determine to gratify their passions.

In such cases, the parents are made to endure many hours of dejection. They sit together and mutually bewail their foolish son; and, in the bitterness of their souls, are almost ready to wish that he had never been born.

Could the disobedient to parents know the heart-rending expressions which his conduct occasions, or the many solitary hours which the afflicted parents pass together on his account, his heart must be like adamant not to relent.

The folly of such a conduct must become obvious to all who duly consider,

(1.) That the parents have trodden the path of life, and by experience have learned the dangers to which their children are exposed: consequently, like the skilful pilot, are qualified to direct them. That mariner must be deemed a mad man, or at least very rash and imprudent, who, arriving on a dangerous coast, with which he is unacquainted, should refuse the directions of one who knows every place of danger. Greater is the folly of those, who, though young and inexperienced, rush on in their own way, regardless of the advice of parents.

(2.) Nor is their folly less apparent in thus rejecting parental instruction, when we consider, that the parents are not only qualified by experience to guard them against the hazards of the present life; but that all their instructions arise from the warmest and most sincere affection, which has been largely treated of in a former part of this discourse. Hence their advice is the

effect both of knowledge and of love. What consummate folly and base ingratitude, then, are those children chargeable with, who turn a deaf ear to all that parents can say unto them !

(3.) They also pour contempt on the solemn directions of God himself, who, in both the Old and New Testament, has taught the duty of filial obedience. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is right." The same exhortation is repeated elsewhere in the inspired writings. He then who despises the word of the Lord, in this respect, not only discovers the badness of his heart, but exposes himself to that curse which shall fall on the heads of the disobedient.

(4.) The folly of such must be farther evident, while we consider the ruinous tendency of this vice. It must be taken for granted, from that near and agreeable connexion which subsists between the parent and the child, that he will wholly consult his benefit ; advise him to nothing that shall disserve his reputation or interest, nor lay him under any unnecessary restraints. If, therefore, the child rejects the parent's instructions, it must be that he may indulge himself in things forbidden and injurious. In consequence of which, he lays himself open to numberless temptations, and there is every reason to fear his ruin. For when necessary restraint is removed, he will be likely to be hurried by the impetuosity of his passions into every extreme. Several times did I hear the late unhappy youth declare, that had he regarded the advice of a tender mother, he should not have come to such an awful end. Nor was he the

first, who reflected on himself for his disobedience to parents.

2. He certainly is a foolish son, who, aided by his companions, endeavours to persuade himself that Christianity is a fiction.

The cause of infidelity has many friends; some of whom are to be found among persons of different ages, and characters. Their number probably is much greater than it appears to be. For every deist is not willing to be known: he fears a discovery, lest he should suffer in interest or reputation: but when he has a proper opportunity, he throws off his disguise, and can lampoon revealed religion as fast as any of the company. "And wherever such men fall in with the youth of forward spirits, and more liberal education; they bend all their arts to corrupt their minds, which are often too easy in receiving ill impressions; especially when the baits are dressed with wanton jollity and good humour, and the plausible pretext of free-thinking." Nor will deism want friends, so long as the human mind remains in its present sinful condition. Yet the folly of this cause is now evident, and will be more fully displayed at a future period.

(1.) What folly must it be to reject Christianity, without a better religion in its stead; and who would not reject it, could a better be found? I mean a religion more honorary to God, and more safe for man? But amidst all those who have opposed Christianity, and have been nibbling at that glorious system of divine truth, where is the man who has paved the way for the rejection of it, by substituting a better in its place?

The Christians are now made to bear the imputation of weakness or wickedness, for their attachment to the religion of Jesus Christ ; but should they abandon it, without a better in its stead, they might justly be looked upon as consummate fools.

Great swelling words have been used by free-thinkers, concerning the religion of nature and the light of reason, as a sufficient guide to duty and happiness ; to judge rightly of which, I know of no more reasonable and concise method than to consult the state of the heathen world. By such conduct, we are soon made acquainted with the true condition of human nature, unassisted by revelation. The Greeks, with all their learning, had lords many and gods many, and worshipped for gods the work of men's hands. They had a religion, but it was filled with idolatry and various practices, which evidently proved, that the light of nature in fallen man is by no means a sufficient guide to duty and happiness ; and I cannot but think, that the more we look into the condition of the different heathen nations, the more fully will the necessity of a divine revelation appear.

(2.) What folly must those men be guilty of, who reject Christianity, without being able to disprove a single truth or fact ?

“ Do they not daily hear, from the holy scriptures, and the doctrines of Christianity, of an eternity, either of happiness and solacing joys, or of misery or torments, which is to begin when this frail life doth end ? Now can these men of jollity give any demonstrative evidence, that in the event they shall not really find it so ? Can

they prove from their principles of self-evidence, that these are only amusing whims, melancholy dreams, or scare-crows and bug-bears, to frighten them from their sinful pleasures, and disturb their carnal repose? No: though they are daring enough, yet they have not the confidence to pretend to this.

“And ought not this to awaken that reason wherewith men are endowed, at least to ponder deliberately the weighty arguments of moral evidence for the truth of Christianity, with all the impartiality they can? If there is an hereafter, in which all must be sharers eternally, either of the greatest felicity, or the most dreadful misery? if this is confidently affirmed, on the one hand, by wise and good men, who profess a full conviction of it; and on the other hand, there is no pretended evidence that it is not, or cannot be so; is not the very possibility of this enough to awake their inquiry?”\*

To deny the truth of Christianity, without proving it to be false, surely is not all that we are to expect from a set of men, who mean to be thought the most profound reasoners.

Can these men really prove that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ, who made his appearance near eighteen hundred years since? or, that the characters of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, &c. were fictitious? or, that the former was not crucified on mount Calvary, and that the latter never were his disciples? or, if they admit that such persons might have been, can they prove that they were a band of deceivers? and that the writings which bear their respective names are fallacious?

\* West's *Introduct. to the Evidence of the Christian Religion.*

Till this is done, it must be the highest folly to reject Christ and his religion :

(3.) Especially when we consider that he who lets go Christianity, is in danger of falling into absolute scepticism, or of doubting about every thing that does not come within his own notice. For in rejecting the religion of Christ, we reduce our creed to very few articles. If we disbelieve the truth of Christianity, we deny that there ever were such persons as Christ and his apostles ; that there are either good or evil angels, heaven or hell, the resurrection of the dead, and a day of judgment. And many have doubted of the immortality of the soul ; which, if they have been unwilling to let go entirely, they have, however, found their minds at a loss to conceive of it, or to give credit to it. And should such persons proceed so far in their infidelity as to doubt whether there is a God, it would not be surprising. We are told that Dr. Tindal died with this awful sentence in his mouth, "If there is a God, I hope he will have mercy on me." This is a doubt unworthy of a heathen. What happened to him may happen to other infidels ; for he who lets go Christianity sinks at once into a horrid abyss ; and finds himself enveloped in clouds and darkness.

(4.) I shall only add here, that it must be the highest folly in any persons to reject Christianity, seeing it furnishes us with the best rules for moral conduct, administers sufficient supports under the heaviest afflictions of the present life, and in the important hour of death.

The practical principles of revealed religion are many : it may suffice to mention the following, viz. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." Supreme love to God, and a due regard to our neighbour, will always have an important influence on our practice, by leading us to seek to please the former, and to relieve the latter. Our duty in the last respect is taught in the most striking manner by the account Christ has given us (Luke x.) of a good Samaritan, who met with a certain man on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, who had fallen among thieves, by whom he had been treated in the most cruel manner, and left half dead. The Samaritan no sooner came where he was, than his humane heart glowed with compassion, and he lent him every help in his power; upon which Christ thus addressed the person, whose inquiry occasioned the repetition of this sacred story—"Go thou, and do likewise." Thus, while the adorable Redeemer severely censures the Priest and Levite, from whom a kinder conduct might have been expected, he highly commends the friendly behaviour of the Samaritan, and recommends him as worthy of imitation.

We have also a concise, but complete system of ethics in the following short passage; "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise." We are farther taught to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; to do good to all men; to shun every vice, and to practise every virtue; to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; and to obey civil rulers when they are the ministers of God for good. In a word, such are the rules laid down in the holy scriptures for the government of life, that they will, when duly observed, lead us to the most re-

fin'd morality ; I must therefore observe, in the words of another, that the Christian religion is of the utmost importance to all orders and degrees of men ; and that the greatest service that the most zealous patriot can do his country, is to promote the faith, and thereby encourage the practice, of the truly divine virtues recommended by Christ and his apostles.

Of no less importance is revealed religion to believers in times of great afflictions. The supports which arise from it to such are matters of personal experience, and therefore are a kind of internal evidence in its favour. Yet it may be observed, that the following truths, which are addressed to our understandings, are calculated to give such supports as have been mentioned, viz. that God, by a general and particular providence, governs the world ; that no events are casual ; but that all things are directed by infinite wisdom, and shall terminate in the glory of God, and the best interests of his people ; that all things now work together for good to them who love God ; that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, &c. If these truths are really believed, they tend in their own nature to support the afflicted, and to reconcile them to the whole of the divine conduct.

Nor do the truths of Christianity desert believers in the important hour of death, but in many instances have enabled such to exult in their expiring moments. Here I might call in a cloud of witnesses ; and in particular, the noble army of martyrs rise into view, to testify the truth of the above remarks. They reckoned that the suffer-

ings of this present life were not worthy to be compared with the glory which they believed would be revealed in them. Nor did they count their lives dear unto them, that they might finish their course with joy, and lay hold on eternal life; knowing that they had in heaven an enduring substance. The firm persuasion that their souls should pass immediately to glory upon their separation from the body, and that the body should rise again in the resurrection at the last day, led them to triumph over the last enemy, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The manner of the great Addison's death, as related by Dr. Young,\* is pertinent here. "After a long and manly, but vain struggle with his distemper, he dismissed his physicians, and with them all hopes of life: yet with his hopes of life he dismissed not his concern for the living, but sent for a youth nearly related, and finely accomplished, yet not above being the better for good impressions from a dying friend. He came; but life now glimmering in the socket, the dying friend was silent. After a decent and proper pause, the youth said, 'Dear sir, you sent for me; I believe, and I hope, that you have some commands; I shall hold them most sacred!' May distant ages not only hear, but feel the reply! Forcibly grasping the youth's hand, he softly said, 'See in what peace a Christian can die.' He spoke with difficulty, and soon expired. Through grace divine, how great is man! Through divine mercy, how stingless death! Who would not thus expire?"

\* Conjectures on Original Compositions.

I the rather chose to mention the case of Mr. Addison, because his character is so well established in the learned world, that no deist will have the effrontery to charge him with either weakness or ignorance.

Upon the whole, what folly, my brethren, must they be guilty of, who reject Christianity, seeing it is of infinite importance in life and death. I now pass to observe,

3. That he is a foolish son, who persists in the gratification of his vicious passions, regardless of the consequences. The passions in their original state were pure and regular; but by reason of sin they are tumultuous and vicious; and so far as they have influence, lead to such methods of conduct as are infinitely odious in the sight of God, and destructive of human happiness. An enumeration of the vices which mankind fondly countenance would produce a long and shocking catalogue. These are commonly placed, by the vicious themselves, in two classes; the fashionable and the sordid; or, the vices of gentlemen, and those of the meaner rank. Men of character, as they are called, disdain the low gratifications of the vulgar; but, alas! pursue methods of indulgence no less criminal than theirs.

I am sorry to say it, but it is too notorious to be contradicted, that many persons, whom God has exalted in rank and fortune, are some of the warmest abettors of the cause of infidelity. I would be far from throwing out indiscriminate reflections, knowing that there are not wanting some in the above stations who regard the doctrines of Christ. But have we not reason to believe that the number of such is small, compared with those who treat the primitive and self-deny-

ing doctrines of the cross with contempt? Now what sin can rise higher in its malignity than unbelief? "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Besides, the examples of such are more powerful in their influence, by how much the more they are exalted in life.

The folly of this cause I have endeavoured to expose in some preceding reflections; to which may be added, that all attempts to invalidate Christianity or to lessen its authority, so far as they prevail, are injurious to society, by removing those restraints which are necessarily laid on the vicious passions of men. We are told in the holy scriptures, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men." And in many places the sins are mentioned, which expose to the wrath of God. The apostle Paul tells us, that "the law was made for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for whoremongers, for them who defile themselves with mankind; for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." While these declarations are received as divine, they tend to curb the passions, or make the guilty tremble after their indulgence. But deny their authenticity, and persuade yourselves that they are the mere inventions of men, intended to keep the vulgar in order, and the flesh-pleasing doctrine follows, that God made us with these passions, and meant that we should indulge them, else why did he implant them? Thus making

no distinction between the passions in their original and in their present state, the restraints of conscience are thrown off, and a door opened to live as a bad heart dictates.

The profanation of the name of the infinite Jehovah, who is exalted above all blessing and praise, is extenuated into a mere peccadillo, a very small fault; if not a lawful use of language; though it is expressly declared, that God "will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain." So common is this vice, that the name of God is appealed to or made use of on the most trifling occasions; and damnation is often imprecated on a friend or intimate, with all the air of good humour.

Gaming, however connected with a train of evils, is abundantly practised; for which none have a greater thirst than youth. In the first place it may be justly said to be an abuse of time, as a prevailing fondness for it often leads to a neglect of business; not only so, but in many instances to excessive drinking. For it would be a very dry entertainment indeed for gamblers to have neither bowl nor glass; and a thousand to one, if these are not used too freely. Nor are we without instances of such as have spent their fortunes at a gaming-table, and thereby brought themselves and families into the most necessitous condition. When this is the case, and poverty comes on like an armed man, is there not the utmost danger, that the methods of dishonesty will be fallen upon to repair a ruined fortune? You cannot but have heard of persons reputably descended and liberally educated, who, having been ruined by gaming, and other vices, have finally been guilty of forgery, house-breaking, or highway robbery, and have

made their exit in an infamous manner ; or who, through the interest of their friends, have had their lives, upon condition of perpetual banishment. However some may sneer at this observation, it is indisputably certain, that vice, as to the present life as well as the future, has undone multitudes. He then must be guilty of the highest folly, who will run every hazard for the sake of vicious indulgence.

Nor will I forbear to mention on this occasion, that there are many who would have us think that they despise a mean action, or have a mind too great to be guilty of one, who, notwithstanding, by every method of intrigue, attack female chastity, and infamously endeavour to prostitute it to their own vile purposes. In what respects are such persons better than he who should present a pistol to your breast, and demand your money ? Both are robbers. The one asks for your cash, and if he obtains it, the loss may be repaired ; the other makes an attempt on your honour, my female hearers, and if it is lost, can never be regained. But the nature of the subject forbids me to enlarge, lest I should put that modesty to the blush which is the ornament of both sexes. The works of darkness dare not appear before the sun.

Common drunkenness, lying, contempt of the day and worship of God, thieving, &c. are of the number of the vices which finish the character of a foolish son, and make him a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bare him ; the folly of which must become obvious to all who consider their contrariety to God, and destructive tendency with respect to men. By these in-

iniquities Jehovah is offended, his anger incurred, conscience wounded, poverty, disease, reproach and death brought on. Sin indeed promises pleasure, but ends in pain; for “the wages of sin is death.”

Let us now pass to some reflections on the subject.

1. Parents, we ought always to bear in mind the important duties which we owe to our children. They are parts of ourselves, and stand in an intimate and dear relation to us. And from the strong affection which we have for them, we cannot but be interested in all their conduct; mourn when they mourn, and rejoice when they rejoice. They, with us, are candidates for immortality. Hence while we consult their present happiness, we should be supremely desirous of their future felicity. What if they should gain the whole world, and lose their souls, what can they give in exchange for their souls? Our care for their bodies should always be exceeded by a concern for their future well-being; and those of us who know what real religion is, will certainly be supremely desirous that they may be saved. Nor can we discover our affection for them in a more proper manner than by attending to the sacred exhortations, such as “Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Or, as St. Paul has it, “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” It is our indispensable duty to endeavour to lay before them their ruin by sin, and the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ; to caution them against the vices of

the day and place in which they live ; and to labour to convince them of the fatal tendency of sinful gratifications. But we should be particularly careful in all our instructions, not to feed that principle of self-dependence, which is natural to the proud heart of fallen man. To sap the very foundation of this temper, it is necessary to lay before them the spirituality and extent of the divine law, as reaching to the sins of their hearts, and condemning them for a single failure ; and on the other hand to exhibit the divine Jesus in his glory, person, love, fullness, and sufficient redemption ; explaining the nature and necessity of faith and repentance, which are so connected in the plan of salvation, as that no sinner, remaining in unbelief, can enjoy the consolation that there is in Christ now, or finally enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Let us accompany family instruction with a life and conversation becoming the gospel ; for example has a powerful influence ; and follow all with prayer to God, that they may be translated out of darkness into marvellous light. It is in this case, as in the public dispensation of the gospel, that “ God giveth the increase.” Nor should religious parents be discouraged from a due discharge of their duty by the seeming security or inattention of their children ; for God can remove the most deep-rooted enmity, dispel the grossest ignorance, and reclaim the most abandoned prodigal. “ When he worketh, who shall let it ?” Animated by this consideration, we should diligently attend to family religion, the importance of which cannot be called in question by any who admit the truth and influence of

Christianity as it respects the present life, and as it opens the most glorious prospects to believers beyond the grave.

It is probable that the preceding remarks flash guilty conviction in the faces of unbelieving parents, who may now be ready to say, As for us, we have only been concerned for our children or ourselves, with respect to the present life. Having contemned the gospel of Christ, and treated it with entire neglect, we have only been thoughtful, what we should eat, what we should drink, and wherewithal we should be clothed. The salvation of our own souls, or of the souls of our children, has been but seldom thought of. Why so, ye heads of families? Is the present more important than the future? Is a short life on earth of more consequence than an eternity hereafter? No; for it is a dictate of reason, that the greater good should always be preferred to the less. Why then this unreasonable and wicked conduct? Ye unhappy, unbelieving parents, your conduct arises from, and is an evidence of that depravity of heart, which many of you are unwilling to admit. Nor need we be at any loss to prove the total corruption of the human mind, while we attend to the conduct of men. By their fruit you may know them. For he who pours contempt on Christ and his religion, or treats them with indifference, is most certainly an enemy in his mind, by wicked works, to God. Glad shall I be, should the Spirit of truth fasten a just sense of your real condition on your minds, and take of the things of Jesus and show them unto you. An alteration in temper and conduct would in consequence thereof instantly take place.

Then the world and all its good things would appear to be but vanity, and Christ and his religion become the one thing needful for yourselves and children.

2. Those parents, whose children behave with duty and affection towards them, and who are in many respects their comfort, will permit me to congratulate them on so great a blessing. If “a foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bare him,” how great a pleasure must result from children of an opposite character! Such youth there are, who entertain the tenderest regard for their parents; feel for them in every difficulty, and yield the most cheerful obedience to every just command; who carefully study their parents’ ease and interest, and shun those things, which they apprehend will occasion grief. How commendable is the conduct of such, and how happy the parents who are in such a case. But what an unspeakable addition must it be to the godly parents’ happiness, to have reason to think that their children are really acquainted with Jesus Christ and his divine religion. This is a blessing inexpressibly great, and when rightly viewed, fills the parents’ hearts with humility and gratitude. Now no fears of a future endless separation rack their minds; but they dwell together as in the fear of God, and rejoice in hope of eternal blessedness. Knit by the ties of nature and religion, they become one in the most intimate sense, and mutually contribute to each others’ felicity. Happy parents, and happy children, when both can rejoice in God their Saviour.

Alas! says some aged father, or almost broken-hearted mother, this is not my case. Mine is a

foolish son, and has been a grief to me all my days. He is a prodigal; profane, disobedient; determined to gratify his passions, come what may. Your condition, O afflicted parent, is grievous. May the Lord support you under this heavy trial, and in his own time make the prodigal return. All things are possible with God.

3. It may be that some such prodigal is here to-day. If so, I hope conscience has been awake, and engaged to point you out, as Nathan did David, "Thou art the man." You trample on the most delicate and sincere affection; you violate the most solemn obligations; you are guilty of the basest ingratitude to your parents; you despise the sacred declarations of the God who made you; you contemn the Lord of life and glory, and are rushing on, in the greatest haste, to final and everlasting destruction. The way in which you are may seem right to your carnal minds, but the end thereof will be the ways of death. Sin has undone many! A late melancholy instance is yet fresh in view. On Thursday last many of you were spectators of the shameful death of a youth in all his bloom and vigour. Would to God, that his awful end might prove a useful warning to the sons of vice! He seldom thought, while pursuing his base conduct, what would be the issue; and when he did, the devil and his lusts prevailed against every remonstrance of conscience. He has descended to the grave with ignominy, and was at last obliged to say, "What fruit have I in those things, whereof I am now ashamed?" May others see and fear, and do no more so wickedly.

4. Such awful instances, among other important considerations, may tend to calm the minds

of parents, and check their immoderate sorrow, when the Lord is pleased to take away their children in infancy. Had their lives been spared, who can tell what methods of conduct they would have chosen, or what end they would have made? They might have acted the part of foolish children, and have brought their parents to the grave in sorrow. If the Lord has seen it best to remove them, we may be satisfied that his way is perfect, and that all his conduct is ordered by infinite wisdom. Besides, they are taken from the evil to come.

Here I should have finished the discourse; but having been warmly solicited by a number of my friends, after the execution of the unhappy youth, to satisfy them and others respecting the state of the prisoner's mind as it appeared to me during his confinement, and to give them some account of the conversation which we had together as we walked from the prison to the gallows, I consented to add the following account of the matter, in which, as far as I can trust my memory, I have truly represented, and made use of the prisoner's own expressions, which I have distinguished by single commas.

After his condemnation, there was a remarkable concern for him on the minds of many of the children of God, both ministers and private Christians, who seemed to be favoured with an uncommon spirit of prayer for his salvation. Many supplications ascended to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from day to day for poor AMES, that he might be a monument of sovereign mercy, and die in faith. Nor was

this the only way in which they discovered their real regards for him. He was visited by my fathers and brethren in the ministry, of both town and country, and by many private Christians of different denominations. Kindnesses were shewn him from various quarters ; nor was he insensible of his obligations to his benefactors.

Having received a message from him, acquainting me that he desired a visit, I went to see him, and found him seemingly stupid, with but little to say ; nor did he appear to me to be so much affected with his condition as a condemned malefactor, as one would reasonably have expected. This was the state of his mind the first visits I made him. I endeavoured to lay before him, in as plain a manner as possible, the nature of the divine law, under which he was as a man, and to the curse of which he stood most justly exposed for his transgressions ; knowing, that “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” He owned that he was a great sinner, and deserved to be cast off ; but did not appear to have any proper views of his sinful nature and life.

Some days after, his conscience seemed to be in some measure alarmed. He discovered unusual uneasiness, and assured me, ‘that he did not know what to do. I have lived such a life, that I can have no hope from that, that God will have mercy on me. And my time is so short, that I can do no good works to go to heaven by.’ Thus he was perplexed ; not knowing by what method God could save him. An attempt was made to open the nature of the gospel to him, or the way of salvation through the complete redemption of Christ ; and he was directed to the holy

Scriptures, as containing the whole will of God, respecting both the ruin and recovery, the law and gospel.

But omitting much that passed, I would observe, that at a certain time I found him in keen distress from a sense of his sinful condition; when he declared that he saw himself, yes, said he, ‘*I feel* that I am lost! I sometimes think that I am given over to destruction, and that there is no mercy for me. I am undone in soul and body. If I go to the place of execution as I am now, they must drag me like a bullock to the slaughter. Oh, must I die so? I am like a man that made a great fire, and then run right into it! So I have done; I have run from God, and must be damned, if God won’t have mercy on me! May I not have a little longer time than is now fixed?’ At this time he appeared to have very clear views of the justice of God in condemning him, should that be the case. ‘I see,’ said he, ‘that if God could damn me a thousand times, he would be just; I never did any thing but sin against him.’ Thus I left him, confident that neither men nor angels could help him; and that God would have mercy on whom he would have mercy.

In this distressed state of mind he continued until Friday evening, the 8th of October, when, according to his own account of the matter, he was unexpectedly relieved in good measure from his guilty fears, by Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh,” &c. Upon hearing that the prisoner appeared easy in his mind, I called to see him, being desirous to know what was the occa-

sion of it; and not without fears, lest he should compass himself with sparks of his own kindling. Upon conversing with him, he said, 'I feel my mind peaceable; such a peace as I never knew any thing of in my life before. I was turning over a little book which was put into my hands, and cast my eye on these words, "A new heart will I give you," &c. It struck me: it came as if it was a promise to me. I wanted this new heart; for my heart was bad, bad indeed. This was God's promise. I knew that God could not lie; and therefore if I would not believe this, I would believe nothing. I was now sure that God could give me a new heart. Oh, that is what I most wanted. And I could not get it, but God hath let me see that he gives it.' He said several things about the grace of God in giving a new heart, a right spirit, &c. and particularly discovered the view he had of the enmity of his own heart against God, in the following sentence: 'I now see that I have sinned against God all my life, with as much envy as ever I killed a snake; which I always had the greatest hatred to.' He at this time spoke of his former contempt of the gospel with evident sorrow, and expressed his gratitude to all those who had visited him, with a view of making him acquainted with the way of salvation through Christ. 'This,' said he, 'I never knew any thing of before, though I have always lived in this land where the gospel is.' From the time mentioned above, till his death, he had much to say about the words of the apostle John, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." This seemed to dwell in his mind; and on this truth, he assured me, he rested all his hopes, or his soul, guilty as it was.

The Saturday morning before his death, I was with him. When he was brought into the room, I observed that his countenance appeared serene ; rather pleasant. I asked him how he did as to the state of his mind ? His answer was, as near as I can recollect, ‘ Comfortable : I want to be with Christ ; he is glorious, and I am sinful.’

The afternoon before his execution, I found him much terrified with the prospect of the manner of his death. He trembled, and thus expressed himself ; ‘ I think I see myself hanging up before the people.’ But this fear soon subsided ; and at his own desire, he had three Christian friends to spend the night with him ; by whom I have been informed of his behaviour through the night, and the manner in which they employed their time.

When they went into his room, he had the Bible in his hand ; and being asked how he was, he said, ‘ I am easy,’ and began to read the 3d chapter of John ; and when he came to the words of Christ concerning the new birth, he stopped, and testified that he had reason to think that God had given him to know by experience what that was ; said several things respecting his view of the excellency of God, and the evil of sin ; and thought, as far as he knew his heart, that he did love God for his own worthiness, and hate sin, because contrary to God. He assured the company that he hated his own evil thoughts, and wanted to be freed from all sin ; crying out at times, ‘ If I am not right, I hope God will put me right. I see,’ said he, ‘ that if I could be admitted into heaven with this body of sin, I could not be happy. I know I must be like God ;

I must be holy.' He slept none all night, and at times used the following expressions: 'O what should I do, if it was not for Jesus Christ; wonderful, wonderful goodness and love of God! How have we sinned against him!' The company prayed with him alternately; and he, at their desire, prayed also. In his address to God, he appeared sensible of his unspeakable guilt, and affected with the wonderful way of salvation by Christ; and earnestly begged that the Lord would be with him in his last hours. Nor did he forget to pray for his friends and his enemies. In the morning he declared that he had a pleasant night, appeared resigned, and bid his friends farewell with calmness, never expecting to see them on earth again.

At nine o'clock that morning (which was the day of his execution) at his request, I visited him; found him solemn and composed, considering the circumstances in which he was, and had much conversation with him, in the presence of four or five persons of serious character. His views of himself, and of redemption by Christ, were the same as are mentioned before; therefore it is needless to repeat them. At this time, he more than once said, 'I hope I am right, and shall not deceive myself. On Christ alone I rest; if I perish, I will perish at his feet.'

But I come now to the conversation that I had with him, as we proceeded in solemn pace to the place of death.

About two o'clock he came out of the prison yard, attended with all the awful formalities of execution; his arms pinioned, and the halter about his neck, following the cart in which were

his coffin and the ladder. Gladly would I have been excused from this painful office; but the youth's importunity, and a sense of duty, forbid me to decline it. I therefore stepped up to him, and thus addressed him: AMES, how do you feel under your present circumstances? The answer was not a little surprising. 'I feel composed. I am not afraid. What can make me feel so? Could it be, if I had not a good hope?' This naturally led me to enter upon a familiar consideration of the nature of a good hope; such as, that hope is the expectation of enjoying a certain good at a future period; that a good hope of eternal life, or happiness hereafter, is a gift of God; that it has for its foundation the righteousness of Christ; that the man who has a good hope has been made sensible of his guilt and helplessness, and from a view of Christ as the ground of his hope has been enabled to fly to him, and cast himself upon him, expecting the blessing hoped for wholly as a free gift, he being unworthy, and having nothing to bring as a price in his hand; farther, that where this divine hope is, there will be such gracious exercises of mind as these: hatred of sin, sin of heart and life, because of its opposition to God; a prevailing desire to be perfectly free from all sin, and like to God; with much to the same purpose. He listened with a solemn attention; and when I had done, he said—'I know that there is no other salvation but Christ; on him I rest my soul, and think I can say, I hate sin because God hates it, and do long to be made holy. I see that if I had sinned but once, and could live a thousand years, and pray and read

all that time, I could not make amends for that one sin. I can have no hope but Christ. If ever I enter into heaven, it will be by the free grace of God: it can only be by the mercy of God, because I never did a good thing in all my life. I have done nothing but sin against God.'

He discovered no anxiety about his body, or the death he was to die, all the way to the gallows, except once; which I think was occasioned by the falling of the end of the halter from under his arm. He caught it up, and said, 'Did I ever think that I should have such a thing about my neck?' To which I replied, AMES, how could you expect any thing else from your manner of life? Did you not tell me, that you once passed the gallows with stolen goods under your arm, and thought then that you should die there, if you did not leave off stealing? 'O yes, I did. True, true. But is there not yet hope for such a sinner? Is not the blood of Christ sufficient to cleanse me from all sin? On that I trust.' Several times by the way, he affectionately used the words of David, in a short prayer to the Lord; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see what wicked way is in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" I also observed him breathe out his soul to God, as we walked, in these words—'O Lord, make me holy.'

I asked him how his past life appeared to him; to which he said, 'Bad, bad beyond all account! My sins frighten me, they are so many and great.' But still he rested on that sacred declaration, "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

He asked several questions about the way of access to God the Father through Christ, and

concerning the distinction between the Father and the Son. Also, whether I thought that the souls of the wicked at death would appear before God, to receive the sentence of condemnation? or, whether they would immediately pass to hell, and wait their doom at the day of judgment? To all which I answered him. The questions were asked, and the answers attended to with an astonishing composure.

He mentioned with astonishment the horrors of conscience he had been under at a certain time while in prison; expressed his wonder at God's goodness to him, and his gratitude also that he now enjoyed such an agreeable composure of mind; and would ask, 'How can it be? I hope I am not deceived!'

By this time we came in sight of the gallows. I designedly took no notice of it, but watched the prisoner to see how he would behave, expecting that the sight of it would give him a shock. But he looked up, and said, 'There is the gallows; and I shall soon know, dear Sir, more than you.' I asked him how his mind was, at the near approach of dissolution. 'I feel composed,' said he.

We were now hindered from conversing, by the pressing of the multitude, who were all desirous to be as near the prisoner as possible. Upon coming under the gallows, he was ordered to get into the cart and stand up while the warrant for his execution was read; after which he sat down on his coffin, and I asked him, as the solemn period was at hand when he would launch into eternity, how things appeared to him. As for his heart and life, he declared, shaking his head at the same time, that they were 'bad;

dreadful bad ; that he could have no hope if it were not for Jesus Christ ; but that he thought there was infinite safety in him.'

I asked him, whether he was sensible of this truth respecting Christ, and whether he had reason to think he could trust his guilty soul on him. He answered, ' O, yes, there is no other way ; where else can I hope ? I want no other hope : " the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." O, that I may be right.' I then prayed with him, and after prayer took an affectionate leave of him. At parting, he assured me that his mind remained in the same state. I then retired a few steps from him, leaving him to the exercise of his own thoughts. He laid his head on his coffin for some time, then kneeled down by it, and prayed softly. But it now being within fifteen minutes of the time fixed for his execution, he was ordered to stand upon his coffin. He obeyed at once. Being now tied up, and waiting the last minute, he addressed the people in a few words : ' Look at me, a sight enough to melt a heart of stone ; I am going to die for my wickedness : but the death I am to die, is nothing compared with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, for they pierced his hands and his side with a spear. O take warning by me. If you were my own brethren, near to me as my own soul, I could only tell you to beware of stealing, swearing, drinking,' &c.

He asked how long he had to live ; and being told, he addressed himself in solemn prayer to God. Among other expressions I recollect the following : ' Lord, have mercy on me, the worst of sinners. I can only stand at a distance, and say, God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, it is

better to trust in thee, than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in thee, than to put confidence in princes. If I perish, Lord Jesus, I will perish at thy feet; but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' There were many other expressions which he used in this his last address to God, that appeared to me really suitable to his case. He again asked how long he had to live, and was answered five minutes. He desired to know when the time was out; and looking wishfully at the sun, he said, 'That sun is almost down; but before it sets, I shall be in eternity, where I never was;' and pulling the cap over his eyes again, he cried out, 'Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' As he finished this sentence, he was turned off, and died with great ease.

I have only now to add, that both before and since the execution of the unhappy youth, I made inquiry respecting his latter conduct; and have been informed more than once, by the family who daily observed him, that they never saw so great an alteration for the better in the temper and conduct of any man, in so short a time, as in this youth. And as far as he had opportunity, he discovered a readiness to forgive, and to do a kindness for his worst enemy. Thus he said he could cheerfully and heartily forgive the person, who, he declared, had sworn falsely against him on his trial, relative to his first entering the house of Mr. Bicker. Nor did he only forgive him, but when any of the neighbours sent him victuals, he said, I cannot eat it; carry it to A——, he wants it. This was an evidence of a Christian temper. Upon the whole, I cannot but think that he died a *Penitent Thief*.

Thus I have, at the warm solicitations of some of my friends, given an account of the exercise of mind of the late LEVI AMES. They who, with the author, think that he died in faith, will admire this display of divine grace; and carefully ascribe all the glory to God; knowing, that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

It is probable the author may have subjected himself to some unkind reflections, for taking so much notice of a once profligate youth, who made his exit on a gallows; but as an evangelist has mentioned one penitent thief, he expects your indulgence in the preceding narrative of another. The most that can be said, perhaps, in this matter is, that the author has made a charitable mistake; this surely will be no great crime: besides, charity will cover the multitude of faults.

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## SERMON XI.\*

### HOPE THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

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H E B R E W S, vi. 17—20.

*Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.*

IN a former discourse from these words, I particularly considered the 18th verse, and endeavoured to shew, that the purpose and promise of God are a source of strong consolation to such as have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. We shall now consider the two last verses, “ which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.” The language is figurative, and if followed, will lead us to observe,

I. That the believer in this world is like a vessel at sea, driven by every storm.

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II. Hope is his anchor, by which he is preserved from shipwreck, being sure and stedfast, and entering into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for him entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

I. The Christian in this world is like a vessel on a boisterous sea, exposed to many storms. This remark is founded on Paul's representing hope as an anchor. The mariner cannot do without the anchor, nor the Christian without his hope. Let us trace the similitude in the following instances.

1. The prudent mariner, when about to sail, prepares for storms, because he cannot expect to have fair weather always.

So should it be with Christians. In such a world as this, they should expect and be prepared for the worst. "In the world," said Christ to his disciples, "ye shall have tribulation." But it is the too common fault of young Christians, especially, to think their mountain stands strong, and that they shall never be moved; and though they who have gone before them warn them of their danger, they will not prepare for it: hence are they often overtaken in an unguarded moment; and thus Satan gets an advantage of them.

2. The mariner sails with a serene sky and a leading breeze; his prospects flatter him: but scarcely has he cleared the land, before the clouds gather, the wind heads him, and it becomes tempestuous; so sudden the change.

So it is with Christians. Happy in a sense of the divine favour, and swallowed up in God, one minute, the next attacked by their common

enemies, the devil, the world, or the flesh; they hang their harps on the willows, and refuse to be comforted. In this condition they adopt the language of Job, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." "O that I were as in months past!" How sudden and how melancholy the change, from the height of consolation to the depth of sorrow!

3. When the mariner embarks, he leaves behind him, perhaps, those who are as dear to him as his life. Gladly would he carry them with him if he could; but the calls of duty must be heard before those of affection. He looks behind him as he goes, and casts a wistful eye to the place where all that is dear to him on earth remains; wishes them a thousand blessings, and drops the involuntary tear of warmest affection over them.

So it is with Christians. Often, when called to follow the Lamb, they leave---O painful thought! they leave some of their best earthly friends behind; a wife, a husband, a child, a brother, a sister, yea, all that they value on earth, who are unwilling to accompany them in the way of religion. They often look behind, drop the tear of Christian love, and wish to take them by the hand, and conduct them to him who taketh away the sin of the world. They part with them with the greatest reluctance, and are often whispering to themselves, 'And shall we be separated forever? Shall we, who are connected by the tenderest ties of blood and friendship, be at last

as wide apart as heaven and hell? Forbid it, thou God of all compassion! Unite us to thyself by love divine, and permit us to meet and worship before thy throne in heaven forever.'

4. When the mariners have left their native shore, and launched out into the mighty deep, nought appears but sky and water; the little company seem to be alone in the world.

So in measure it is with Christians. Having left the crowd of unbelievers, and fled for refuge to Christ, they appear to themselves a little flock. Thus it was in a particular manner in the age of the first Christians. They were few, compared with Jews and Gentiles, who opposed them; for the world was against them; and always will be, while unregenerate, against the true disciples of Christ. "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," said Christ to his followers.

The Bible teaches us to believe that real Christians, in all ages, are few, in comparison with those who reject the gospel. Many are called, but few are chosen. "Strait is the gate," said Christ, "and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it: but wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat." "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." Thus Paul speaks. But was not Paul mistaken? Christians believe he was inspired by the Holy Ghost; if so, he hath spoken the truth. It follows, we may receive it as a divine truth, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called."

The same thing is established by observation. Look which way you will, and you find that the

majority neglect religion, and live without God and without hope in the world. There are times, indeed, when the godly have much company. This is the case when religion is revived; then converts come as the clouds, and as the doves to their windows. But in general, they have been much alone in the world. They sometimes think themselves alone as to their exercises of heart; or that no person was ever troubled as they are, with sins and temptations.

5. The mariners, always when at sea, keep their port in view, and endeavour to make their passage in the best and safest manner they can.

So it is with Christians. When they set out in the divine life, they keep heaven in view, and endeavour to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

6. The mariners meet with storms, and sometimes seem to be in danger of shipwreck; are driven back to port, or hover long in sight of their haven, but are not suffered to enter.

So it is with Christians. Their little bark is beat about by many a wave; and they are ready to think they shall never reach their haven. The following particulars will illustrate our meaning.

(1.) Violent temptations, horrid thoughts, and blasphemous suggestions attack them; insomuch that they shudder at themselves.

(2.) Risings of indwelling sin; which cause them to fear that they have never known the truth as it is in Jesus, and shall surely fall, and be lost at last.

(3.) Reproaches of the world. Those who are strangers to the nature of religion oppose and persecute the saints. There is in man a fear

of reproach, and a wish to avoid it ; and sometimes the Christian acts unworthy his character, and upon reflection becomes unhappy.

(4.) The false principles of religion, that God permits to take place, often extremely distress him ; because the glory of divine truth is obscured, and weak or unguarded persons are led captive for a time, till the light of truth breaks forth, and destroys the man of sin, with the false prophet.

It hence appears that he meets with innumerable afflictions in the present life, and is often ready to faint under them. Such indeed is his situation, beset by a sinful heart within, accompanied with languor of affection, doubts and fears, the temptations of an alluring world, and the arts of false religion without, that he would certainly fall, if it were not for hope, which is as an anchor to the soul. His feeble bark is like the ship at sea, tossed with every wave, and exposed to ten thousand dangers. We now pass to consider the hope,

II. Which is said to be as “ an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.”

By this hope we are to understand either the two immutable things spoken of in ver. 17. i. e. the purpose and promise of God, which lay the foundation for hope ; or Christ himself is intended, who is called the hope of Israel, Acts xxviii. 20. “ For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain,” said Paul. Or it may intend the grace of hope, or hope as an act of the mind. The last appears to me to be the sense, because such an exercise of heart is encouraged by the two im-

mutable things mentioned in the preceding verse, and because it is distinguished from Christ himself in the next verse, who is said to be the forerunner. Hope is said to enter within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec : it therefore is distinct from Christ, who is gone to heaven, and is followed by hope ; which is said to be as “ an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.”

Those things that are said of hope now come under consideration.

1. It is as an anchor to the soul. By the anchor a vessel is kept from driving ashore, when the wind is high and the current strong. By this little but useful instrument, many vessels have been preserved, and many lives saved.

So hope keeps the soul in the most trying seasons. Hence we are said to be “ saved by hope.” Is the believer tempted ? Hope waits for the accomplishment of the promise, that God will not suffer him to be tempted more than he is able to bear ; but with every temptation will make a way for his escape. Is he burdened by sin within ? He waits in hope of a final and complete deliverance. Is he afflicted ? He hopes that all will be for his profit ; knowing “ that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Is he in darkness of mind ? He hopes that the Lord will lift upon him the light of his countenance, and put joy and gladness in his heart. Is he grey with years ? Hope sustains him while he totters ; he expects a blissful immortality. Is he called to die ? Hope sustains him. He looks

forward to a crown of glory, which he expects to enjoy through grace alone.

2. The anchor is thus serviceable, though unseen ; for it sinks to the bottom.

So hope is of great use to the poor Christian at a time when he can hardly think he has any ; or when the things he hopes for are almost out of sight. In the Christian's worst times he cannot give up his hope. It has fixed on Christ, his fullness, unchangeableness and promise, and will not let go. It is at such times hoping against hope.

3. Sometimes the ship drifts, notwithstanding the anchor ; at length, meeting with better ground, it brings her up, and prevents her going on shore.

So hope sometimes seems to fail the Christian : back he goes ; or sinks with discouragement. But at length hope fixes on some sure word of promise, some divine truth, and he stands fast.

4. You may have seen a number of vessels riding at anchor in fair weather ; all appeared equally safe ; but when a storm hath arisen, many went on shore.

So it is with professors. There are many who appear as safe as any in fair weather ; but when storms have arisen, when temptation and persecution have taken place, hope has failed them, and they have turned back. And thus has it been with many anxious sinners. Remember the hopeful youth who fell at Jesus' feet.

5. The anchor causes the vessel to keep her head to the wind and tide.

So hope makes the Christian face his trials. He rejoices in hope, even in the midst of tribulation. " We glory in tribulations also ; knowing that

tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

6. The anchor sinks to the bottom, and lays hold there.

So hope "entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec."

This expression is in allusion to the high priest his entering into the holiest of all. This he did once a year; and not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the sins of the people. In this he was a type of Christ; who hath entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for his people. He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for the heirs of promise.

And this he did as a forerunner. The business of a forerunner is to prepare the way for the entrance of others: so Christ went to prepare places for believers.

Now the hope of the Christian entereth into that within the vail. It follows Christ to heaven, and rests upon his intercession at God's right hand. Hence he expects to persevere unto the end, because he has an advocate with the Father; and he hopes that he shall at last be with Christ, that he may behold his glory.

"Hope with a goodly prospect feeds the eye,  
 "Shews from a rising ground possession nigh;  
 "Shortens the distance, or o'erlooks it quite:  
 "So easy 'tis to travel by the sight."

DRYDEN.

It is sure ; it cannot be lost. When once it enters within the vail, and fastens on Christ, the forerunner of his people, nothing can ever destroy it. The waves and billows spend their force in vain ; the believer's heart is fixed, trusting in God.

It is stedfast ; it never changes its object ; it is immoveably fixed on Christ for eternal life. Amidst the changing scenes of time, this stedfast hope buoys up the soul when tossed on the billows of adversity.

“ Hope travels through, nor quits us when we die.”

A few reflections shall close the subject.

1. How great the divine condescension, to give such ground of consolation to them that fly for refuge to the mercy of God ! The eternal purpose and faithful promise of God must afford the strongest consolation to every believing, humble soul. This hope causes him to sing while in the house of his pilgrimage, and cheers with its beams the dark valley of the shadow of death.

2. How important for us individually to possess that hope that is as an anchor to the soul. In the dying hour, all other refuges will fail : the hope of the hypocrite shall be cut off and perish, and his trust be as the spider's web. Yea, the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost. Job viii. 13, 14 ; and xi. 20.

3. Let us examine whether we possess this permanent hope. It may be satisfactorily known by its tendency : it always leads to holiness. “ He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” who hath called him. The genuine hope of the gospel never leads to licen-

tiousness. It constantly keeps the soul sensible of its obligations to him "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

4. And lastly. This hope alone animates and cheers our future prospects. The believer, in the hour of despondency, is enabled to adopt the language of David; "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." When just entering the "valley of the shadow of death," when the guilty mind is filled with horrors indescribable, the believer, under the influence of this hope, is enabled to sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" While he knows that the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; he can rejoice in God, who giveth him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Until the voyage of life is finished, may the Lord grant to all his believing people the supporting influence of that hope, which is as an anchor to the soul, and which entereth within the veil; and may his terrors alarm the thoughtless and secure, who live without God and without hope in the world. Apprized of their danger, and quickened by grace, may they fly for refuge to the Lord Jesus, and lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. Amen.

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## S E R M O N XII.\*

GOD'S DESIGNS VAINLY OPPOSED BY SINNERS.

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PSALM ii. 1—4.

*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel  
together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let  
us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.  
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have  
them in derision.*

THIS psalm is clearly prophetic of Christ, and of the ill treatment with which he and his followers met from the ungodly in the world. To him the apostle applies it in Acts iv. 25, 26. "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hath said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." This application of the psalm to Christ is decisive.

I readily acknowledge that it has respect to David, the type of Christ, in the first instance; but on this occasion, a greater than David is here.

\* Never before printed. Delivered at the quarterly day of prayer,  
June 4, 1803.

There is in general, if not always, a degree of ambiguity attending prediction, which is happily removed by its fulfilment. It is the event that fully explains prophecy. To us this happiness is granted; and this shall be the business of the present opportunity, to compare this prediction and the event together. My intention is to impress on my own heart and yours, the sufferings and safety of that blessed cause, in which we are so much interested, and for which we meet this day to pray.

Let us attend to the passage as it lies before us, and beseech the Father of lights to give us a right understanding of its meaning.

The sacred writer asks, why do the heathen rage? This prophetic question was fulfilled when Christ made his appearance in the flesh, and was preached by his apostles.

There is another branch of the sentence in connexion with the preceding; which is, "and the people imagine a vain thing." The people here spoken of are, I suppose, the Jews. They imagined a vain thing when they thought,

1. That Messiah would come as a temporal prince, to deliver and exalt their nation. Such a Messiah would have been of no advantage to them as sinners, as persons under the condemnation of the law. But of this they were not sensible: their eyes were blinded to their true condition and need of a Saviour.

2. They imagined a vain thing, when Herod ordered all the male children, from two years old and under, to be slain, with an intention of cutting off him who was born king of the Jews. He knew not what he did; or that in doing it,

he was fighting against God, whose purpose shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure.

In each step of their conduct, you see the text exemplified, or have a display of the rage of the rulers and people of the Jews against Christ. All their opposition made to his preaching and miracles was of the same kind, and arose entirely from rage against him. His miracles they ascribed to a diabolical influence, and his doctrine they despised. They treated him as a deceiver, and raised a clamour against him.

3. They imagined a vain thing, when they hired Judas to betray him, and urged Pilate to condemn him, and when they crucified him. Their design was to get rid of him; but we shall find, before we conclude, that he who sitteth in the heavens did laugh; yea, that he had them in derision.

4. How vain a thing did they imagine when they placed a guard of Roman soldiers at the sepulchre, to prevent the sacred body from being stolen away. Hence they became the first witnesses of an important fact: for they, affrighted, ran into the city, and declared that he had risen. Their wicked designs were thus signally frustrated.

By the heathen are meant all Gentile nations; especially the Greeks and Romans. You recollect the manner in which the apostles were treated for preaching the doctrines of Christ. The Jews and Romans, by their influence, were the principal actors in his condemnation and death; but afterward the Greeks took a very decided part against him. They esteemed Christ crucified foolishness. And when Paul preached at

Athens against idolatry, they mocked. At another time he was stoned, imprisoned and scourged. Such was their rage against him, that they said he ought not to live any longer.

The next verse opens this matter more fully to our view. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed."

The terms kings and rulers signify persons clothed with different degrees of power and authority; the former are supreme, the latter subordinate. They united in their opposition to Christ.

You are desired to bear in mind, that this prediction was delivered about one thousand years before the coming of Christ. Its accomplishment hath been exact, so far as the present age of the world. Much yet remains as to the latter part of it.

The kings of the earth set themselves, i. e. in opposition against the Lord, meaning Jehovah; and against his anointed, meaning Jesus Christ, who is often spoken of in the word of God by this phrase.

Let us now compare prophecy and event together in this part of it.

The first instance of this kind we have in Herod, and in Pilate the Roman governor. You recollect that the former was so much opposed to him that he murdered many infants, that he might be sure to cut off Jesus Christ. Pilate arraigned, tried, condemned him, and delivered him over to the Jews and soldiers, to kill him.

You are sensible that the text was literally fulfilled during the ten persecutions under the Ro-

man emperors. The first was under the cruel Nero ; the second by Domitian ; the third by Trajan. I might mention all the names of those Roman kings or emperors, who set themselves against the Lord's anointed, or his cause in general ; but it is not necessary to my present purpose.

These persecutions lasted about three hundred years ; during which period, thousands of Christians were put to death. This was under Rome Pagan. Afterward the most cruel persecutions were carried on by Rome Christian, so called.

“ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed.” The following statement of facts will farther show the exact accomplishment of this prophecy. ‘ There was a strong conspiracy between James II. the king of England, and Louis XIV. of France, who were both papists, to extirpate the northern heresy, as they called the protestant religion, not only out of England, but out of Europe ; and had laid their schemes so as to be almost sure of their purpose. But just as they were about to put them into execution, God in his providence suddenly dashed all their schemes in pieces by the revolution, at the coming in of king William and queen Mary.’

After this there was a plan laid to accomplish the same thing by bringing in the popish pretender in the latter end of queen Anne's reign ; which also was defeated by Providence.

The emperor of Germany declared war against the duke of Saxony because he favoured Luther and his friends. The king of Spain maintained a long war with Holland and the Low Countries, on the same account.

In Holland, there have been shocking persecutions under the Spanish government. In France, at different times; especially under Louis XIV. who was a most bloody man. In England, in the reign of bloody queen Mary; and in Scotland, in queen Mary's days. Ireland too has had her share in the persecutions of the church. In the reign of Charles I. of England, above one hundred thousand protestants were cruelly put to death. In Italy too the same horrid cruelties have been exercised towards the Lord, and towards his anointed.

By this short sketch of facts it appears, that the text, delivered many hundreds of years past, has been literally fulfilled, as it respects the combination of kings and rulers against the Lord and the cause of Christ. And these cruel persecutions have been carried on in those very countries, which are now the seat of wars and desolations; the Lord hath given them blood to drink in their turn.

We may now look back and trace the progress of error, and departure from the faith, from the beginning, and learn how they have been gradually preparing for the present state of things in the world.

The persecutions of the church, and the corruptions of Christianity, have been long foretold with such clearness, that they have always been expected. The issue of these things hath been also foretold.

We have observed already, that at first Jews and Gentiles opposed the cause of Christ; him they apprehended, condemned and crucified. His followers were treated in the same manner, in different ages, and in different countries.

A departure from the faith began in the apostolic age. And after Rome pagan became Christian, which was when Constantine was converted to Christianity, she soon became corrupt. Errors were introduced, and fatal controversies took place among them. A hierarchy was soon established among the clergy, and primitive Christianity was greatly corrupted. Popery, with all its errors and with all its horrors, sprang up in the world, and spread with a surprising rapidity. Many things which did not belong to Christianity, being found among those who were called Christians, brought it into disrepute. The superstitions and fooleries of the Romish church, and the ignorance in which the common people were held, had an immediate tendency to make deists. This was actually the case, till at length Christianity was viewed as a mere human invention, an engine of state to keep the ignorant world in awe. Deism increased surprisingly, till at length thousands of mankind, in different nations, threw off all regard to religion.

Thus the abuses of mankind and the corruptions of Christianity led to the infidelity which now prevails in the world, and is openly avowed by a great body of men.

Such have been the causes which in a course of ages have brought the state of religion in the world to what you see it to be.

The tyrannies exercised over the souls and bodies of men, have also tended to awaken their resentments, and to produce the convulsions that are now among the nations. A diffusion of political knowledge hath helped on the matter. And when once mankind are let loose, there is no knowing

where or when they will stop. They who set out right, have lost sight of their first principles, and overleaped the bounds of reason, and of true rational liberty.

‘God is now making himself known,’ says an ingenious writer, ‘by the judgments which he executeth in the earth. He is now, by the works of his providence, giving the ultimate and that which will be the all-convincing evidence of the truth of the scriptures. There is but a little period to come, compared with the past, in which infidelity will dare speak its sentiments. All considerate and good people see this already ; and though there be some infidels against growing light, Infinite Wisdom permits them to rise up for two purposes : first, to fulfil more bloody judgments on apostate Christendom than men of good hearts would wish to be instrumental of executing, although they know them to be just ; and secondly, that by their avowed principles, practice, and the end to which Providence will bring them, they may be a warning to future ages against infidelity. God teaches by experience. Within the conclusion of a century from this time, it will not be disputed what was meant by prophetic Babylon. Her great wickedness will be illustrated to universal knowledge by her great plagues. It will also appear that infidelity was the instrument prepared by God for her punishment ; that this infidelity naturally sprung out of her own corruption, or rather was the last stage of antichristian apostacy ; and that having consumed itself and the parent that gave it birth, the judgments of God are finished. A new era will take place. Through the instruction of past

experience, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, righteousness and peace will fill the earth. All the prophecies describe this succession of events. The past and present fulfilment of them must remove from wise minds, all doubts concerning the future.\*

We pass to consider the next verse in the text, which is the language of the combined enemies of Christ and his church. "Let us break their bands, and cast their cords from us."

These words are a daring and impious declaration of the enemies of Christ, that they will reject his law and contemn his gospel. It is as if they had said, we will not have this man to reign over us. This they did: "he came to his own, and his own received him not."

By bands and cords are meant those things that unite them to Christ and to one another; love to Christ and his cause, which animated them amidst all their sufferings. Their enemies attempted, by threatenings on one hand, and promises on the other, to make them deny their Master; but they chose death rather than such a shameful and wicked conduct.

The last verse now comes under consideration. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." These words are David's, and teach us that Jehovah, who sitteth in the heavens, observes and controls all the events that take place on earth. He beholds the rage of the heathen, the combination of wicked kings and rulers against his church, and laughs at them, and will finally have them in derision. They are his instruments to execute his purposes;

\* Mr. Strong's Sermon from Rev. xviii. 4.

and when they have completed the work for which he uses them, he will bring them to their end and none shall help them. This is a blessed truth for such a day as this, in which the world is in convulsions.

We may illustrate the truth of this part of the text by the following instances.

1. Herod, in the slaughter of the infants, was disappointed. Christ was preserved. He who sitteth in the heavens defeated the wicked designs of his enemies.'

2. Thus it was with respect to the Jewish rulers and people in the crucifixion of Christ. His death was necessary in order that he might save sinners. They brought about, though with wicked hands, the event for which he came into the world, and finally they met their punishment in being conquered and dispersed. The Lord now hath them in derision. They are now a reproach, a proverb, a taunt, and a curse, in all places to which they are driven.

3. Persecution hath been overruled for the spread of the gospel, contrary to the design of persecutors. They meant to suppress, not promote the cause of Christ. They also sent many good men to heaven, by their cruelties, and the gospel to our America. Here we sit under our own vine and fig-tree, and there are none to make us afraid.

4. The Lord may be said to laugh at the enemies of his church, and to hold their weak designs in the utmost derision, as appears in the following instances. In the reign of queen Elizabeth, 'the Spanish armada was sent to invade England, in order to suppress and root out the reformed religion; and therefore they brought

in their fleet all manner of instruments of cruelty wherewith to torture the Protestants, who would not renounce their religion.' But they were baffled in so extraordinary a manner, that the Spanish admiral blasphemously swore 'that he feared Jesus Christ was turned Lutheran.'

In the rage of the papal party against the Protestants, Ireland was doomed to drink of the bitter cup of persecution, but was delivered in the following remarkable manner. Dr. Cole being sent with a commission for that purpose, called on a friend at Chester, and being pleased with his appointment, informed his friend of his determination to proceed to the utmost extremity when he should arrive at the place of his destination. A Protestant lady being present, and hearing what was said, found means to take his commission from a small box which contained it, and to place in its room a pack of cards. When the Doctor came to Ireland, and was about to produce his commission to the proper persons, (a large collection of people being present,) on opening the box, to his extreme mortification he found only a pack of cards, with the knave of clubs uppermost !\* He returned to obtain a new commission, but the queen died before it could be procured. The unhappy people were, in consequence of this, saved from death and ruin. Thus he who sitteth in the heavens doth have them in derision.

I might proceed to illustrate the prophecy before us, and to encourage the friends of Christ, by historical facts in abundance ; but these may suffice.

\* The chief officer observed to him, as things were, he had only to return and obtain another commission ; and with a degree of pleasantry added, "and we will shuffle the cards while you are gone."

We must now close the subject with a few reflections.

1. We are taught the depravity and wickedness of mankind in different ages and nations; which they have manifested in their rage and opposition to the cause of Christ. This wicked disposition hath led to reject or corrupt Christianity, and finally to renounce it, and embrace positive infidelity. 'This,' says the author we have quoted, 'is the last part of the antichristian apostacy. They can go no farther; and when they have spent themselves in destroying one another, Christ Jesus will appear to vindicate his insulted, injured cause.' 'We are come,' says one, 'to what the scripture emphatically calls the last day. The last tyrannical form of government is falling to pieces, viz. the Roman; for which event there hath long been a growing preparation in the state of the nations. It is the dying pangs of this fourth beast that now convulse the world.' "He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh; the Lord will have them in derision."

2. We learn this pleasing, animating truth, that the cause of Christ shall be preserved amidst all the convulsions of nations, and at last triumph gloriously. To this end he who sitteth in the heavens will conduct the present distressing scene of things; Christ will reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. Remarkable is the following part of the psalm, in which the text is. "Then shall he speak unto them, (his enemies,) in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son; this day have I

begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Thus you see that this psalm is remarkably applicable to the present condition of the church and of the world. God will accomplish all his pleasure as it respects the downfall of antichrist, the punishment of the enemies of his church, and finally cause her to come forth in triumph.

3. Let Christians duly consider what their duty is in such times as these. They should be much in prayer and supplication in private and in public, keep themselves unspotted by the flesh, and provoke one another to love and good works. Our God is a God who heareth prayer. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

4. There are several sources of encouragement for us amidst the distresses of the times; the principal is the promise and prophecy, and what God hath done in the extraordinary revivals of religion in different parts of the United States. God grant that they may be more universal, and we become a pious, a reformed people. These beginnings give us reason to hope that the Lord will not forsake us, though our iniquities abound.

Another source of consolation to good men is, that there is nothing in the cause of religion that can justly procure such a treatment of it, and of its friends. It is a religion of benevolence and love; it displays the love of God and of Christ, and exhorts its friends to do good to all men; to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; and as much as lieth in them, to live peaceably with all men. They who suffer in this cause suffer for righteousness' sake.

The subject affords great encouragement to us who are engaged in the ministry, to preach the word, to be instant in season, out of season. It becomes us to be faithful in our attachments to the apostolic doctrines, and to preach them with fidelity and plainness. If ever we are useful to mankind, it will be by preaching Jesus Christ and free grace.

To such diligence and fidelity we have many calls: one especially solemn and interesting to us all, in the death of our much beloved friend and brother, the Rev. Dr. THACHER.

To the societies united in this concert for prayer, this event is particularly solemn, as he was united with us in it from the beginning, and continued to assist us till his ill health deprived him of the opportunity. We this day miss him: we feel our loss, and sorrow most of all that we shall see his face no more. No more shall we enjoy his company and counsel: no more shall we hear his excellent addresses to the throne of grace: no more shall he return to his house; and the place which once knew him shall now know him no more. We were deprived of the opportunity of conversing with him in his last moments, by

his absence from home. But on the Saturday evening before he sailed, I was with him. He expressed his confidence that he should not recover, but with a peculiar energy, said to me, 'the doctrines I have preached are now my only comfort. My hopes are built on the atonement and righteousness of Christ.' But as we are favoured with the extract of a letter, from one who attended his last minutes, I shall lay it before you. 'It would appear,' says the writer, 'that from his first coming among us, he was under the impression that here his days would come to a close. I visited him as often as was practicable, and still found him placid and resigned, waiting for the salvation of his God; particularly on my last visit, a few hours before his death, after expressing his unshaken confidence in the obedience and death of the Son of God, the blessed Saviour of men, he requested me to pray for him, that whether he lived, he might live unto the Lord, or whether he died, he might die unto the Lord; that living or dying he might be the Lord's; to pray also for his family, for his congregation, and for his friends in Boston. All which, after kneeling by his bed, was attempted in humble dependence on divine grace; and in which this worthy and excellent minister of the altar joined with all the fervour of his soul. With the first Christian martyr, the last words which he was known to articulate were "Jesus Christ my Saviour."

May this solemn event have a becoming influence on us his brethren in the ministry, and on you our Christian friends.

To the greatly afflicted family we wish every divine consolation and support ; and to his bereaved flock, hearts devoutly to improve this mournful visitation. And may we all be followers of them who, through faith and patience, are gone to inherit the promises, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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## S E R M O N    X I I I . \*

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DIE IN THE LORD.

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REVELATION, xiv. 13.

*And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

A MOURNFUL providence hath determined my choice of this passage: a providence in which I myself am chiefly concerned. God most wise and righteous hath seen meet to remove an affectionate and tender mother by death!

The gloomy tidings were received the day past. I feel the stroke. Nature recoils; but religion teacheth to say, *All is well*. In such a case, who can help feeling, seeing the connexion was near and mutually binding? Yet, O my soul, dismiss every murmuring thought, and adore the hand that strikes!

The deceased ever acted a tender, a provident, and an indulgent part. While properly thoughtful of the body, and its concerns, she manifested a prevailing solicitude for the immortal soul: making it evident to all that were about her, that she “travailed in birth again, till Christ should be

\* Delivered April 17, 1768, occasioned by the death of the author's mother, Mrs. Mary Stillman, who died March 17, 1768, in Charleston. (S. C.) 2ged 57.

formed in them." A reflection on such repeated acts of kindness, tends to make the wound the deeper, and to increase the sense of loss in him, who feels that he has the affection of a son.

Had I been on the spot, it would have been expected, that I should make some improvement of the dispensation. It appears no less proper, when so far removed from the place of her death. The parent is no less a parent, for being above a thousand miles distant, neither is the stroke the more tolerable; rather this circumstance is an aggravation. We all esteem it a felicity to be near to them we love; and are ready passionately to wish, when any such die at a distance from us, that we might have seen the last of them, and have been among the number of their friends, who took part in their affliction, and contributed all that was in their power to make their death-bed easy. Had inclination made the disposal, this circumstance would have been prevented: but the Lord fixes the bounds of our habitation. We are not left to choose for ourselves, and it is well we are not; seeing we should follow our own way, till it would either prove our ruin, or our very great disadvantage. We have a striking instance of this in the conduct of Jonah, that disobedient prophet. In obeying the dictates of his own mind, he ran from God; and was soon brought to the sad dilemma, either that the mariners with him must suffer shipwreck, or he be cast into the sea. An instance this, that may lead us to reflect on our happiness, in being disposed of by an all-wise God; and at the same time, to justify his dealings with us, even when exercised with heavy trials.

Confident that you, an affectionate people, amongst whom I esteem myself happy, will bear with me on the present occasion, and give me a share in your prayers and sympathy, I shall go on to improve this righteous providence of God.

The passage I have read to you, will naturally lead us to a variety of suitable reflections ; such as are calculated to give support and comfort, under the death of those relatives, who, we have reason to believe, have slept in Jesus. Therefore I shall not be called to preach altogether to myself ; inasmuch as what may be suggested from the text, will be no less suitable to you, who have lately lost near and pious relations : yea, it may be received and treasured up against the time to come. Afflictions await us, and we know not how soon God may make a breach in our families, or among the number of our bosom friends.

St. John having spoken of the rise, power and cruelty of antichrist, in the preceding chapter, proceeds to foretel his destruction, and the punishment that would be inflicted on all such as should worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in their forehead and in their hand. But with respect to those, that should endure the great fight of affliction, and maintain their integrity, in the midst of temptation and bloody persecution, he highly commends their conduct, and pronounces them blessed in death. Ver. 12, 13. "Here is the patience of the saints : Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." q. d. In these distressing times of antichristian cruelty, their patience having been severely tried, did shine conspicuously ; they chose rather to part with their lives, than to

deny their Master. And the text seems to be introduced with a design to encourage such patience in tribulation, by setting before the saints a prospect of enjoying immortal blessedness, as soon as they should finish their course: "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Let us attend to the following particulars:

I. An inquiry into the import of the phrase, "dying in the Lord."

II. A consideration of the blessedness of such; "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

I. We are to inquire into the import of the phrase, "dying in the Lord:" which is an inquiry of importance, seeing the blessedness here predicated is confined to such.

1. Some die in the comforts of the Lord; being favoured with the most lively manifestations of the love of God, and clear and soul-reviving discoveries of that glory to be revealed. Many believers have had such realizing views of heaven and its ineffable felicities, by faith, through the medium of eternal truth, and the Spirit of God so sensibly witnessing with their spirits their adoption, that they have been anxious to be gone. Death and all its terrors have been swallowed up in the divine prospect of the all-surpassing glory; and from hence they have, upon the verge of eternity, cried out like the mother of Sisera in another case, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?"

We have had numerous instances of those triumphant deaths, which adorn religion and confirm the hope of such of the children of God who have still to submit to the like event. With what pleasure and tranquillity have some waited for their dissolution, under the growing infirmities of the body, and have often spoke of the period when they should be dissolved with an evident satisfaction? I have never read the letter of which the following is an extract, written by the devout Mrs. Rowe to the Rev. Dr. Watts, without delight. After she had requested that he would look over, and prepare certain of her papers for the press, she adds, ‘I have now done with mortal things, and all to come is vast eternity. Eternity! How transporting is the sound! As long as God exists, my being and my happiness is secure. These unbounded desires, which the wide creation cannot limit, shall be satisfied forever. I shall drink at the fountain head of pleasure, and be refreshed with the emanations of original life and joy. I shall hear the voice of uncreated harmony speaking peace and ineffable consolation to my soul.

‘Through the blood of the Lamb, I hope for an entire victory over the last enemy; and that before this comes to you, I shall have reached the celestial heights; and while you are reading these lines, I shall be adoring before the throne of God, where faith shall be turned to vision, and these languishing desires satisfied with the full fruition of immortal love.’\* Thus lived that ingenious, pious Christian in the glorious prospect of immortality.

\* Prefixed to Mrs. Rowe’s Devout Exercises of the Heart.

And how full of divine consolation was the excellent Mr. Hervey. On the day of his death, among many other things that he said, which are worthy of being transcribed and repeated, he mentioned 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." And went on in the following language, 'Here is the treasure of a Christian. Death is reckoned among this inventory; and a noble treasure it is. How thankful am I for death, as it is the passage through which I pass to the Lord and Giver of eternal life; and as it frees me from all this misery you now see me endure, and which I am willing to endure, as long as God thinks fit; for I know he will, by and by, in his own good time, dismiss me from the body. These light afflictions are but for a moment, and then comes an eternal weight of glory. O! welcome, welcome death! Thou mayst well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian. "To live is Christ, but to die is gain."\* Thus died that man of God, whose praise is in the churches. Besides whom, we have had a crowd of witnessees. And whosoever understands Heb. xi. 1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" I say, whosoever experimentally understands this incomparable definition of faith, may at once account for the Christian's triumph over the last enemy.

But it is necessary to observe, that all the children of God do not die in the comforts of the

\* Hervey's Life.

Holy Ghost. We have seen some very affecting instances of the exemplary Christian his having the severest conflict in his last illness and death. I have read of an eminent divine, who had lived thirty years in the assurance of faith; notwithstanding which, he died in the dark. And let it be remembered, that there are many things at such times that tend to fill the mind with gloominess. The diseases of the body, of which the Christian complains, often so affect the mind as to hinder the wonted exertion and exercise of its faculties: these two being so nearly connected, that in common their distresses are reciprocal.

Besides, we cannot be insensible that it is the devil's last onset; and the shorter his season of tempting is, the more violent are his efforts. "The devil is come down to you," said St. John to the church, "in great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." He cannot destroy, but he will as much as possible perplex the children of God. Add to this that the believer's comfortable living, and surely his comfortable dying, depends upon the communication of divine love, and the vigorous exercise of faith. Now God may, yea, he sometimes does, for wise reasons, suspend his gracious influences from his own children, even when on a death-bed. The Lord Jesus Christ himself, when he hung on the cross, cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It becomes us to be silent, when the reasons of the divine conduct are hid from us. But, alas, how apt are we at such times to say, 'Why is it thus?' This instance in which our blessed Redeemer was

forsaken on the cross, should lead us to a mute behaviour under such a dispensation.

The preceding remarks may correct one mistake, which seems to be generally fallen into, viz. Christians, their almost taking it for granted, that a believer who has been eminent in life, will be no less, yea, more so in death. Whereas we find that there is a variety of circumstances, either from the diseases of the body, the fiery darts of the wicked, or the suspension of divine influence, that may fill the mind with darkness, and cause a once shining Christian to set in a cloud. But this should not suggest any suspicion of the safety of his state, seeing it has been the lot of many of the people of God, who in life, and during a course of years, had given their intimate friends the most satisfying evidences of their acquaintance with true religion. Besides, was not Christ himself forsaken in his last minutes? Who would dare from hence to infer, that he was not the darling of the Father? The blessedness, therefore, that is spoken of in the text, is not limited to such as are so happy as to die in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But,

2. They are blessed who die in the Lord, i. e. in his favour; who have their sins pardoned through the precious blood of Jesus, and their souls justified by his everlasting righteousness; who are united to him by ties that are indissoluble; inasmuch that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.” And this is the case

with all that are called according to his purpose. They all die in faith, and in the divine favour; though they may not be able to say, Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' To be in the favour of God is absolutely necessary to our dying safely; and a persuasion that we are personally in his favour, is necessary to our dying comfortably. And the one may be, where the other is not. The blessedness, therefore, is annexed to those persons who die in union to Jesus, and interested in the favour of God; though it may be their great affliction to struggle hard with death, under the hidings of their Father's face. I now proceed,

II. To consider the blessedness of departed saints: "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them."

1. Note by what authority St. John publishes this glorious sentence, "Yea, saith the Spirit," the Holy Ghost, by whom holy men of God at sundry times were moved to speak; who inspired the whole of the living oracles.

2. We observe, that the dead in Christ are blessed from the moment of their departure out of this world. This seems plain from several scriptures: Solomon assures us, that at death the "dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." Our Lord said to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And St. Paul, in several places, has satisfied us what views he had of this matter: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He speaks with confidence, it being no matter of conjecture or uncertainty;

but what he, with the rest of the disciples, were persuaded of, viz. that when the body should die, the soul should immediately enter into the joy of the Lord. And in his epistle to the Philipians, he declares that he was "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." If the apostle had not known, that upon the dissolution of the body he should be present with the Lord, why was he anxious to depart? Death in itself is shocking: nature shrinks at the prospect of it. St. Paul, as a man, loved his life and enjoyments too well to wish to die, barely for the sake of being dead. And as a believer in Jesus, he loved his privileges, especially that communion he had with a God in Christ, too well to be desirous of departing without an assurance that he should instantly pass to glory, where his joy should be full; or as it is here expressed, rest from his labours, and his works follow him. This is the blessedness that takes place, as soon as the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved. In the world, believers shall have tribulation; but at death,

1. They rest from all those distresses, that result from the afflictions and death of friends and relatives. Besides that natural sympathy, which mankind are generally possessed of, by which they are inclined to pity the afflicted, and as it were to bear a part of their burdens, real believers are justly supposed, in consequence of a true acquaintance with the religion of Jesus, to possess, if I may use the expression, a more delicate sensibility; inasmuch as his doctrines and example mutually tend to promote it. This divine temper never shone in any one as it did in the adorable Son of God; and it is expected

of all his followers, that the same mind, the same tempers should be in them, which were also in him. Now in whomsoever this temper prevails, it will interest him in the prosperity or adversity of others. He will mourn with those who mourn, and rejoice with those who do rejoice. He finds himself sensibly afflicted when his brethren suffer, and as sensibly relieved when they obtain deliverance.

But besides this more general sympathy, having formed a variety of agreeable connexions in domestic life, he becomes still more attentive to their interests; and consequently is so much more affected with their calamities; e. g. Does God lay his hand upon the wife of your bosom? or the provident and tender husband? Who can describe the distressing anxiety of mind on such occasions? What fears invade the person, lest cruel death should dissolve the happy ties, break the pleasing connexion, and thus deprive you of the partner of your life; leaving you to bemoan your state of widowhood, after having spent many years together in that near relation!

Or are the indulgent parents, who have reared you through the several stages of life, from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, at vast expense; who have always dealt with you in the most tender and compassionate manner; I say, are they afflicted? You feel for them, and become partakers of their affliction. Are they taken off by death? You sigh in secret, weep abundantly, and are ready to wish that it had been the will of God to have continued them longer.

Does the Lord single out one of your tender offspring, and load him with painful sickness? No

one can tell the feelings of a parent's heart on such occasions, but he who is himself a parent. How gladly would he bear a part of the affliction, were it possible? He walks the room, watching every breath, and every pulse, while his fears suggest the most dangerous symptoms. His anxious mind continually trembles, lest death should cut down the flower. And if the event should be according to his apprehensions, we hear him, in language like that of David, bewailing the sad catastrophe: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom: would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." Thus we see, that the very connexions which make up a great part of what we call happiness in this life, often prove like so many thorns in our sides. From distresses of this nature, all are delivered at death.

2. They rest from all pains and sicknesses. The human body is exposed to a great variety of diseases, many of which are attended with the most excruciating pains. With these, some of the saints have been long exercised, while others have been suddenly transmitted from earth to heaven. How glorious is such a transition! One minute busy in the affairs of the world, and it may be struggling with poverty, with distress, &c. the next minute in the presence of God, and of the Lamb! But God is a sovereign; he appoints a sudden death and an easy passage to some, but lingering, painful sickness to others of his own children. We have seen some continue months, under a complication of diseases, and afflicted with the acutest pains, till finally, nature being worn out, submits without a groan to the stroke of death, and thus obtains an eternal deliverance from all such distresses. Who would be so

cruel as to have them back again, even if they might have it for a wish, seeing they have endured the conflict, and finished their course, and are now admitted to the fruition of eternal life?

3. By this event, the saints are freed from all solicitude about the fickle things of time. These they had been anxious to obtain, and were either disappointed in the pursuit or enjoyment. They either never acquired what they had studiously sought after, or, having acquired it, became convinced that they were as far from their fancied happiness as ever.

These sorrows of the world are now at an end. The body lies at rest in the land of darkness, as darkness itself, and the soul exults in the beatific vision. The body waits the summons of the last day, when the trump shall sound, and the dead in Christ rise first. Such cease to say, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" being amply, yea, eternally provided for in an infinitely better state.

4. The saints rest from all persecutions for the sake of Christ and his divine religion; from all unkindness from those of whom they expected better treatment; they have done forever with all disputing about religious sentiments, and have arrived in that world, the glorious inhabitants of which see eye to eye, and with perfect harmony unite to magnify the exceeding riches of grace.

5. Departed saints have obtained that deliverance, they had long desired, from all sin. Sin now has no more being in, or power over them. Often did they on this account groan, being burdened; and in the pathetic language of St. Paul say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That

cursed thing is entirely done away, and they have no more to do in a way of opposition to it. The combat ceaseth forever, and they are enabled to say, "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory!" It was a fiery conflict, and cost the saints many a sorrowful hour. Often did they complain, "When we would do good, evil is present with us." Many times did they enter their closets to weep over their indwelling corruptions, to bewail their want of conformity to the divine character, and to wrestle with God for greater spirituality; but now "their warfare is accomplished, and they have received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins." O happy conquest! blessed deliverance! What, sin no more? Never be interrupted more by that monster which hath made all the days of their pilgrimage sorrowful? Blessed be God, he hath so ordered it, that the promised rest shall come!

6. They now bid defiance to the powers of darkness. Satan can tempt them no more. Though he cannot destroy, he will make the journey of God's people as thorny and distressing as possible. "He walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" and his temptations are compared to fiery darts: with what propriety every believer knows, seeing he is not ignorant of his devices. But having passed through death, he has arrived where the wicked one, the devil, ceaseth from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

7. Departed saints rest from all unbelief, from all fears of death, and from all doubts about their interest in Christ. These things, while they were in the body, were a constant source of discouragement. They were often led, through

the weakness of faith, to stagger at the promises, to dread the last enemy, and to fear that after all they should be deceived: ever ready to write the most bitter things against themselves. It is not uncommon for those that fear the Lord, to walk in darkness, being deprived of the light of his countenance; which is the greatest trial they can meet with in the world. And having lost sight for a time of Jesus' most glorious character, his personal worth and beauty, through the prevalence of unbelief and their indwelling corruptions, they lament, in the bitter language of Job, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." At such times nothing can satisfy a real believer, but renewed discoveries of a glorious Christ; who is to him altogether lovely, and the chief among ten thousand. 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' is his prayer; 'let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely! In these expressions we observe not only warm love to an absent Redeemer, but distressing anxiety for his return.

But the case is altered with all those who have died in the Lord; they rest from these difficulties, and all those evils that attend the present state. And we are led to observe, as an essential part of their blessedness, that they are in the actual enjoyment of all good. "And their works do follow them." By this sentence we are taught to trace them to some other state of being. They have bid adieu forever to the present scene; but

have not lost their existence, nor yet sunk into a state of sleep or inactivity. They have only changed place, earth for heaven; a vale of tears, for the presence of God. They have been conducted by their guardian angels to the blissful society of heaven, and are seated in yonder glory, among the spirits of just men made perfect; among all the redeemed with the blood of Jesus. There they enjoy the company of patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, and the noble army of martyrs. There old friends meet together; and having taken a retrospective view of the way, in which the Lord led them in this wilderness; the various deliverances he had wrought for them, and that abundant mercy displayed in their being made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, they unite with all the illustrious company of saints, to adore the Lamb. Now they are without sin and sorrow; they no more complain, 'I sought him, but I found him not;' for they are in the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus, who is to them a real object of sight. They behold his glory, and are satisfied with appearing in his likeness. To them an abundant entrance has been ministered into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their works have followed them. It is an old, but a just remark, that their works did not go before, to give them a title to the kingdom of heaven, or to plead their admission into it: no, this unspeakable favour they receive purely on account of the merits of Christ, through whom they obtain remission of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. They were accepted in the Beloved, in whom all the elect of God are complete. And upon

their arrival in that world of glory, they had nothing to plead as a reason of acceptance but the perfect righteousness of Jesus. "Their works followed them when admitted," says one; "as the robe which, on a king's coronation-day, flows from his shoulders, cannot but accompany him wheresoever he goes. It may be pertinent, on the mention of this illustration, just to hint, that as it is not the robe of state that makes the king, so neither is it the practice of holiness that makes the Christian. An union with Christ, an interest in his merits, and the indwelling presence of his Spirit; these, and nothing short of these, constitute the true Christian. Yet, as the royal robe is an attendant on majesty, and distinguishes the monarch; so practical godliness is inseparable from faith, and adorns the believer."

But after all that can be said of their happiness, it will readily be acknowledged, that we fall far short of an adequate description. We can better describe their miseries in this life, than their felicities in heaven. Verily "we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." "We know but in part, and we prophesy but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Yet this we are assured of, that the dead are blessed who die in the Lord; and we are in a degree made acquainted with the nature of that blessedness: but fully to investigate it, is impossible in our present state of sin and ignorance. Nevertheless, in this we rejoice, that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

As an improvement of the subject, I would observe,

1. That these instances of mortality should remind us of our own end. Their silent, but persuasive language, is, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." It is appointed for all once to die: this event is inevitable, but the time when it shall take place, uncertain. Man's days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. This is a truth none can deny. The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? No: death visits, without distinction, the palaces of kings, and the cottages of the poor; men of eminence, and such as are less distinguished; the aged and the youth. Where are all the inhabitants of the first ages of the world? Alas, they have long since submitted to the stroke of death. What numbers have walked these streets, filled our public places, bustled through the world under a weight of cares, carried on great business, been serviceable in their day, who are now no more in time? How many that have stately worshipped in this place, that sat on yonder seats, all attention, while the glories of the gospel were declared, are now confined in the land of darkness? Some that from this desk have preached unto you Jesus and the resurrection, and were once warmly engaged for God's glory and your salvation, are now returning to dust. Death indeed hath slain his ten thousands! What means the passing bell? Why go the mourners about the streets? These are all loud calls to us to consider our latter end. It hastens: before to-morrow's rising sun, some of us may be called to the judgment-seat of Christ! Which leads us to observe,

2. That it is a necessary inquiry, Are we in the Lord? Have we ever been called out of darkness

into marvellous light? Ever brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Important questions! Death is on his way: we stand exposed every moment to an arrest; and should we be overtaken in a state of unbelief, we are gone forever. Mankind need not hesitate a moment about their natural condition; they are dead in trespasses and sins. Having violated the divine law, they are under its curse; and dying in that state must be damned. If such, and such only, are blessed who die in the Lord, then all those who go out of the world in a state of impenitence, being without God and without Christ, must perish under the amazing load of their own guilt. How awful is the consideration! Yet awful as it is, we have had a long experience, that in itself it is utterly insufficient to quicken dead sinners. They will not believe, though one should rise from the dead; being under the powerful influence of enmity against God, and his glorious method of salvation. May the Holy Ghost accompany the solemn truth to the sinner's conscience, and slay that native principle, which will be his everlasting ruin, if unsubdued.

3. What has been delivered may tend both to support believers under their manifold afflictions, and to remove their fears of death. The present is a checquered state; these are their days of mourning. Neither have they any intimation from their divine Lord, that they shall be delivered from afflictions, until they put off the body. While in the world they are never secure. It often happens, that when they have emerged from under a heavy trial, and begin to think the worst is past, that an affliction still more grievous takes

place. To-day applauded; to-morrow condemned: one hour in affluence, the next reduced to want: one day in health, prosperous in business, and happy in the blessings of domestic life; the next, attacked with inveterate disease, frowned upon by Divine Providence in trade; or despoiled of those very things, which in their nature were calculated to render the calamities of life more supportable. But in the midst of all these distresses, believers may thus reflect; ‘This is not our rest: we have our eye fixed on the recompense of reward; and desire that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Verily we know, that if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. And who can think hard of the sufferings of this present time, when he looks to that glory which shall be revealed in him? They are not worthy to be compared with it.’

As these glorious truths tend to support believers under present afflictions, so they remove the fears of death. Why should they fear, who are united to Jesus, and whose sins are pardoned through the blood of sprinkling? The sting of death is sin. If sin be pardoned, what harm can death do to the Christian? He may dissolve the union that has long subsisted between the soul and body; but, glory be to God in the highest, that neither death, nor any other creature, shall ever be able to separate the soul from Christ. “They shall never perish,” said he, speaking of his people under the character of sheep, “neither shall any pluck them out of my hands.” Die they must; but their very bodies shall be kept in safe-

ty, until the resurrection of the just. Then Christ will change those vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body. "There is," says an apostle, "one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." This is one of the very comfortable articles of the Christian faith; and greatly conducive to reconcile the mind to death. Why should the believer be afraid to commit his sickly, infirm, and perhaps emaciated body to the tomb, when he can do it in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection?

And as to his immortal spirit, it does, as already observed, instantly pass to glory. The partition between earth and heaven is thin; "absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Thus writes an inspired apostle. Whereas we too commonly speak as though the spirit, upon its separation from the body, travels through immeasurable tracts of space, before it arrives at the celestial mansions. But did we strictly attend to the holy scriptures, methinks we should readily conclude, that the soul, upon the dissolution of the body, finds itself at once surrounded by myriads of perfect spirits, and in the transporting view of the ascended Saviour. Why then should the Christian fear to die? Rather, why is he not, with the apostle, desirous to depart, that he might be with Christ? Austin wished to die, that he might see that bless-

ed head that was once crowned with thorns. If believers are not allowed to wish for death, yet they may, and it is right they should, wait with pleasing expectation for their great change, as it will dismiss them from the flesh, and its numerous incumbrances, and introduce them into the presence of God, where is fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore ! There they shall behold that compassionate Jesus, who once agonized in the garden, until his sweat was as it were great drops of blood ; who was betrayed by Judas, arraigned at the bar of Pilate ; and though declared to be innocent, went forth bearing his cross, and died the just for the unjust ! And they shall forever sing the new song, saying, “ Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

4. In fine, what has been said is calculated to give support and comfort, under the death of pious relations. Have we reason to think that they died in the Lord ? The Holy Ghost hath pronounced them blessed. Permit me to say, that this is the case in the present afflictive visitation. Has the Lord removed one so nearly related, and so high in affection, to the world of spirits ? Blessed be his name, that the survivors have every satisfying evidence that she died in the Lord ; therefore they do not sorrow as those who have no hope.

Had I not been so nearly concerned, here I might have been permitted to say something of her character. But should it be attempted, some might judge it an impropriety ; and perhaps in the warmth of filial affection, too much might be

said. Yet how would it look to be silent? Tell me, what forbids a child to speak well of a venerable parent, when it may be done with the strictest regard to truth? Bear with me, I had rather be censured, than slight the memory of one of the best of mothers. After all, it is an agreeable circumstance, that I can do it in the words of the worthy minister\* of the church, of which she lived and died a member; as delivered by him on the solemn occasion. "Much might be said in her favour with the greatest justice; many things in her, worthy of praise and imitation, came under my own notice. I had the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with her for more than twenty years; during which time her conversation was such as became the gospel of Christ: and prior to the commencement of our acquaintance, she had several years been a warm, zealous, and exemplary professor of religion. So that, although she often lamented her having lived too many years in vanity, she was converted to God in the very prime of life; and which she spent to good purposes. She had naturally a great flow of spirits, and much vivacity of temper: which being by grace properly regulated, and kept under due restraint, made her appear with a brighter lustre in the Christian life. Her behaviour was lively, but not light; cheerful, but not vain. She maintained a close communion with God; was often engaged in her closet, and constant in her attendance on the word and ordinances of the gospel. Out of the abundance of her heart, her mouth frequently spake of divine

\* Reverend Oliver Hart, of Charleston, South-Carolina.

things; and which she did in a way suitable to the cases of those with whom she conversed. The poor and distressed, by various methods, she would help and relieve; and ever manifested a singular regard for ministers of the gospel.

“In social and domestic life, she was an affectionate wife, a tender parent, a kind mistress, and a sincere friend: an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile. Her last and fatal illness was both tedious and painful; which she supported with much patience, and resignation; until nature, being entirely exhausted, sunk under the weight; and she sweetly slept in Jesus.” And give me leave to subjoin, that she always admired the astonishing riches of grace; and that love of God which passeth knowledge. And did invariably, from her real acquaintance with the gospel, adopt the language of St. Paul to the Philippians; “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

In such a case, my brethren, how great must be the loss of surviving relatives? But infinitely greater the gain of them, who have thus walked with God, and died in faith. May all of us be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Even so, Lord Jesus! Amen.

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## S E R M O N    X I V . \*

THE RESURRECTION, AND CHANGE OF THE VILE BODY.

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I CORINTHIANS, xv. 51—54.

*Behold I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

THE general resurrection of the dead is the subject on which Paul treats in this chapter ; for which we are entirely indebted to divine revelation. Yet there are some things which are analogous to it in the natural world. For example : the seed that is cast into the earth, when sown, appears to us to be dead, springs up first the blade, then the ear, and finally the full corn in the ear : nor is the seed quickened except it die. This is a resurrection.

This is the case with some of the class of insects. The silk-worm, after having fed for a few weeks, winds himself up in a small case ; there remains in a dead, or torpid state ; at length he perforates his inclosure, and comes forth a moth or butterfly. Does not this instance represent a resurrection ?

\* Never before printed. Delivered November 30, 1806.

I mention one thing more, in which there is a most striking analogy to the resurrection ; I mean the returning seasons of the year. In the fall or autumn, the trees are stripped of their verdant honours ; plants and flowers lose all their beauties ; the verdure of the fields is destroyed by frosts, or covered with snow ; and the feathered company, that sung among the branches, become silent, or, taught by instinct, leave us, and seek a retreat in some more hospitable clime.

Thus nature is clad with the habiliments of death. From such an appearance, who could ever expect that she would revive and live again, unless taught to believe it from what has so often taken place ? Yet this has been the case ever since creation. When the spring approaches, the trees gradually resume their foliage, and present us with their fruit ; the fields with their verdure ; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds comes on. All nature looks fresh and gay. What is this but a general resurrection ? Does it not bear a great analogy to the resurrection of the dead at the last day, when all that sleep in the dust of the earth shall come forth ? He who effects the one can accomplish the other : nor should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead. This very important truth Paul proves in this chapter. “ For as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”

After all that he had said in proof of this subject, he anticipates an objection some might be ready to make, viz. How shall they be disposed of, who shall remain alive at the second coming of Christ. As they die not, they cannot be raised. To answer which, he introduces the pas-

sage first read to you : “ Behold, I shew you a mystery : we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump.”

Let us consider the passage before us in its natural order.

I. “ Behold, I shew you a mystery.”

There are few words in divinity that are more exceptionable to natural men than this. It has often been a stumbling-block to infidels ; not because it is peculiar to revelation, but because they have a fixed aversion to Christianity.

That there are mysteries in creation and providence, all must confess. Why then should any man be unwilling to admit, that there may also be mysteries in revelation ? Or why should objections be raised against the truth of Christianity on this account ? The objections of this kind will apply with equal force against the creation of all things, and the plan of providence.

It may be useful here to shew in what senses the word ‘mystery’ is used in the sacred scripture.

1. It is used to denote a truth, which is above the comprehension of the finite mind. This is the case of the first principle of all religion and morality ; the eternity and necessary self-existence of Jehovah. We believe that this is a truth, but we never pretend to comprehend it. What do we know of an eternal, self-existent Being ? We use terms which neither angels nor men can comprehend.

The nature of Jehovah will forever remain a mystery or an incomprehensible truth, because it is above all minds to comprehend, except the infinite mind itself. It will remain a mystery for-

ever, from the nature of things. Till finite shall be able to understand infinite, the divine nature will continue to be a mystery. And shall we dare to say, that there is no such glorious Being, because we cannot comprehend eternity and infinity? This is both unreasonable and wicked. "Who by searching can find out God, or the Almighty to perfection?" Could any of his creatures comprehend him, he would cease to be God; and consequently he would be no longer an object of supreme love and adoration.

The belief of the existence of a supreme Intelligence, who created and who governs the world, forces itself upon the mind. The Christian who receives the sacred scriptures as the ground of his faith and practice, will also admit the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity. That there are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one, he readily admits; although he does not attempt to explain this mysterious union, even to himself. He feels no greater embarrassment in admitting this truth than he does in admitting the belief of an eternal, self-existent First Cause. All that relates to the *modus* of the divine existence, must, by reason of our limited capacities, be mystery to us.

The same may be said with regard to the incarnation of Christ. The sacred scriptures declare, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" that in the man Jesus dwelt "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." But this union between the divine and human natures of Christ, or what St. Paul calls "God manifest in the flesh," is, without controversy, a great mystery.

2. The same thing may be asserted as to the work of creation. What idea have we of God's creating all things out of nothing? or, can we conceive of that act of Deity that gave existence to matter, and reduced it to its various forms? It was so; but how it was, we know not. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast; he said, Let there be light, and there was light.

3. Mystery attends the providence of God. Clouds and darkness are round about him. His way is in the sea, and his judgments are a great deep. I need not take up your time by enumerating the many unaccountable things that take place in the divine government, which Jehovah, had he seen fit, could have prevented, but hath not.

4. This is the case with the gospel, or with divine revelation :

Here I would remark,

(1.) That it is no reasonable objection to Christianity, that there are mysteries in it, any more than it is to creation and providence. The objection may with equal force be applied to the latter as to the former.

(2.) I remark, that a mystery is not contrary to reason, but above it. It may be perfectly consistent with reason, though reason may not be able to comprehend or explain it. I may illustrate this observation in the following manner: The minds of mankind are not equal as to powers or information. Hence it follows, that what may be a mystery to one, may be well understood by another. To a very ignorant man, of small powers of mind, many things are unintelligible.

Ascend from him to a person of a greater mind and better information, and he correctly understands what perplexed the other. Thus we may ascend, from men of common capacities, to the astonishing genius of a Newton; and we shall find that the things which were mysteries to many persons of less penetration than he, were well understood by his great and penetrating mind. Pass from a Newton to the holy angels, and they comprehend what he could not. Pass from angels to the Infinite Mind, and no mystery remains. All things lie naked and open to his view. These observations show, that what may be a mystery to some, is plainly understood by others. It follows, that a matter may be above our reason that is not contrary to it; if contrary to it, the matter could not be comprehended by any mind.

(3.) I pass naturally to observe, from what has been said, that the increase of religious knowledge will naturally remove much perplexity from the mind. This is the case in this life. Hence Paul says, "When I was a child, I thought as a child; I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Christians have many childish things, which they will put away upon their increase of divine knowledge. But when they shall arrive in glory, they shall know even as they are known. "Now they see through a glass darkly, then face to face." This thought may afford the Christian some consolation under present ignorance and perplexity. Increase of knowledge will, undoubtedly, be a great part of the happiness of heaven.

2. I now pass to mention, that the term mystery is used in the holy scriptures to signify a truth that the disciples understood, but which the people at large did not understand. "To you it is given," said Christ to his disciples, "to know the mysteries of the kingdom; but to them that are without, these things are done in parables." Matt. xiii. 11. The disciples understood what Christ calls the mystery of the kingdom, but the world did not.

3. It is used to signify a truth that had been long hid, but which was at length revealed. Thus Paul speaks of the calling of the Gentiles: The mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations; but which is now made manifest to the saints; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and partakers of the same blessings with the Jews. Colos. i. 26.

Thus we learn, that the term mystery, in the holy scriptures, is used in three senses; for a truth that is in its own nature incomprehensible, as the eternal, self-existent Jehovah; the doctrine of the Trinity; the incarnation of Christ, &c. Also for a truth that was known to the disciples, but not to the people at large. And for a truth that had been long hid, but was at length revealed; as the calling of the Gentiles to the fellowship of the gospel. The latter appears to be the sense of the term in the text.

II. "Behold I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

This change that will pass on the saints at the last day he calls a mystery, because,

1. It had been a hidden truth or fact till now revealed. "Behold I shew you a mystery:" that is, I reveal to you what you never knew before. As soon as revealed, it was no more a mystery.

2. He calls this change a mystery, because it will be produced in a mysterious manner. The same divine power that created the universe, will be exerted to produce this wonderful and instantaneous change on the bodies of living saints. How striking is Paul's account of this change—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." We are here taught the suddenness of this change—"in a moment." Perhaps too, in a moment unlooked for. Solemn thought!

We are also taught that the resurrection of the dead will be alike sudden, and that the same power that will raise the dead will change the living saints. "The dead," says he, "shall be raised, and we shall be changed:" both will take place in the same moment. What an august scene will open to an astonished universe!

The apostle says, "We shall not all sleep." He uses the term *we*, not to intimate that he should remain till Christ's second coming; but as one of the great family of man. We, mankind at large, shall not all sleep, i. e. die. He himself hath been dead many centuries, and will be among the number who shall be raised at the last day. But some of the human race, both saints and sinners, will remain alive at that period, who will be changed.

“We shall not all sleep.” This soft and pleasing term is repeatedly used in the sacred oracles, to denote death. Christ says, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” “Then they also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” The analogy between sleep and death, though natural, is very striking.

In sleep there is rest; so in death. “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: from henceforth, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

They who sleep are insensible of the events that take place around them: so it is with the dead; for in the grave there is no work, wisdom, device, or knowledge. But I believe the principal idea of the apostle, when he compared death to sleep, was, he who sleeps expects to rise again; so it is with the saints who die. They believe that they shall rise again at the last day, to die no more. Hence they submit to death in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life.

III. Our apostle proceeds to shew in what the change will consist, that is to take place on the bodies of the saints who shall be found alive at the second coming of Christ. The bodies of the dead that are raised, and of the living saints who will be changed, will be alike. This the apostle teacheth us by applying what follows in the text to both. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption.”

The body in its present state is subject to corruption. Of this we have melancholy proof in the many instances of gangrene, cancer, and par-

tial mortification in some persons while alive, to such a degree as to render them disagreeable to themselves and to those who attend them.

But if mankind escape this most distressing condition while living, how soon after they have died, do they become a mass of putrefaction, in-somuch that their friends are obliged to hurry them to the grave for the sake of the living. However much beloved before, they now say with Abraham, "Bury my dead out of my sight." The apostle therefore styles it this vile body. "Who shall change this vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body." But "this corruptible must put on incorruption." After this change, it shall be spiritual and glorious, and thus fit to be re-united to the soul, and in a complete person enter into the joy of the Lord.

"And this mortal must put on immortality." That body which was subject to disease and death must put on immortality. It will become as immortal as the mind or soul itself. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written (Isaiah xxv. 8.) Death is swallowed up in victory." The resurrection or change of the body will be the destruction of death, because the grave shall deliver up the dead that are in it, and the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and there shall be no more pain, no more death; for the former things shall all be passed away.

Let us now close the subject with a few reflections :

1. How sublime and interesting is this doctrine of divine revelation ! What a cheering prospect it opens to the believer, when contem-

plating the dissolution of the body. Though now vile, and subject to disease and death, it shall finally be changed, and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body. What inconceivable joys await the real Christian, in this perfect resurrection state. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The last trump will sound with sufficient energy to raise the dead. He who has all power in heaven and earth in his hands can easily call the dead from the grave. Of this we have decisive proof in the resurrection of Lazarus. How interesting is this truth to the dying Christian. Supported by its influence, he is enabled to say, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is interesting also to the living Christian. When he follows his pious, beloved friend to the grave, he rejoices that he shall live again. "Not lost, but gone before," is his motto, when such are removed from him.

2. For this blessing we are indebted to Christ: "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of the resurrection of his people. He rose as their Head, and for their justification. Often beset with difficulties and dangers, the believer is ready to say, If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. "But now (he can add) is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. Christ

the first fruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

3. How glorious to the saints will be the resurrection day ? This to them will be a morning without clouds. It will be the beginning of a glorious scene, that will never close. They will now enter upon the felicities of that state, and be introduced into that kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water ; and God himself shall dwell with them, and be their God ; and all tears shall be wiped away.

4. And lastly, how awful will that day be to unbelievers. They must also rise, but "to the resurrection of damnation." How unspeakably distressing the condition of those, who shall then be driven to cry to the rocks and mountains, saying, "Fall on us, and hide us from Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand."

May the Lord enable such of you as are in a Christless state, to bow to the sceptre of mercy, before it is too late ; before the pit shut its mouth upon you, and repentance be finally hidden from your eyes. The Lord grant that ye may find mercy in that day, for Christ's sake. Amen.

# SERMON XV.\*

## THE NATURE AND USES OF PRAYER.

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### PSALM lxxv. 2.

*O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.*

THE being and perfections of God are the foundation of all religion and morality. This principal truth is established by every thing around us, and by the common consent of mankind; and is inseparably connected with many other important principles: such as, the creation of all things; upholding, preserving and governing all things. That Deity had a certain and very important end in view in bringing into existence such a great variety of beings, cannot be doubted. That that end shall infallibly be accomplished; in order to which, he governs all things, great and small; the fall of a sparrow, as certainly as the rise and fall of empires. If he did not govern all, his plan might be disappointed. That he hath established in his own mind the means by which his purposes shall be brought to pass. Hence follow other truths: such as, that we are accountable to him; and that there will come a period, when all mankind shall appear before him, to give an account of the things done in the body. To which I add, that the duties of prayer and thanksgiving also result from this first principle: for if God created and governs all things,

† Delivered April 7, 1801, being the quarterly day of prayer.

it follows, that we are to ask of him the blessings we need, and to praise him for all those that surround us. In this view of things, we learn the dependence that all creation hath on God. To this great source we trace our duties and obligations. The duties in which we are now engaged, arise from it. This David well understood; hence he begins the psalm with these words: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed." He then adds, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." The text naturally introduces various considerations, that are suitable to the occasion. David, instead of using any of the common names by which Deity is known in the holy scriptures, addresses him in this endearing language: "O thou that hearest prayer," and adds, "to thee shall all flesh come;" that is, in prayer. Let us, on the present occasion, consider,

I. The nature, design, and uses of prayer.

II. The circumstances that urge us to this duty, and our encouragements to engage in it.

I. The nature, design and uses of prayer.

Prayer is, properly speaking, the language of the heart. Hence Paul speaks of praying with the spirit. And we read of some persons who are said to worship God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. No prayer can be acceptable to God, unless the heart is engaged in it. The most excellent expressions; accompanied with the greatest apparent fervour, are nothing but solemn mockery, unless the heart be duly exercised. For Jehovah looks at the heart, and

we are accepted by him only when that is right in his sight. If so, it follows that those are the best prayers which flow from a heart deeply affected with the holiness of God's character, with a sense of sin, of its own wants, and of Christ's fullness of grace for sinners. Such a heart will naturally dictate the most simple and expressive language. The persons we here describe are, in common, well acquainted with the sacred scriptures; which furnish us with the most proper expressions for prayer. Hence it is, I believe, that very pious people are generally more able in this duty than others; because they pray often, pray feelingly, and are well acquainted with the Bible. It may be truly said, in this case, that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."

But though prayer is properly the language of the heart, it is not confined there; for this duty is performed by expressions solemnly addressed to the infinite God. Even in the closet, many Christians, perhaps most of them, choose to express the feelings of the heart in words. There is this advantage in it, that it tends to keep up the attention of the mind to its duty; and to impress the heart with the subject with which it is conversant. God knows the secret wishes of the mind; but the good man finds an advantage in expressing these wishes, even when alone. That he may do this without being heard by any one, he chooses places of retirement.

In considering the nature of prayer, it is proper to observe, that it is also a social duty; to be performed in the family with a few, and in the public congregation, with the many. It is a duty of the family. Heads of families, who are really re-

ligious, attend to it with seriousness and punctuality. "Let others do as they will," said Joshua, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Every man ought, in some sense, to be a priest in his own house. It must be confessed to be fit, reasonable, and useful, to observe a strict religious order in our families. This part of the subject will come more immediately under consideration in the sequel. I will only say now, that praying families are generally well governed. To worship God in the morning and evening, becomes a habit, and is as much expected by your domestics as their regular meals, or their different daily occupations. And I appeal to the whole assembly, even to the most gay and thoughtless, whether it is not proper, that the God who made us, and who every moment preserves us, should be worshipped? Is it not improper and criminal to forget him, and to pass each day without becoming thoughts of God, and gratitude to him for his goodness to us? Yet many such families there are, who call not upon the Lord; in which there is no appearance of religion, or of reverence of the infinite God. Let such families remember the following awful passage: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name."

In better days, when our ancestors came to this country, and long after they had dwelt here, they were very attentive to family religion. In almost every house, prayer was wont to be made. But many of us, their degenerate descendants, not only think we know better than they, but are at times disposed to ridicule their strict attention

to religion, and brand it with the name of superstition. In this we discover our degeneracy, and that we have too far forgotten the God of our fathers; and society at large is most evidently injured by this part of our conduct. Vice and immorality uncommonly abound; and children and youth show that their religious education has been neglected. Our progress in vice has been rapid and alarming. Should we proceed in this manner, the next generation will be in a melancholy condition as to sentiments and morals.

There are indeed, and will be in every age, some persons of uniform serious character, who set their faces like a flint against corruptions of Christianity in the church, and against the prevalence of wickedness in the world. They will be useful. But it requires great love of the truth, as well as resolution, to maintain the purity of the gospel, and the self-denial of the cross, in times like the present. We bless God, at the same time, that he never leaves himself without witnesses. There always will be praying persons in the world, who will seriously walk before their families, in the fear of the Lord, or who will make their houses the places where he shall be worshipped and adored.

In considering the nature of prayer, we are to observe, that it makes a great and an important part of public worship. The primitive Christians employed their time, when together for religious purposes, "in breaking of bread and in prayers." To this duty Christ gave the following important encouragement: "If two of you shall agree as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven."

All religious societies, I believe, make it a part of their public or social worship. Time immemorial, they have begun and ended the sacred service with a solemn address to God. How proper it is, that we should ask divine assistance in the beginning, and solicit the blessing of God on the attempts that are made by public instruction, to make mankind wiser and better. We are taught, by an inspired writer, in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known to God.

The design and uses of prayer are to be also considered, as useful parts of the subject.

The design of prayer is not to inform Deity of our situation, because he knows what things we have need of before we ask him, he being omniscient. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Nor is prayer designed to prevail on God to alter his mind, or to do any thing he had not before determined to do. For "he is of one mind, and who can turn him?" With him is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

But, to come to the point, prayer, like all the other institutions of religion, is designed to promote our spiritual advantage. Considering the depravity of our hearts, and the many temptations that await us in the present life, we need continued helps in the way of duty. We want line upon line, and precept upon precept. Prayer is one of those means designed to keep up in our minds a sense of God, of our dependence on him, and gratitude to him for all the blessings that surround us. It is one of God's appointed means of carrying on the divine life in the soul. It is

the very breath of a new creature, nor can he live without it. Hence, though the Lord hath determined to bestow particular blessings on his people, he will be sought unto for these very blessings, because this is the only method in which he will bestow them. It is a duty calculated to affect the heart by bringing into view many of the most solemn and interesting objects, such as God himself, who is always the immediate object of prayer. A mind properly engaged in this duty, takes a comprehensive and affecting view of God in his being and perfections; in his glory, goodness, purity, justice, faithfulness; in his omniscience and omnipresence. Such a view of God is calculated to affect the heart, and cause the suppliant to take his own place. He views Christ as the medium of prayer. "For by him," says Paul, "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." In this new and living way he draws near to God, and humbly hopes for audience and acceptance. Through faith, his prayers are offered upon that golden altar which sanctifieth both the gift and the giver, and maketh the comers thereunto perfect. When rightly engaged in this duty, he has solemn and affecting views of himself, his sins, guilt, dangers, weaknesses and wants; all which tend to make him importunate, and to humble him.

The good man has a great concern for the church when in her low state. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Nor is the pious heart less affected with the value of the souls of men. He is impressed with the thought that they are immortal, and must consequently be happy or miserable to all eternity. If Christians duly realized this truth, they would pray much for the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon a guilty world. If ministers realized the exposed situation of many of their hearers, and that themselves have shortly to give an account of their stewardship, would they not preach and pray as for eternity?

Many are the advantages resulting from prayer.

1. The good man feels it to be a solemn thing when in his closet, to be alone with his God. He enters this retired apartment and shuts his door, and then pours the desires of his inmost soul into the bosom of his Father, who seeth in secret, and who in his own time rewardeth him openly.

Here he is free from all restraint with respect to the manner and matter of his prayers, which he feels too much of when any persons are present. He can unbosom himself in this retired moment without reserve. Nor has he the same temptation to vanity and pride as when attempting to pray before his fellow worms, whose good opinion he is likely to overvalue.

2. Public prayer gives opportunity for those who are engaged in a common cause to supplicate the throne of grace at the same time, and with one heart. Such seasons serve to impress the mind with a solemn sense of dependence on God, of his all-wise and universal providence, and to raise and strengthen our confidence in him. Prayer, as well as all other institutions of reli-

gion, is calculated to promote the public good, as well as to increase the happiness of individuals.

The union of so many Christians in the same duty, at the same time, must be a pleasing thought to the pious mind. The God who heareth prayer has never encouraged the seed of Jacob to seek him in vain.

II. I pass to consider the circumstances that urge us to the duty, and our encouragements to engage in it.

1. A sense of personal weakness, wants and dangers urges us often to engage in this duty. At some times, our sense of these things is much more lively than it is at other times; but always it presses us to ask of God those things we need.

2. A sense of sin, of guilt, and of danger of everlasting ruin urges us to pray for pardon and cleansing; for sanctifying and preserving grace; for comfort and joy.

3. Gloomy and threatening prospects of evil drive us to God, that he would save us from what we fear, or sustain us when it shall have come upon us.

4. Afflictions in our persons or families have the same tendency. "In their affliction," said God by the prophet Hosea, "they will seek me early."

As a people, we have many public incentives to this duty. The whole prosperity of nations, as of individuals, is of God; hence the propriety of days of annual prayer, and of thanksgiving. How proper that we should open the season with prayer for the divine blessing, on our husbandry, fishery, navigation, &c. Our dependence on God is absolute, therefore we should acknowl-

edge him in all our ways, and he has promised to direct our steps.

It remains that we consider what encouragements we have to engage in this duty. These arise,

1. From the very nature of God, who is disposed, by his benevolence, to do good to his creatures. He is said to make the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man. He sends his rain on the evil and on the good, and causeth his sun to shine on the just and unjust. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

2. We derive very great encouragement, in our addresses to God, from the many declarations of scripture. His language to us, necessitous creatures, is, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Not to multiply passages like these, which hold up to our view the same encouragement, I shall only add the text; "O thou who hearest prayer." This expression not only teacheth us that God hears prayer, but that he answers it. Thus Jacob had power with God, and prevailed. Elijah's prayer was also heard and answered. David says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." Daniel was heard from the den of lions; the three Jewish believers from the fiery furnace; Jonah from the whale's belly. Peter was delivered from

his prison through the strength of prayer. The history of the church and of the world furnishes us with many striking answers of prayer.

In your own private lives, Christians, you have had a rich experience of this pleasing truth, that God heareth prayer. When ready to sink under trouble, you have sought the Lord, and he hath answered you. Let us remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

A few reflections must close the subject.

1. We learn, that prayer is one of the most important duties of the Christian life. As it is founded in the relation we stand in to God, as his dependent creatures, our obligation can never cease, so long as we have a want to deplore, or he a favour to bestow.

2. What a blessed privilege we enjoy in discharging this important duty. Our heavenly Father permits us, in this solemn act, to draw near to him; and graciously invites us to come, with the humble boldness of children to a father. In this way we converse and enjoy communion with God. We leave our wants with him, and in due time receive gracious answers of peace; or, if denied the things we ask, we rest satisfied that a God of infinite goodness has done right. Christians, you know the preciousness of this privilege: for often have you gone to a throne of grace burdened with sorrows and afflictions, and ready to sink in despondency; but found yourselves comforted in leaving your cause with God, and casting your cares upon him.

We add, in concluding the subject, that the want of a disposition to pray, is a sad omen of a

bad heart. A Christian, in the lively exercise of grace, cannot live without prayer. Daniel could not be denied the privilege even for thirty days. Let such then as cast off fear and restrain prayer before God, consider their awful situation. However secure they may now feel, let them remember, that the time may come, yea, may not be far distant, when they may attempt to pray, but all in vain. They will be constrained to use the emphatic language of Job, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." To increase their perplexity, they may have to complain with the prophet, "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer."

Let such be exhorted to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; lest his fury break forth upon them like fire, and burn, that none can quench it.

The Lord grant that we may all be prepared for the great final day, by being adorned in the perfect righteousness of the Saviour, that so an abundant entrance may be ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## S E R M O N    X V I . \*

### THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

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PROVERBS, xi. 30.

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ; and he that winneth souls is wise.*

BY “the righteous” is meant the real believer, who is made “righteous by the obedience of One ;” and who, having been renewed in the spirit of his mind, acts agreeably to the strictest rules of uprightness, under the influence of evangelic principles.

By his fruit we understand his Christian temper, his holy life, and his godly conversation. On these accounts he is a tree of life, deep rooted, and laden with those fruits which are to the praise and glory of God. He hath his fruit unto holiness, and the end will be everlasting life : whom David beautifully describes, Psalm i. 3. “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season : his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

The text is descriptive of all good men, but especially of the faithful ministers of the gospel ; who are said to watch for souls as they who must give an account.

\* Delivered in Salem, at the ordination of the Rev. Lucius Bolles, January 9, 1805.

I. Let us consider the nature and great importance of the object of their ministry, with the means best calculated to accomplish it.

II. Shew in what respects he who winneth souls is wise.

I. The nature and great importance of the object of the gospel ministry, to win souls, with the means best calculated to accomplish it.

Solomon uses the term souls to signify the whole person. In this sense it is used in the sacred scriptures, and in common conversation. In Acts xxvii. 37. Paul says, "We were all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls." We say in common, when we describe a shipwreck, in which all the people were lost, 'every soul perished.'

He might also intend to convey to us the idea, that the soul is the man, or his most important part. The body is mere matter, mysteriously united to the mind, and under its direction and influence. Hence it is, that by an act of the will, we can extend an arm, and bring it again to the body; we can walk, run, and perform the various functions of animal nature, unless prevented by some natural cause: and, as it has no consciousness, it cannot be accountable. It follows, that the soul is the man, or his most important part; and being a conscious, intelligent agent, will ultimately be called to give an account of every thing done in the body.

"How complicate, how wonderful is man!  
How passing wonder He who made him so!  
Who center'd in our make such strange extremes!"

YOUNG.

There are two sources, whence we may derive the most correct ideas of the human soul; the sacred scriptures, and our own consciousness of what passes within us. Moses informs us, that “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Here we are taught that the soul was immediately inspired by God, and is quite different in its nature or substance from the body: the one is matter, the other is spirit.

Solomon uses an expression of like import with that of Moses. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Our blessed Lord maintains the same distinction between the soul and body. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” Remark, the body may be killed, but the soul cannot; the reason is obvious, because it is spirit. If we admit that the soul is material, it will follow, that it may be killed; it may be pierced with a sword: but the Son of God, who created all things, and is most intimately acquainted with the nature of the human soul, assures us that it is entirely different from the body, and will survive its dissolution.

The sacred volume abounds with information concerning this interesting subject; to which we shall frequently appeal, while we attend to the second source of knowledge of the soul of man; I mean our own consciousness of what passes within us.

I ask, in the words of another, “Why may we not frame the complex idea of a soul, or spirit,

from the operations of thinking, understanding, willing, &c. which are experiments in ourselves? This idea of an immaterial substance is as clear as that we have of a material one: for though this notion of immaterial substances may be attended with difficulties, we have no more reason to deny or doubt of its truth, than we have to deny or doubt of the existence of the body.”

To you, my brethren, I now make the appeal, whether you are not conscious of the following things:—

1. That you think. Of this you can no more doubt than that you see. You know you think with greatest ease. Thought is a spontaneous operation of the soul; yet you cannot see the thinking principle within you. And should consciousness be suspended by sleep, the moment the person awakes, he finds all the powers of his mind ready for their wonted exercise.

It is also a matter of consciousness, that God hath given to you the important powers of reason, understanding, will, and affections.

2. The nature and excellence of the soul may be ascertained by this circumstance, that it is capable of constant progression in knowledge. This we see continually exemplified in our children and youth. They begin their pursuit of knowledge with few ideas; but in many instances surprise as well as delight us with their progress; and promise fair to be extensive blessings to society. To which I add, that the greatest men who have ever appeared in the world, began their career to literary eminence by learning the first rudiments of science. Even sir Isaac Newton was once seen with his spelling-book in his hand.

Such being the nature of the soul, may we not reasonably conclude, that in a future life it will continue to increase in knowledge in infinite progression? Freed, as it will then be, from its connexion with the body; which, by its cares, its diseases, and its wants, often prevents mental improvement, it will more easily and rapidly advance. And, as many of the objects of knowledge are infinite, they never can be fully comprehended by a finite mind; but by their transcendent excellence, will keep the holy soul forever pressing forward, toward a more intimate acquaintance with them. And as he advances, his happiness will increase; because he will have more clear and comprehensive ideas than ever of the glory of the divine character, the excellency of Christ, the fullness of his redemption, and the wonders of his moral government. These are subjects that are infinitely delightful, and can never be exhausted.

3. The soul is also capable of great attainments in holiness in the present life. For proof of this I refer you to the many instances of remarkably holy men, who have appeared in the world at different periods of time. Such were Abraham, Moses, Elijah, with the apostles and first Christians. And in modern times we see some persons of eminent piety, who shine the brighter, the more they are known. They walk with God as did Enoch. If their breasts were transparent, and you could read what passes there, you would find the most absolute hatred of sin, because contrary to a holy God; the most ardent desires after holiness, as that perfection of Deity in which is comprehended all moral beauty. Hence their

language is, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." In them you would perceive the various Christian tempers, such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and deep humility. They live on the very threshold of heaven, and often anticipate the happy moment when they shall drop their body of sin, as Elijah did his mantle in his ascension, and enter into the rest that remains for the people of God.

But the pious soul is not always thus happy in the present state. He groans, being burdened with sin within; and sometimes is ready to conclude he never has known the truth as it is in Jesus. If I am a Christian, why am I thus? why so much sin, so many wrong tempers? Permit me to say, that through a long life, I have had opportunities of learning, from Christians of different denominations, that this is their common language at certain seasons. They all feel and speak the same things. But did you complain of a body of sin when you were in unbelief? You did not. This is the exercise of a soul renewed by grace, and brought to long for holiness. Remember it was not Saul the Pharisee, but Paul the Christian, who cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

4. The soul, in many instances, suffers extreme pain in the present life. We have seen some persons in an agony of distress, on account of uncommon losses in business. What pain of mind do some persons endure in the anticipation of a distressing event! How great their anguish when their Isaac is cut down! With David they cry in bitterness of heart, "O Absalom, my son, my

son! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

What agony of soul do sinners feel, when labouring under a guilty conscience. "While I suffer thy terrors," say they, "I am distracted." "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" This is the case especially with despairing sinners. Such was Judas, to whom life became a burden; hence he went and hanged himself.

Such was the awful condition of a young gentleman who had forsaken the principles of Christianity, and embraced the cause of infidelity. "When taken ill he found he had not shook off the expectations of another life. This made him throw himself upon a bed, and break out in these expressions: 'Whence this war in my breast? What argument now to assist me against matter of fact? Do I assert there is no hell, while I feel one in my own bosom? Am I certain there is no after-retribution when I feel a present judgment? Do I affirm my soul to be as mortal as my body, when this languishes, and that is vigorous as ever? O that any one could restore me to my ancient guard of piety and innocence: wretch that I am! whither shall I fly from this breast? what will become of me?'"\*

Such extreme anguish does the soul endure, in some instances, in the present life. What then may we suppose the finally impenitent will suffer in the future state, where hope can never come?

5. Permit me to observe farther, as a matter of consciousness, that the soul can pass in an instant, in thought or idea, to the most distant

\* Ryland's Cause of Infidelity ruined forever.

parts of the globe. The traveller can be present in a moment in any country he hath ever visited, and recollect the buildings, the inhabitants, their dress, their manners, &c. ; yea more, by virtue of this power of the mind, the good man can ascend to heaven in thought and affection, and unite with saints and angels in the delightful service of praise and adoration. Such foretastes of the happiness of heaven, some eminent Christians are favoured with at times, that they feel a strong desire to depart and to be with Christ. "Why," say they, "are his chariot-wheels so long in coming?"

6. It follows from the preceding observations, that the soul cannot be confined by walls or bars. You may imprison the body, but the soul will enjoy its liberty : it bids defiance to its enemies, and will roam at large. Paul and Silas were confined in prison, with their feet fast in the stocks, but their holy souls ascended to the throne of God in praise and prayer. Place makes no difference with the heaven-born mind.

"—— The mind is its own place ;  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven :  
No matter where, if I be still the same."

MILTON.

7. To sum up this part of the subject concerning the nature of the soul, I have only to add, that it is immortal. It shall survive the body, outlive time ; yea, live forever. What dignity, what unspeakable value does immortality stamp on the soul of man ! and how perfectly agreeable is it to the wishes of all mankind !

I cannot, on this occasion, enter largely on the consideration of this blessed truth ; yet beg leave

to suggest, that the unequal distribution of things in this life, renders it necessary that there should be a future state of rewards and punishments. We often observe, that wicked men prosper in the world, have all that heart can wish ; their eyes stand out with fatness, they have no bands in their death, they are not in trouble as other men. On the other hand, we repeatedly see men of great piety oppressed with complicated sorrows. This circumstance perplexed the psalmist extremely : hence he said, “ I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me ; until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places ; thou castedst them down into destruction.”

If the present were our final state, it would be impossible for us to justify the ways of God to man. But the difficulty is removed by the doctrine of a future life, when he will render to every man according to his works : “ to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, immortality, eternal life ; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; for there is no respect of persons with God.”

But, my brethren, it is to the sacred volume that we are indebted for the clear discovery of this most important truth. Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. He hath taught us in places too numerous

to be quoted, that we are made for immortality. "I give," said he, "to my sheep eternal life." "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation." And in Matt. xxv. in which is represented the last judgment, he closes the solemn scene with these striking words: "These (meaning the ungodly) shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

"So unmoveable is that truth, delivered by the Spirit of truth, that though the light of nature gave some obscure glimmering, some uncertain hopes of a future state; yet human reason could attain to no clearness, no certainty about it, but that it was Jesus Christ alone who had brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."\* "I gratefully receive and rejoice in the light of revelation," says the same writer, "which sets me at rest in many things; the manner whereof my poor reason can by no means make out to me. Omnipotency, I know, can do any thing that contains in it no contradiction; so that I readily believe whatever God has declared, though my reason find difficulties in it which it cannot master."

All that hath been already said concerning the surprising powers of the human soul, tends not only to display its excellence, but to prove that it is a very important object. Our blessed Lord assures us that it is worth more than the whole world. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or, what shall he give in exchange for his soul?"

\* Locke's Second Reply to the Bishop of Worcester.

In this light it was viewed by the first preachers of the gospel; who counted not their lives dear unto them, so they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Paul declared that he could wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Why all this zeal, but because they considered the souls of men of great importance?

One consideration more I mention, as full proof of the value of the souls of men, and that is, the price that was paid for their redemption. "For ye are not redeemed," said Peter, "with silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Without the shedding of this blood there could be no remission. Its value is infinite, therefore can never be fully described. Angels desire to look into it. Let us, my fellow Christians, dwell in contemplation on this glorious subject, till the happy period shall arrive, when we shall be received, through grace alone, into the presence of God and of the Lamb; and have nothing to do, through vast eternity, but explore and admire the wonders of redeeming love, and unite with ransomed millions, in ascribing blessing and honour to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood.

From the preceding article a very interesting question ariseth, What is the condition of the soul that renders this redemption necessary? I answer, It is a condition of total depravity, guilt, and condemnation.

By total depravity, to which objections are often made, we do not mean, that man has lost any

of the powers of the soul. These remain amidst the ruins of the apostasy. For my own part, I believe, that mankind possess the same natural powers of mind that Adam did before he fell; but that the disposition of the heart is now wholly sinful. "God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was evil, only evil, and that continually."

This verse is explicit. The depravity is in the heart, and is total: every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, only evil, and that continually.

Isaiah declares that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." Jesus Christ, who could not mistake the human heart, describes it as the fountain of moral evil. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." And Paul assures us that "the carnal mind is enmity against God:" to which he adds, "for I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" that is, in him as a natural man, or in his corrupt part.

Sinners are also in a state of guilt and condemnation, as transgressors of the law of God. For it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This is the melancholy condition of all men naturally, because "all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God."

These things being true, we are called to weep over dignity in ruins. "Man being in honour did not abide." He possesses the most surprising powers of mind, yet has a heart disaffected to that God who gave him all!

From all that hath been said, it appears that the conversion of sinners is a very important and desirable object; that they may escape the wrath to come, and enjoy that happiness which the world can neither give nor take away. "Believing," says Peter, "we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It is very important to families, and to society at large, on account of their piety, their example, and their prayers. How amiable and happy was the family of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. How happy would your families be, if you and yours were under the influence of real religion! All would be love and peace. Yet there are some heads of families, who in times of revival of religion speak evil of the things they know not, and throw stumbling-blocks in the way of those under their care, who anxiously inquire what they shall do to be saved. Be not offended, if I caution you in the most solemn manner, not to discourage those persons who are anxious to become Christians, or to know what experimental religion is. If you will not enter heaven yourselves, throw no difficulties in the way of your children or domestics. Remember for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Should you not rather rejoice to see them inquiring the way to eternal life? "One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, that shall not be taken away from her."

The conversion of sinners is one great object of the gospel ministry, and much to be desired, because the Redeemer's kingdom is thereby enlarged; than which nothing is more pleasing to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is their daily prayer that his kingdom may come in all its glory and extent.

I add once more, that the conversion of sinners is a very desirable object, because God is thereby glorified.

It is taken for granted, that Jehovah, in all his works and ways, had in view the greatest possible good; and that the greatest possible good is the manifestation of his own glory. "He hath made all things for himself." The salvation of sinners, except so far as it tends to glorify God, is a subordinate object in the view of all holy beings; whose supreme desire is, that God in all things may be glorified.

This is emphatically the case in the plan of salvation, which was so adjusted by the infinite God in eternity, that he will have all the glory forever.

Here mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The ministration of death was glorious, but the ministration of the Spirit is rather glorious. Every perfection of the divine nature shines in this way far superior to every other method, in which God reveals himself to men. Paul therefore observes, that he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. His glory or perfections shine in the face or person of Christ, who acted out his character, and was himself the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Hence it was that he said to his Father, "I have manifested thy name to the men thou gavest me out of the world." Name is used here as a general term for the nature or perfections of God: To display these was the great end Christ had in view, in his appearance in the flesh.

I have no idea how certain perfections of the Deity could be displayed in any other way : such as mercy, which always respects misery ; long-suffering, the patience of God ; forgiveness or pardon, his justice. To which may be added, that in the method of salvation, the love of God to man shines, and will forever shine, with the most distinguished glory. “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

One of the glories of this plan of salvation is, that all sinners who are saved by grace, experience in heart an entire moral change, and unite to give all the glory to God.

What means, it may be asked, are best calculated to accomplish this important object ? I answer, those that Christ hath appointed in his word. When he gave the commission to his apostles, he commanded them to “ preach the gospel to every creature ;” because “ it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.”

We have several excellent specimens of apostolic preaching in the New Testament. Let us preach as the apostles did. Their sentiments are divine, and the language of the holy scriptures inimitably excellent. It is pure and plain ; with which our hearers are well acquainted, in consequence of their constant perusal of the sacred volume.

If we, as ministers of the gospel, wish to win souls, we must exhibit the divine law in its extent and spirituality ; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. We must endeavour to convince the sinner of his entire depravity and guilt, and the alarming condition he is in every moment, as a transgres-

sor of the law of God. We must urge, in a plain, convincing and impressive manner, the absolute necessity of personal holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. We must enforce the necessity of good works as fruits of faith, and the best evidence to the world that we have passed from death to life; and lead the people, as much as possible, to realize a judgment to come, and the final states of men.

In a word, let us not shun to declare the whole counsel of God; always remembering, that Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but that God alone can give the increase. And for our encouragement, let us always keep in mind that excellent promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

II. It remains that we consider, in what respects "he that winneth souls is wise."

The term 'wise' is often used in the scriptures to denote a man of real religion. In this sense it must be taken here, as suggested before, from its connexion with the first sentence, which describes the righteous; compared with Dan. xii. 3. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." That the ministers of the gospel ought to be good men, I believe is universally allowed.

The men we describe, may be said to be wise in the choice of their profession. "If any man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

It is a good work, because it is connected with the display of divine glory, and the salvation of souls. These are two of the most sublime and

interesting subjects that can employ the minds of angels and men. He then who hath made this choice, acts from the wisest and the best of motives, and has the most pleasing prospect of being useful to mankind.

With the talents and education which, in common, fall to the lot of this class of men, they might have made choice of a profession far more lucrative, and probably have ranked with men of fortune. But from a love to God and to the souls of men, they choose rather to forego these prospects and advantages.

I may also remark—It is a good, that is, a pleasant work. To a pious, a benevolent man, what can be so desirable as to preach the everlasting gospel; which opens to the view of the mind such wonderful subjects for holy love and contemplation, and tends to exalt and purify the heart, and to make all happy here and hereafter who believe it. With these views and with these feelings, he is willing to spend and to be spent in the sacred service; especially when he sees that the Lord crowns his ministry with success.

He is wise in the management of the various parts of ministerial duty. Here much might be said with propriety; but I can only suggest in a few words, that he is wise in the choice of his subjects, the manner of treating them, considering always the state of his flock; in going from his knees to the pulpit, and returning from the pulpit to his knees, to plead with God that success may attend his feeble efforts. If wise, he will address the people in a plain, affectionate and persuasive manner; and make it evident, that

he travails in birth again till Christ be formed in them. He will labour to inform their understandings, and to impress their hearts; and thus to secure their attention, and to captivate their affections to divine truth. This is the import of the original expression.\*

He will be easy of access, affable and attentive to mankind at large; especially to anxious sinners, who come to converse with him concerning their salvation. He will become all things to all men, that he may by all means gain some. He will reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine, and study to approve himself unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; giving to every one his portion of meat in due season.

If he should labour long with but little apparent success, he will continue to be faithful in his ministry, and leave the issue with God. If success attend his ministry, he will give him all the glory.

From the subject I take occasion to ask you who are parents and heads of families, whether you ever realized the importance of your situation? Consider that every soul committed to your care is immortal. Have you discharged your duty to them? Or have you hitherto neglected your own souls and theirs? I pray you to think on these things before it be too late.

If the souls of men are of such importance as hath been proved, you will not, my friends, blame the ministers of the gospel, for their plainness and zeal. If they feel right, they must lift up their voice like a trumpet; cry aloud and

\* Pool's Synopsis, in loc.

spare not, though the more abundantly they love you, the less they be loved. Their heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may be saved. Should you think their zeal excessive, you must confess it is benevolent. Will you blame them for being too anxious for your happiness? Assuredly you cannot.

But while some of our friends censure us for being zealous overmuch, we blame ourselves that we are not more engaged to win souls. Brethren, pray for us, that we may be willing to spend and be spent in so good a cause.

I must ask your patience a few minutes longer, while I address myself to the candidate for ordination.

My dear young friend—Full three years have you been of my family; a great part of which time you have laboured with me as a son in the gospel: nor were your first efforts unsuccessful. There are in Boston those who were ready to perish, who rise up and call you blessed. Your continuance with us was the wish of my heart, and of the hearts of your friends; but the Head of the church hath directed your way to this place by very unexpected events. We are therefore obliged to acquiesce in his disposals. It is with great pleasure we behold the union and affection that subsist between you, and the church and society, over whom the Lord is about to make you an overseer. Your prospect of usefulness is pleasing; and we, your brethren in the ministry, most sincerely pray, that the Lord Jesus may hold you as a star in his right hand; furnish you with every gift and grace for the sacred office, and make you wise to win souls; and finally

receive you to his heavenly kingdom, where is fullness of joy, and pleasures forever.

In fine—Brethren of the Church and Society on whose account we are now together, give me leave to congratulate you on this auspicious day. Your union among yourselves, and unremitting and liberal exertions, have enabled you to take your place among the several societies of Christians in this town. Without going to Boston, to Danvers, or to Beverly, as usual, to enjoy your religious privileges, they are brought to your doors. The Lord hath raised up for you a pastor, we believe, after his own heart; whom we do cheerfully commend to your affection and esteem. Let no man despise his youth. Pray for him, that he may prove a lasting blessing to you and to your children. Study to make him as happy as you can. The providence that hath brought him among you is plain and striking. Live in love, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

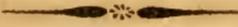
Entertain a liberal mind towards your fellow Christians, who differ from you in some things. Wise and good men do not yet see eye to eye. While you enjoy your own privileges, leave others to the enjoyment of theirs, and fall not out by the way. This mutual candour becomes the disciples of the same Divine Master, and is not incompatible with fidelity to your own principles and practices.

May grace, mercy and peace rest upon you and your pastor elect, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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## SERMON XVII.\*

THE SINKING SOUL SAVED BY GRACE.



MATTHEW, xiv. 31.

*And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him.*

IT may, perhaps, be said with truth, that in the life of every man there has been a critical moment, when nothing saved him but a divine interposition: for in a world like this, in which we are ever surrounded with dangers, we can only be safe when God keeps us. Many of these dangers, seen and unseen, we have escaped, through the goodness of God. Such things should never be forgotten by us: yet how apt are we, like Israel of old, to sing his praise at the moment, and then to forget his works! This is one affecting evidence of human depravity.

In how many instances has the mariner experienced the most threatening dangers. Most of us can recollect such seasons, when with strict propriety we might adopt the language of the text—He stretched forth his hand, and caught me.

The words are part of a very interesting piece of history in the life of Jesus. Having wrought a miracle, in feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, he ordered his disciples to depart by water to the other side of the lake,

\* Never before printed. Preached on a Lord's day evening lecture, March 18, 1804.

while he sent the multitudes away. On their passage there arose a violent storm, which evidently endangered the ship and company. About the fourth watch of the night, while the ship was in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves, Jesus came, walking on the sea. When their fears on seeing him were removed, (for they were affrighted to see a man walking on the stormy billows, and concluded it was a spirit ; but he soon convinced them of their mistake ;) Peter said unto him, " Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. He made the attempt ; but on " seeing the wind boisterous he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him."

I have chosen to address you from this single sentence, because there is something beautiful in the expression, and important in the idea, which may lead us to a variety of useful observations.

I. The first is, that Peter's previous condition was that of a mind agitated with various passions. He had been in fear, on account of the storm ; the horrors of which were increased by the darkness of the night. There was every appearance that they would be shipwrecked.

Peter was also agitated, when Jesus appeared, by a fear that he was a spirit ; hence we are told, " they cried out for fear ;" considering it ominous of their approaching fate. But he said unto them, " Be of good cheer : it is I ; be not afraid."

His fears were succeeded by a joyful surprise, when he beheld Jesus coming to them, walking on the water. Joy indeed to them all, to see

their Master ; which was increased by their distressed condition. Joy at any time ; but doubly joyful to have a visit from their best friend, at the moment when they were tossed about with the waves, and threatened with immediate death. Joy to be delivered from their danger, and to have Christ with them.

This was followed by a display of Peter's love to Christ, and his confidence in him. Love, in his desire to go to him ; and confidence, that he could support him even on the boisterous deep. There seems to have been a mixture of ignorance and self-confidence in his conduct. He ought to have known, that there are some things in which the disciples are not called to imitate Christ ; this of walking on the water is one.

Though Peter failed in this attempt, there have been some deluded persons, who have made the like attempt. To what extremes, my brethren, may the minds of good men sometimes be carried, under peculiar circumstances. None of us, if left to ourselves, are secure from such delusions.

It deserves to be mentioned on this occasion, that Peter did not attempt to walk on the water, till he had asked and obtained leave of Christ. "Bid me come to thee," said he. Hence learn, that good men sometimes ask amiss. They know not what to pray for as they ought. Do ye not think that he was to blame on this occasion ? Why not wait till Christ had reached the ship ? I am apprehensive there was no small degree of pride in the heart of Peter, when he made this request. It seems as though he wish-

ed to do as Christ did, and thus be the foremost of the disciples. His pride would have been fed extremely, had he succeeded. It would have been a flattering circumstance in his character, to have it said, Peter had walked on the water.

We have, my Christian friends, more pride and selfishness mixed with our acts of religion, than we are aware of. Hence the necessity of great caution in every thing we do. How often have we found ourselves influenced by these motives. We have reason to be ashamed before God, who knoweth our hearts, on the account thereof. We may be constant and warm in the affairs of religion, when our motives are entirely wrong. Sometimes, indeed, it is difficult for the godly man to determine what are his motives. Hence he condemns himself when they are right; and at other times approves them when wrong. It requires great acquaintance with ourselves, and a constant attention to our own hearts, to distinguish when we do all to the glory of God.

It may be asked, why did our Lord grant Peter's request, if he asked amiss? I answer, to try him. We read of the Israelites, that "they lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." (Psalm cvi.) At another time they asked a king, and he gave them one in his anger, and took him away in his wrath. Hosea, xiii. 11.

In this case, I believe Peter asked amiss, and the Lord granted his request as a trial to him; and so it proved: for instead of its exalting, it degraded his character. For you are all sensible that this part of the history of Peter does not re-

dound to his honour ; and that Christ himself reproved him for his want of faith in him. This will appear as we examine the sacred account. When Peter “ had come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid ; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.” No doubt the other disciples, more prudent than Peter, looked on with great anxiety to observe what would be the issue. The affair was soon decided ; for seeing the wind boisterous, he was afraid. He forgot at the moment the power of his Master, thought of nothing but his danger, and “ beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”

This part of the history teacheth us several useful lessons ; such as, that we ought not to run to meet troubles ; they will come fast enough. Peter ought to have remained in the ship, as his fellow disciples did. When we leave our station, or the place allotted us, we always rush into danger. This same Peter, when his Master was on his trial, went imprudently among the servants of the high priest, who knew him, and instantly accused him ; this led on to that dark part of his history, in which he denied his Lord, and swore he did not know him. So here, this very forward man must needs leave the ship, and throw himself into danger, without any proper call of duty ; and by doing so, has taught us to keep in our own place, till the Master call us to any hazardous enterprize.

Peter hath also taught us this important lesson, that whenever we are in trouble we should look to Jesus, who is “ mighty to save.”

We also learn, that a mind in trouble can pray without book. "Lord, save me." Poor Peter had not much time to compose this prayer; he was sinking: nor did he want it. Experience taught him to pray; nor could he possibly have expressed himself more to the purpose by any previous meditation. It is short, comprehensive, and was delivered with all the warmth and importunity of a distressed man. Prayer maintains a sense of dependence.

We also learn that Jesus Christ will be sought unto by his followers, to do even those things for them which he had determined to do. We must, however, give Peter credit for his faith in Christ, which he now manifested. It was a time that tried what manner of spirit he was of. Remark, he did not call to the disciples in the ship, to come and take him in; no: but he forgot every method of help but one, and that was Christ. "Lord, save me. And immediately he stretched forth his hand, and caught him." We proceed to notice,

II. Mankind, like Peter, in many instances, feel themselves sinking, and are indebted to Christ for their preservation. He hath, in various instances, stretched out his hand and caught them.

In many instances mankind feel themselves sinking.

1. This is the case with sinners, under clear views of their guilt and condemnation. These views are in some instances greater than they are in others; but in all cases they produce the same fears, though not in an equal degree: for when a sinner has a just view of his guilt, as under the law; when he is convinced of his sin as against

God, and the punishment due to him for it; when he realizes the wrath of God against him for sin, he feels himself sinking, and cries with David, "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." To the borders of despair have some persons been driven by these discoveries, and have thought that God could not be just in saving them. But behold the mercy and goodness of Jesus Christ! Then, in the critical moment, when no created arm could help; then, when the destruction of these unhappy creatures appeared unavoidable, the Lord Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught them; I mean, he then sent relief to their sin-burdened souls, by granting a view in the gospel of his complete atonement. To you who have been delivered I appeal, for the truth of this observation.

2. This has been the case with the believer also under clouds and darkness of a spiritual nature. It is a common thing for those who have lately been brought to the knowledge of the truth, to think that their "mountain stands strong," that they shall always be as happy as they now are. This mistake prepares the way for extreme distress, when they shall afterward lose their first love, or meet with the loss of their consolations. And such is the common lot of real Christians: yet when it happens, they are ready to give up all hope that they ever knew the truth. Their distresses are unspeakably great at such times. The reason why they are so, is this: they have known their danger and escape, their misery and remedy; they have known the joys of faith, therefore cannot bear the loss of them. An idea of deception, or of separation from Jesus

Christ, whom they really love, though they hardly dare to own it, creates all this distress. They feel as though they must sink into perdition. But, behold he cometh, walking as it were on the sea, and stretcheth forth his hand of mercy and saves them. Again the dejected soul is brought to sing, "He brought me up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Though sorrow endureth for a night, joy cometh in the morning.

3. Sometimes they have such a sense of indwelling sin, of unlikeness to Christ, of coldness of affection, of barrenness, and of hardness of heart, that they begin, like Peter, to sink. They doubt all that has passed in their minds, conclude that they are deceived, and that they have deceived others. But in the darkest moments Jesus appears for their relief, by stretching out his hand to support them; that is, he speaks peace to them by renewed discoveries of his love; he reveals himself to them, and they, like Thomas, cry, "My Lord, and my God!"

4. Sometimes they feel ready to sink under the number and weight of their afflictions; which seldom come alone. As it was with Job, so hath it been with others; they have overtaken them in clusters. Numerous and extremely distressing they have been; hence they have been ready to sink under them. But at the moment of their greatest discouragement, behold relief! "He stretched forth his hand, and caught him," saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen

thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The Lord will either deliver from, or support his people under, the heaviest afflictions.

Our guilty first parents (now in heaven) can adopt this language, and say, When sinking under the guilt of our first offence, he stretched forth his hand and caught us.

Abraham can recollect that this was his case, when Isaac lay bound on the pile prepared to consume him. In this distressing moment, when the patriarch's faith was tried, Heaven interposed, and saved the heir of promise.

Isaac can sing this song, when he recollects his critical situation, when the arm of his father was uplifted to strike the fatal blow. Had not the arm of mercy been stretched out for his deliverance, he would have inevitably sunk in death.

The Israelites ought never to forget how alarming was their condition at the Red Sea. Had not the arm of the great Jehovah sustained them, they would have perished with their enemies in the mighty waters.

David too, when pursued by Saul ; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the fiery furnace ; and Daniel in the lion's den, all experienced, in a remarkable manner, the delivering hand of the great Redeemer. When to human view they were ready to sink in death, he stretched forth his hand, and caught them.

The prodigal son, who had left his father's house, and spent all his substance in rioting and debauchery, as soon as he came to himself, began thus to reason: "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" While he was yet a great way off, and still liable to perish, the father ran to meet him, and received him again to his favour.

How many such disobedient children, how many such prodigals, that had gone from home, from virtue and goodness, and had run nearly their course of vice to destruction, yet have been stopped! When in the last stages of vicious gratification; when given up as lost forever; I say, how many such have been stopped! Jesus hath stretched forth his hand, and caught them. And such were some of you.

The subject thus explained, naturally suggests the following reflections.

1. We are led to look back on life, and recount our dangers and escapes. Few of us but have experienced special interpositions of Divine Providence, in preserving our lives and limbs. To God we owe all our escapes from death. Not only from death temporal, but from everlasting destruction. When rushing forward in our mad career, just as we were approaching the precipice of ruin, Jesus stretched forth his hand of mercy, and caught us.

2. Learn hence, that we ought not to be discouraged, though things may appear dark as midnight. Our compassionate Redeemer often suffers us to be brought into straits, that in our deliverance his holy arm may be more visibly

seen. We sometimes feel as if we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in the living God. When deep calleth to deep at the noise of his water-spouts, and all his waves and billows go over our heads; yet may we hope that the Lord will command his loving kindness in the day time, and in the night shall his song be with us, and our prayer be unto the God of our life.

3. We see from this instance of divine interposition, what encouragement is given for prayer and supplication in times of greatest distress. God is nigh to all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

Let all that love the Lord, be encouraged to repair to the mercy seat; especially when dangers thicken around them, and they feel themselves beginning to sink. No sooner did Peter cry, "Lord, save me," than he found the compassionate arm of the Saviour stretched out to relieve him. How many martyrs, how many dying Christians have had this sweet experience of the divine condescension and goodness! Their last hours have been cheered by the supporting influence of divine grace. Then let us, brethren, wait all our appointed time, until our change comes; and when Jesus bids us come to him, let us cheerfully venture upon the untried ocean of eternity. Though our flesh must sink down in death, yet the gracious arm of him that has conquered death will raise our spirits to his throne above, to join the ransomed millions in praising Father, Son, and Holy Ghost forever and ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XVIII.\*

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE ATONEMENT.

GENESIS, iii. 21.

*Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

IT was observed this day week in this place, that the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy cannot be properly explained, without we admit the doctrine of the atonement. I had not time then to pursue this important subject: this shall be the business of the present opportunity. Let us then, my brethren, attend to the origin, the nature, and the design of the sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation, as referring to the atonement of Christ. In prosecuting the subject, it will appear how sacrifices were viewed by the people under the law, and by the apostles and primitive Christians under the gospel dispensation; and that no consistent meaning can be given to them, unless we allow that they pointed to Christ, and were fulfilled in him as a sacrifice for sin.

It is further to be observed, that we never read of an atonement or sacrifice till after man had sinned. The reason is obvious; there was no need of a sacrifice, because there was no offence to expiate; there was no crime for which to

\* Preached Lord's day, February 1, 1807.

make atonement. Sin, therefore, rendered it necessary. If so, it must have had some connexion with the pardon of sin.

Offerings among the Jews were very numerous. Of these, at large, it is not my intention to treat. But particularly of their shedding the blood of some chosen victim, with very solemn circumstances, as a typical expiation for sin.

By atonement is meant a satisfaction offered for an offence that had been committed. The import is the same as the term ransom. Christ is said to give his life a ransom for many: i. e. for the redemption of many. The sacrifice is the offering, and the atonement the effect of that offering or sacrifice. For it was by sacrifice the priests made atonement. We proceed then to inquire,

I. For the origin of offerings, sacrifices, or shedding the blood of animals as a religious rite; and here we must search the Jewish scriptures, because they are the most ancient in the world, and of divine authority.

The text gives us the first hint of this religious and expressive rite. "Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." This took place after the fall, and after the Lord had denounced the sentence of punishment against them.

These skins, it is generally believed, were taken from beasts that had been slain in sacrifice; which the Lord had taught them to offer as types of Christ, who was to appear in the end of the world, to put away sins by the sacrifice of himself.

They could not be slain for food, because they were not allowed to eat animal food till after the flood. Their food before the fall was the fruit of the trees of the garden of Eden. Gen. iii. 18. "And thou shalt eat of the herb of the field." The first grant to man to eat flesh, says one, as his common food, was after the flood. Gen. xi. 3. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herbs have I given you all things."

If not slain for food, then we may conclude that these beasts were offered in sacrifice. If so, God himself is the author of this practice. And as it is not a natural idea, that the Deity would be pleased with the slaying of beasts, we must look for its origin in God.

This practice has prevailed among all nations. No doubt the whole was derived from the same source. The first sinners received it from Jehovah, and all others from them, until it was incorporated with the Jewish ritual, from which it is probable many other nations derived the practice.

The first time we find the word atonement in the sacred scriptures, is in Exod. xxix, when the priests were consecrated. On this occasion a bullock and two rams were offered. The victims were brought before the tabernacle of the congregation. Aaron and his sons put their hands on their heads, before they were killed. By which we are taught that they were to be viewed as a substitute, and as typically bearing sin. Through the whole of the Old Testament we find that the victims were considered as bearing sin, and thus satisfying the affronted Deity.

The heathen had some idea of atonement ; for in the horrid act of offering up their children and other human victims, they meant to appease an offended Deity.

I think, my brethren, we are authorized to believe that these skins with which Jehovah clothed Adam and Eve, as was said before, were taken from beasts thus offered in sacrifice. The text leads us to remark,

1. That our first parents were, at this time, in a guilty and naked condition. Sin had disrobed them of their original righteousness, and robbed them of their innocence.

2. That the Lord Jehovah condescended to provide a covering for them, though they deserved to be banished forever from his presence.— This part of the divine conduct leads us to admire his patience and mercy to sinners.

3. That man could not provide for himself. He was as helpless as he was guilty. His naked soul must have been sent down to regions of dark despair, had not mercy interposed.

4. We are here taught also that this covering was the price of blood. The beasts were slain in sacrifice ; and pointed to Christ, who once suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

5. We may also remark, that this covering for our fallen parents may with propriety prefigure the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is unto all, and upon all them who believe. The father of the returning prodigal commanded to put the best robe upon him.

6. We remark once more, that these first offenders were reduced to a very debased condition, being indebted to the beasts that were sac-

rificed for clothing. When they viewed themselves thus clothed in the skins of slaughtered animals, how must they have felt the state of degradation into which sin had plunged them! So it is with all sinners, when brought to the knowledge of the truth; they see that the whole plan of salvation is calculated to bring down the lofty looks of man. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Because it is such a plan, it was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

In the preceding remarks we reason from circumstances, that these skins were taken from beasts offered in sacrifice; but the instance of Abel, to which we pass, is plain; nothing is left to reasoning or conjecture. It is said, Gen. iv. 4. "And Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof;" compared with Heb. xi. 4. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

This is the first explicit account of offering sacrifice. I may ask with propriety, how came Abel to think that God would be pleased with the offering of an animal? It is confessed that it is not a natural idea. Whence then did Abel obtain a knowledge that it was his duty to offer such a sacrifice? I hesitate not to say, that he was taught it by God himself. And this remark is confirmed by the issue. Jehovah accepted his offering, which he certainly would not have done, if it had not been agreeable to his will.

Paul says, he offered it by faith. By faith of what? I answer, by faith that to offer sacrifice would be acceptable to Jehovah; and by faith that such sacrifice pointed to another and a greater one, to be offered in due time. For though Abel did not in his day understand the doctrine of sacrifices as we do in this, he no doubt did believe that there was an important meaning in these offerings, which would be better understood at a future period. Paul says that the ancient believers received not the promise, but were persuaded of it and embraced it. They rejoiced to see Christ's day, though afar off; and they saw it and were glad; but they saw through a glass darkly.

After this, offering of sacrifice became a general religious rite throughout the Jewish nation.

II. The nature and design of these sacrifices are now to be considered, because it hath been said that they pointed to the atonement, or the one glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Out of the many sacrifices of the Jews, I shall confine myself to two, that we may not be tedious. These two are the paschal lamb, and the scape-goat.

The paschal lamb. My present intention is to show that this sacrifice was typical, not only of Christ, but of his atonement, or the pardon of sin by his blood. This will appear from an attention to the passover; so called, because the destroying angel passed by the houses of the Israelites without injury, while the houses of the Egyptians were visited with the death of the first-born. The particulars of which you have in Exod. xii. They were to take every man a lamb, according

to the house of their fathers; a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year. The whole congregation of Israel were to kill it, in the evening; and with the blood they were commanded to strike or sprinkle the two side-posts and the upper door-post of the houses wherein they were to eat it. The flesh of it was to be roasted with fire, and they were to eat the whole of it; nothing was to remain until the morning; but if any did remain, it was to be burned with fire. Here remark,

1. It was a lamb without blemish. This was strikingly typical of Christ; hence Peter thus speaks of Christ—"For ye are not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Here is reference to this paschal lamb, which, in order to its being acceptable, must be without blemish.

2. The lamb was a male. So Christ is the only begotten Son of God.

3. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door posts of the houses of the Israelites, and secured them from the hand of the destroying angel. All were safe, in those houses that were thus marked with blood. So every soul is safe that is washed in the blood of Christ. But if Christ hath not made atonement, his blood cannot secure the sinner.

Can any man explain this sacrifice in any other way, or so as to deny that it has respect to the atonement of Christ? Does not Peter assert that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ? to which sacrifice he refers.

In another place it is said, "Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us." The apostle in these words points to the paschal lamb, and to the benefits that result from his sacrifice. Deny the atonement of Christ, and I ask, what consistent sense can be given to the passover?

The scape-goat is also another very striking type of Christ, bearing the sins of his people. The circumstances of this type are, two goats were to be chosen, lots were to be cast to determine which should die. The one that was to die, was brought to the door of the tabernacle, and there he was to be slain; but the other goat was also to be brought, and Aaron was to lay his hands on his head, and confess all the sins of the people; and then he was to be led away into the wilderness. The one that was put to death, represented Christ dying for the sins of his people: the live goat led away into the wilderness typified Christ rising again from the dead, and ascending to heaven for their justification. What else can be meant by the confessing of sins with hands laid upon his head? If this be not its meaning, we know of no other that can be given to it.

But I will leave the doctrine of offering sacrifice, after having made one observation more; and that is, that all the victims were first brought to the door of the tabernacle, and that the priest with hands imposed on their heads, confessed all the sins of the people; after which they were slain. Is not the plain meaning of this conduct, that the victim was a substitute for the people, and by his death made a typical atonement? In proof of this I add, that it is repeatedly said that atonement was made by these offerings. And it

was the opinion of the people that atonement was thus made for their sins.

I will now lay before you the language of prophecy, in perfect agreement with what has been said in support of the doctrine of atonement.

Isaiah stands in the front of the prophets respecting Christ. Please to read chapter liii. in particular, begin at the 4th verse. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. — He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." Can language be plainer in describing Christ as bearing sin, or its punishment as a vicarious sacrifice? But if he died only as a martyr, he died as Paul died, as Peter, and as many others died. But of them it was never said that they bare the sins of the people, made atonement for them, redeemed them.

Daniel assures us, that Messiah should be cut off, but he adds, not for himself. That he should finish the transgression and make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Does not this language clearly foretel that he would make atonement for sin? In what other sense can it be said that he hath made an end of sin, and finished transgression?

If we now pass to the New Testament, we shall find that the doctrine of the atonement is written as with the point of a diamond, on almost every page.

In Matt. i. where the evangelist speaks of the nativity of Christ, he says, "His name shall be called Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." How was he to save his people? I answer, in the words of the apostles, by suffering "the just for unjust;" by being "made a curse" for his people, he was to redeem them from the curse; by "bearing their sins in his own body on the tree." He "who knew no sin was made sin for us," said Paul, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The whole epistle to the Hebrews explains the rites and ceremonies of the legal economy; and every where speaks of the sacrifice of Christ as vicarious. He was once offered to bear the sin of many. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

In the book of Revelation, the saints are represented as singing, to all eternity, this song: "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood." It follows then, that his blood is infinitely efficacious. It remains,

III. That we consider the extent, the application, and the efficacy of the atonement; also attend to the consequences of denying it, and show why we are exhorted to look to Christ for salvation rather than to any other object.

Some general observations are necessary here.

1. That the entrance of sin into the world rendered the atonement absolutely necessary.

2. We remark, that all mankind have sinned, therefore need the atonement. Because without the shedding of blood, there is, and can be no remission.

It may be asked, why divine mercy or goodness could not pardon the sinner without shedding of blood, or the death of Christ? I answer, It is not for us to say what God can do, but to determine by his revealed will, what he will do.

We have in the preceding part of this discourse proved by the sacrifices of the law, by the plain language of the prophets, by the whole New Testament, and by the event itself, that it was necessary that one should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. But as a more direct answer to the question, whether God from mere mercy could not pardon the sinner without the death of Christ? I beg leave to observe, that it is confessed that the mercy of God would have been displayed in the forgiveness of the sinner, but he has other attributes besides mercy, that are equally dear to him; such as holiness, faithfulness, justice. Sin is the transgression of the law: the law condemns the transgressor to suffer the penalty that was made known when the law was given. I ask, if God had pardoned sin from mere mercy, what display would there have been of his faithfulness to his threatenings? Where would have been the manifestation of his justice? But in the forgiveness of sins through the shedding of blood, holiness, faithfulness, justice, and mercy, as well as love unparalleled, are made manifest. In the sacrifice of every victim that was slain, the evil of sin was exhibited, and mankind were taught that

they deserved to die as the beast that was slain. Because death is the wages of sin. If this were the language of the sacrifices of the law, how much more is this the language of the agonizing and awful death of Christ, who bore the sins of his people in his own body on the tree. Go to Calvary, and behold a dying Saviour extended on the cross, and bleeding for the sins of men; and say whether this is not an affecting way to display the evil nature of sin, its opposition to God, and its fatal consequences to men. In this sacrifice we behold a just God and a Saviour.

But it may be asked, would not the sinner's repentance and reformation have been a just reason of forgiveness, without shedding of blood? I answer the question by asking another. Suppose a man had committed murder, and when arraigned before a court of judicature, should plead repentance for his crime, and promise never to do the like again; would it be safe for society, or proper in itself, that the court should pardon him? This would be mercy, but it would not be any satisfaction to law or justice. If not in this case, much less would it be so in sins committed against a holy and just God. No, my brethren, the soul that sinneth shall die; unless the law can be magnified, justice maintained, and the moral government of God supported.

3. Another general observation is this; that as all mankind have sinned, all deserved to be condemned, and all would have been actually condemned as transgressors, had it not been for the atonement or the sacrifice of Christ. The threatening denounced against our first parents, would have been executed as soon as they had sinned,

had it not been for the divine purpose, that Christ should, in the fullness of time, become a sacrifice for sin. Had they perished as soon as they had sinned, the people that have descended from them would never have existed. Hence it follows that the continuance of temporal life, and all the common blessings of providence, are bestowed upon us for the sake of Christ. In this sense he is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe.

4. We remark again, that there is an infinite value in the atonement of Christ. Or, we say, that if there had been but one sinner saved, it was necessary that Christ should magnify the law and make it honourable. But what he hath done and suffered is sufficient for the salvation of all men, if it had been the divine purpose to extend it to all. Which introduces what was proposed, viz.

IV. To consider the extent of the atonement. In considering this part of the subject, we will follow the sacred oracles as closely as we can. They give the characters of all such as are saved by Christ.

David in Psalm cx. describes them as the people of God, and as made willing in the day of his power. Isaiah calls them the ransomed of the Lord. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." Christ repeatedly describes them by their being given to him by his Father. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

The apostles speak of them as a chosen people. "According as he hath chosen us in him, (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will: to the praise of the glory of his grace; wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In Romans viii. Paul has these remarkable words; "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

The only way we discover who these chosen, redeemed people are, who share in the atonement of Christ, is by their being called by grace, out of darkness into marvellous light. While in unbelief, God alone knows whom he hath chosen; but when brought to believe, they are marked for him. Hence we read, that Jesus Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Thus we learn, that the benefits of redemption extend to all those who are given to Christ and who are chosen in him.

They are farther marked by faith. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." None but such will share in the atonement of Christ. "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." This is their condemnation; i. e. this is the aggravation of condemnation. All

condemnation turns on law; it is altogether a judicial act. But he who is condemned by the law of God, will find an aggravated condemnation, if he reject the gospel.

Upon the whole, let the number of the saved be greater or smaller, this is a plain truth of divine revelation, that all who believe shall be saved, and all who believe not shall be lost.

V. We now pass to consider the application of the atonement to sinners.

It is a known fact, that many persons hear the gospel for years successively, without any application of its truths to them. Application of it is indispensably necessary. If a hungry man hear of an uncommon plenty of excellent provision, it will be of no benefit to him, unless he partake of it. If a sick man hear of an infallible remedy for his disease, it will be of no advantage to him, if it be not applied. So it is in this case. There are multitudes of people who hear the gospel, with as much indifference as if they had not sinned, or had no need of Christ. This is undeniable. They are secure in sin at the moment they are suspended over everlasting destruction. In this condition they remain for years; yea, in some instances, all their days. But there is an application that takes place in certain instances, that creates a peace that passeth all understanding.

This application is made, not by men, not by angels, but by the Spirit of the living God; of whom Christ said to his disciples, "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. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The following is the common method the Spirit of God takes in applying the benefits of redemption to sinners.

1. He convinces the sinner of his condition of depravity and guilt. "He shall convince the world of sin," said Christ. Sometimes, he convinces a solitary individual; at other times, he works on a multitude of sinners. Not only one, but many cry, "What shall we do?"

In this case there is an application of the law of God to the conscience, and the sinner falls before it. His former ease and security are exchanged for extreme anxiety of mind. In this condition he remains a longer or a shorter time, as the Holy Spirit please.

2. At length he "reveals Christ in him," as Paul speaks. This is application of the atonement emphatically. The character of Christ, his fullness of merit, his excellency, his love, grace, justice, holiness, now appear to his enlightened, his believing heart. And what is the effect? His distress is removed, though as sensible, if not more so than ever, of his guilt and unworthiness; and peace and joy follow. Believing he rejoices, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. All things become new to him. The creation appears new, Christ precious, God glorious, Christians amiable and beloved. He hath his fruit unto holiness, and his end will be everlasting life.

In this manner the Spirit of God through all the Christian's life, applies promises and various

truths to him. Sometimes when he hath been ready to sink under sin, temptation, or affliction, the Spirit of God hath brought him unexpected and sufficient support. Often had the believer read the same truths and promises, but without that consolation from them that he now enjoys.

Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Jesus, and shews them unto his people; and he is convinced, beyond the admission of a doubt, of the unspeakable importance of that promise of Christ relative to the Holy Spirit, "He shall abide with you forever." Without him we are nothing.

VI. The efficacy of the atonement is now to be considered. I mean to confine myself to two sources of proof on this occasion.

1. The declarations of scripture. But where shall I begin, and when shall I end? Isaiah liii. "He was wounded for our transgressions—and with his stripes we are healed." Zechariah xiii. 1. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Hebrews i. 3. "When he had by himself purged our sins." ix. 28. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." x. 14. "By one offering he hath perfected forever all them that are sanctified." With 1 John i. 7. I may finish this part of the subject. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." I need not remark on these passages; they are so plain that he who runs may read. By one offering—Then what efficacy is there in that offering? From all sin—Then how efficacious is that blood that was shed for sinners?

2. But I pass to the experience of believers, who have all happily found that there is a divine

efficacy in the atonement made by Christ. I appeal to you, my Christian friends, whether, in the moment when you believed in Jesus, you did not behold and rejoice in the efficacy of what Christ had done and suffered for ruined man? Just before, you were without hope, or nearly so, sinking under your load of guilt; now brought by the Spirit of God to look to Jesus, and to realize his fullness of merit, you find peace, you can trust your immortal all with him. You believe the truth, and you feel its efficacy. Christ is precious, and mighty to save. David, Peter, Magdalene, Saul, and millions of others, have found the sufficiency of the atonement.

VII. We pass to consider the consequences of denying the atonement of Christ.

1. Such denial renders the sacrifices of the law unintelligible. We cannot explain them on any other principle, as having a rational meaning.

2. The only foundation on which sinners may expect salvation, is destroyed. Because "there is no other name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby they can be saved." "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins."

3. It follows, that they who reject the atonement can have no just hope of salvation. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

4. Permit me now to ask, why we are exhorted to look to Christ rather than to any other object? Why not to Peter, to Paul, or to some

other saint? I answer, because Christ alone is the Redeemer of sinners; he, and he only, is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.

Two reflections shall close the subject.

1. What infinite obligations are those under to the Saviour, who are conscious that they have been redeemed by his most precious blood. Astonished at the displays of mercy to guilty men, angels swell their loud hosannas to the Lamb; while the four and twenty elders cry, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness. We are not our own, but bought with a price. Forasmuch then as ye know that ye were not redeemed with gold and silver and such corruptible things; but with the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without blemish; glorify him with your body and spirit which are his.

2. Let such as have hitherto despised the Saviour, and trifled with the blood of atonement, realize that it is through this precious blood alone that they can ever hope for pardon and acceptance with God. May the Spirit of the living God arrest their attention, shew them their guilt, and bring them to a humble reliance upon the great atonement. Amen.

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## SERMON XIX.\*

### THE WATER OF LIFE.

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JOHN, iv. 14.

*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

THE conversation of which the text is a part, Christ had with a woman of Samaria, at the well of Jacob; to which he went with a design of converting her and a number of her countrymen to the faith of the gospel. The place was well chosen by our Lord, because crowds of the people resorted thither for water. Among the many, he addressed himself to this woman, saying, "Give me to drink." She pertly replied, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. To which he replied, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

By "the gift of God," Christ himself is meant. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He is said by Paul to have "delivered him up for us all." He is "the unspeakable gift."

\* Preached Lord's day, March 9, 1806.

Had this woman known Christ's real character, she would have bowed before him with sacred reverence, and have asked of him the things that she wanted, as a lost sinner; and he would have given her living water, i. e. a principle of spiritual life, with all its satisfying pleasures. Like all other persons in a natural condition, she was ignorant of his meaning; hence she answered him, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" This question discovered her entire ignorance of Christ: for he was far greater than Jacob, than Abraham, than angels, yea, than all the hierarchy of angels, cherubim and seraphim; he was very and eternal God. Had she known this divine, this adorable personage, she would have been overcome with the appearance of God in human nature. In this ignorance, however, he did not leave her, but said to her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

In what sense may it be said that he shall never thirst? is a question often asked by the lovers of the sacred scriptures; to which I reply,

1. That they who are made acquainted with the grace of the gospel, and feel its influence, will never thirst with that vehement desire as heretofore after earthly things. The power of religion in the heart, will cure them of their once supreme attachment to the things of the world. Or,

2. And which I esteem the real sense of our Lord in this sentence, "they shall never thirst,"

is this ; that they who drink of this water that Christ gives them, shall find such an infinite and inexhaustible fullness in him, that they shall never find the least deficiency or want. If there is always enough in him, they never shall feel the pain of thirsting, because the water that he gives them shall be in them a well of water : if so, the soul who receives it will never know any want ; he shall drink enough for time and eternity.

On the last Lord's day, I mentioned the uncommon excellency of this passage. My design in the choice of it is, to consider a number of very important ideas with which it is crowded ; such as,

I. A certain communication made to the mind, compared to water.

II. That this water is given by Christ.

III. It is an abiding principle—"it shall be in him."

IV. It is a vigorous and active principle, and of heavenly tendency—"springing up."

V. Its issue—"everlasting life."

I. There is a certain communication made to the mind, compared to water. "The water that I shall give him."

I wish this idea to be attended to, viz. that there is something communicated at the time of regeneration, that the sinner was destitute of before. It is something totally distinct from what such person before had. This certain something has been called grace, a new heart, a right spirit, a being created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The most common term used by Christians, to describe it, has been the term principle ;

thus we say, a principle of spiritual life, a principle of holiness.

Upon strict examination of the term principle, I confess myself much in favour of it, because it is derived from a word that signifies the beginning of a thing: and certainly the principle of grace is the beginning of the divine life in the soul. When this water is given, it abides in the mind, and hence springs up to everlasting life. It is from the moment that this principle is communicated to the heart, that the conflict with sin commences; which is carried on till the believer obtains a complete victory.

I now proceed to examine why it is compared to water. "The water," saith Christ, "that I shall give him."

1. It is compared to water because of its freeness. What more free than water? This term then is fitly chosen to represent the freeness of divine grace. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," says Isaiah, "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." A beautiful description of this water: it is to be had without money and without price. The whole plan of salvation, from eternity to eternity, is of grace. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

2. We always connect the idea of cleansing with that of water. So it is with this water that Christ gives: it is in its nature holy, and always tends to holiness. The text is itself full proof of this, for it springeth up into everlasting life; this could not be the case if it did not tend to holiness,

because without holiness no man can see the Lord. We are told that "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure?"

3. Water is perfectly simple, or unmixed. So is the water of life, or the grace that is communicated to the heart at the time of regeneration. As a principle, it is pure, and cannot be mixed with any other thing. Sin and grace dwell together in the same heart; whence ariseth the conflict we have repeatedly mentioned; but they cannot be blended together. Sin will be sin forever, and grace will be grace. If there were a possibility of their being mixed, or blended together, they would be totally changed, and lose their specific nature: but this can never be the case; they are, and ever will be, infinitely different in their nature and influence.

In the dispensation of the gospel by men, we often find a sad mixture of grace and works; but the principle of the divine life itself will always maintain its own nature, however some persons corrupt the truth of salvation by grace alone. They may corrupt the doctrine of grace, but they have no power to corrupt the water which Christ gives, or grace itself. I remark,

4. That water is absolutely necessary to sustain life; without it, all animal life would become extinct. So it is with the grace that Christ bestows. It is so exactly suited to the sinner's condition, that without it he must be lost forever. The doctrine of grace is the only foundation of the sinner's hope; and the principle of grace, that alone by which the heart is changed, and the sinner made meet for heaven. Christ's work for his people, and his work in them, is all grace.

5. Water is a common blessing, hence but little esteemed. So the water of life, or salvation by grace alone, is much neglected. Mankind are ready to say, as the servant said to Naaman, "If he had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" Mankind, in unbelief, would rather be saved by works than by grace; at least, by both together; grace making up whatever deficiency they might imagine in their works. We observe,

6. That under certain circumstances, this common blessing, water, rises into unspeakable importance, and appears, as to the body, the one thing needful. For instance, when the mariners at sea have exhausted their stock, and can procure no supply. Death stares them in the face. Then they learn the value of this common blessing, and would readily give all they possess for a cup of cold water. So it is with the thirsty traveller. The riches of the Indies, the best wines are nothing compared with water: this only can save life; this only can satisfy thirst.

So it is with the grace of the gospel. When the sinner becomes sensible of his lost condition, this grace rises in its value, in his esteem: nothing else will do; nothing else will calm the mind, and give it hope of pardon and acceptance with God. This is the case too with the believer, whose soul thirsts for the living God, for the enjoyment of his love. Without his gracious presence he never can feel satisfied. Every thing else fails of satisfying the pious soul. His language is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?"

II. A second idea in the text is, that this water is given by Christ. "The water," said he, "that I shall give him." Such is the current language of the sacred scriptures. "My sheep," said he, "hear my voice—and I give unto them eternal life." In another place it is said, "that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me." He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, "to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." I need not add to these passages; they all unite in establishing this truth, that Jesus Christ is the giver of this grace that begins the divine life in the soul. There is no other who ought to be considered as the source of spiritual life. Let Christ then have all the glory. It is given, not purchased; it is bestowed without money and without price. No merit in the creature; no consideration of goodness; no recommending qualifications.

III. We pass to the next idea in the text, "it shall be in him a well of water," an unfailling and abiding principle.

1. "A well of water." By this expression we are taught its plenitude or abundance. Christ himself is the fountain. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell;" and out of that fullness his people receive, and grace for grace. Remark, this well of water is said to be in the believer; but it is derived from Christ, as its source.

Out of the well of Jacob thousands were daily supplied: but that well would have been exhausted, had it not been supplied by various springs. "All my springs," said David, "are in thee." So the grace that is in the believer would

fail, if it were not replenished by Christ. He keeps alive this heavenly principle; he supplies his people with all needful grace: hence they are supported under every temptation and affliction, and hold out to the end. "My grace," said he to Paul, "is sufficient for thee." "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

2. It is an abiding principle; "it shall be in him." The lively exercise of grace may be lost, but the principle itself cannot; because it is from Christ at first, and is maintained by him till it shall issue in glory. Our Lord assures us, John x. 28. that he gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. He hath not committed their safe keeping into their own hands; but he himself is engaged to keep them by his power, through faith unto salvation.

There are seasons when the divine life seems to be almost extinct; when holy exercises of love, hope, joy, &c. are languid. Then doubts arise, and the person is ready to cast away his confidence. Such a condition is, in common, the effect of backsliding, or an unbecoming conduct; against which Christians ought to watch and pray. Such was the sad state of David, Peter, and others: but how melancholy their situation, on such occasions! They wound the cause of Christ; and when they are brought back, it is with brokenness of heart: still the Lord will heal their backslidings. "We are confident of this very thing," says Paul, "that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

I remark here, that when Christians fall into this state of backsliding, they neither have evi-

dence themselves, nor give evidence to others, that they are real Christians; and we cannot judge but according to evidence. "By their fruit," said Christ, "ye shall know them." It follows, then, that such persons, though they may be real Christians, do not enjoy the comforts of religion, but are in a state of uncertainty as to themselves, and are unfruitful in the Christian course.

The perseverance of the saints is secured by the promises of Christ; by the ample provision he hath made in the plan of salvation; by all the perfections of God—his love, power, and wisdom. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

IV. I shall now attend to the next idea in the text, which is, that the water that Christ gives, is a vigorous and active principle, and always tends to heaven: "springing up into everlasting life."

The activity of this principle is seen and felt in the following particulars:—

1. In flying to Christ, in the first act of believing. The sinner leaves every thing behind, and flies to Christ; and finds it to be the happiest moment he ever knew. He looks to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

2. It springs up in supreme love to God and Christ. The mind is impressed with the beauty of the divine character, and loves it. He views Christ as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; hence he appears altogether lovely, and the chief among ten thousands.

3. Hope too is of this kind: it rises, and enters into that within the veil. Hope looks up in

every hour of trial. It is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast.

4. This principle may be said to spring up in prayer, in every time of need; whether the believer be in the closet, the family, the church, or in the common walks of life. Is he in any trial? In a moment does he look up to God to direct and keep him. In all times of affliction and distress he thinks of the Lord, and seeks help from him only. Is he in darkness of mind? He flies to the oracles of God, and to the throne of grace. Is he burdened with the body of sin? He looks to Jesus, as the fountain opened to wash in for sin and uncleanness. Is he longing for holiness? He flies to Jesus, that he may be made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The believer's life of faith is described in a beautiful manner by Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, by "looking to Jesus."

5. This divine principle springs up in desires after the glory of God, the salvation of sinners, and in love to the brethren, or to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; in love to all the ordinances and institutions of Christ, and in general to the whole of the divine law.

In a word—There is a tendency of heart to God, in all to whom Christ gives this water of life. It came from him, and it tends to him. It is divine in its nature, and heavenly in its tendency. It is, as a principle in the heart, glory begun here, to be consummated in heaven. Even in the hours of darkness and lukewarmness it springs up, because it can find nothing in the universe to satisfy the soul, but God. It ascends

in groans, and cries, and tears, when God is absent, or hath hid his face from the Christian. Return, says he, return, O God of love, and grant to me thy life-giving presence.

In the hour of death, on the dying pillow, the believer looks up to God, saying, To whom can I flee for succour, but to thee? Like the proto-martyr, looking up stedfastly into heaven, he cries, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

V. We come now to our last particular, which was, to show the final issue of this heavenly principle, which is “everlasting life.”

Everlasting life, my brethren! What an expression! How full of meaning! how full of comfort! It comprehends all the happiness that the godly shall enjoy forever, in the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb. “In thy presence,” says David, “is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Compare the text with the following words of the psalmist, and you will find they perfectly agree—“The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

#### REFLECTIONS.

1. How invaluable is this living water, which Christ gives? What an astonishing change is effected by it, in the depraved heart? There is something communicated at the time of regeneration, that is entirely new: hence Paul says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” The soul thirsts no more for the pleasures of sin, but is all swallowed up in God.

2. Let us examine ourselves, whether we have any evidence that we have received this water of life. This may be principally determined by the effects which it is said to produce. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." Do we thirst after the riches, honours, or pleasures of this world, as we once did? Do we feel a keener and more ardent relish for the empty enjoyments of time, than for the substantial enjoyments of religion? Do we look more for our happiness to things which are temporal and seen, than to those which are unseen and eternal? Can any thing satisfy us, while God withholds his love? If our hearts at once put a negative upon these questions, we have reason to hope that Christ has given us of this living water.

3. If this principle springs up to everlasting life, it follows, that all the unregenerate are under the influence of a principle entirely distinct from this, even disaffection to things of a divine nature. Instead of having holy desires springing up to God, they do not like to retain him in their thoughts. They are of the earth, earthy. Instead of having their affections placed on the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, they are all placed on things on the earth. They are, of course, strangers to that sweet peace there is in believing, to that happiness and contentment which results from drinking freely of the water of life.

4. How awful is your condition, sinners, who remain in unbelief. You who remain secure, are to this moment hardening your hearts against the Saviour. You now hear of the water of life with the utmost indifference: but remember, sinners,

the time will come, when you will find yourselves miserable without it. It can be had no where else but in Christ; he gives it, and gives it freely, to every thirsty soul.

Are there any here present who thirst for the waters of life? then hear the gracious voice of the Saviour. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." To the same import are those precious words on the last page of your Bible, with which I close. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Amen.

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## SERMON XX.\*

THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES.

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LUKE, xxiv. 44—53.

*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

WITH the passage now read to you, I concluded the discourse the last Lord's day. But we had not time then to introduce those observations that it naturally suggests. It is too important not to engage the pleasing attention of this assembly.

You observe, that the text contains our Lord's last address to his disciples after his resurrection. He had first appeared to the women, then to the

\* Delivered Lord's day, February 22, 1807, being the last sermon which Dr. Stillman preached.

two disciples, and on the present occasion they were all together. To them he gave the fullest evidence that he was their Lord who had been crucified. "These are the words," said he, "which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me." He here stamps divine authority on the writings of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. The things they had said concerning him, he had particularly expounded to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus.

As he had just referred them to the testimony of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, it is added, "Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures." Their minds had been much perplexed after their Lord's crucifixion; and they knew not what judgment to form of these dark and painful events. But now he opened their understandings, removed their doubts and ignorance, and fully satisfied them that it "behoved him to suffer, and to rise again from the dead. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

These words are the commission Christ gave to his first preachers, a little before he left the world. Another of the evangelists expresseth himself thus: "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me; go ye therefore," because I have all power to send you, to support you, and to make you successful. It follows, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

In these last words of Christ, we observe the following particulars.

1. That Jesus Christ, as the Head of the church, had unlimited authority to send forth these men to preach the gospel. This observation will be readily admitted.

2. We have in the commission, the subject matter of their ministry. "Preach the gospel," says one evangelist. "Preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ," says another. We hence learn, that by the gospel we are to understand repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ.

These men had no right to go, till he sent them; nor were they at liberty to preach any thing to the people but what they had received in charge from Christ. They were to deliver the truths that Christ had taught them, and not the inventions of men. The sum of their ministry, we see, was repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ. Which comprehends the following particulars.

(1.) Repentance. This implies guilt on the part of the sinner. That he is a transgressor of the law, and under its curse; that he is incapable of obtaining the pardon of his sins by any exertions of his own; that it is his incumbent duty to repent and to abhor himself in dust and ashes. For God commands all men every where to repent. It is also his duty from the nature of things.

It implies, that sorrow for sin as against God is connected with remission of sins. Such sorrow only constitutes true repentance; or that repentance that shall not be repented of. This is

quite distinct from that sorrow for sin that ariseth from a fear of misery. The former is an evangelical, the latter merely a natural exercise of heart.

It hath been said, there is a connexion between repentance and remission of sins. There is a connexion of purpose. When the plan of redemption was devised, this connexion was established. Hence it hath been plainly and repeatedly declared in the sacred scriptures. "Except ye repent," said Christ to the Jews, "ye shall all likewise perish." He assures us, that he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The apostles continually preached the doctrine of repentance to sinners, as connected with forgiveness.

There is a connexion of fitness. It is fit that the sinner should realize his sinful and guilty condition, before he have a sense of remission of sins. It is highly fit, that he should realize his misery, before he will either wish for, or receive the remedy. "The whole need not a physician, but they who are sick."

We are also taught by our Lord, that repentance ought to be preached to mankind before remission of sins. Paul's manner of preaching he hath taught us in his written epistles. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." That is, knowing that all men have sinned and are exposed to the wrath to come, we persuade men that such is their awful condition. When they are brought to realize this as their condition, they will cry out for pardon. "We persuade men," says Paul, that there is remission of sins, but not for any impenitent sinner as such. To

such, the language of the Spirit of God is, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy," and none but such. There are many persons who content themselves with confessing sin, who return to their former conduct as soon as a temptation offers. Such make it evident that they have no true repentance, but are in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.

(2.) The doctrine of remission of sins, naturally implies not only the guilt of the sinner, but his sense of it. To such a convinced sinner, it will be good news, that there is redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. It was so with Peter's hearers, when they cried, "What shall we do to be saved?" Such, Christ assured us would be the office of the Holy Ghost. "And when he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."

Repentance and remission of sins, are the two main parts of the apostolic ministry. These two, with the various truths connected with them, comprehend all the other parts. Under the article of repentance is comprehended every thing that belongs to depravity; under remission, every thing that belongs to the sinner's acceptance with God.

You observe, that Christ taught his apostles to begin their ministry at Jerusalem. Notwithstanding the inhabitants of that city had been remarkably wicked, had abused his person, contemned his doctrines and miracles, and had put him to death; yet he commanded his ministers to go first to that people with the good news of remis-

sion of sins for penitent sinners : even those very persons who had imbrued their hands in his blood. Such was his mercy and condescension to guilty men. In this his conduct, he hath taught us to return good for evil, and to forgive our worst enemies.

But these were not the only reasons why he commanded them to begin their ministry at Jerusalem, that he might teach them to return good for evil, and to forgive their enemies ; but he had some in that city, whom he designed to call by his grace. This appeared to be the case by the instances of conversion that took place under their preaching. In that city was the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, the conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and the gathering of the first Christian church after Christ's resurrection, the mother of all churches that were gathered in following ages at different places.

Christ adds in the next verse, "For ye are witnesses of these things ;" meaning of his life and death, and especially of his resurrection.

He had given them the fullest evidence of this fact by appearing to the women at the sepulchre ; to Simon ; to the two disciples when on their way to Emmaus ; after that, the same evening to the whole company of his disciples, to whom he shewed his hands and his feet, and before whom he did eat.

Here remark, he gave them all the proofs they could desire, for this reason, that they were to be witnesses of these things. A witness ought to be satisfied himself of the truth of the fact he is to testify to others, especially in a case of such

extraordinary nature as that of a person's being alive, who was crucified a short time before. A case too on which every thing depended with respect to themselves, as well as others. All their faith, and hope of pardon and eternal life, depended on it. No event that had taken place while they had been in the world, was of such vast importance to them as this, nor of such infinite moment to the children of men. This we know to be true from what hath taken place at different times and in various places.

It was necessary that the disciples or first Christians should have the most satisfactory evidence of our Lord's resurrection, because mankind are naturally opposed to Christianity, and slow of heart to believe.

It might have been expected that the story of his resurrection would be ridiculed by unbelievers in general. This was the case. But the apostles were qualified in every respect for their work, let the opposition be ever so great, that mankind could make against them. Their extraordinary qualifications for the work are mentioned in the 44th verse. "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." I shall return to the consideration of this promise of the Father, after we have remarked on the following verses. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany," a village at the foot of Mount Olivet, almost two miles from Jerusalem. When there, "he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them," in the very act, "he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

Here we have another very important event in the history of Jesus ; his ascension to heaven. He was carried up in their sight, in the very act of blessing them. The disciples were at no loss to determine whither he was gone, for they saw him go up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. In this case there was nothing left for conjecture. His ascension was a matter of notoriety. All his disciples then with him at Bethany beheld him in his ascension ; and might recollect that he had said on a certain occasion, "I ascend to my Father, and to your Father ; to my God, and to your God." It is added, "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with exceeding great joy ; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

They worshipped him as very God. As him who had left the Father and come into the world, and having now finished his work, he again left the world and went to the Father. From this solemn scene, they "returned to Jerusalem with exceeding great joy."

The natural and important question that ariseth from the last sentence, is, why were they filled with exceeding great joy ? I answer, because he had blessed them in the moment of his leaving them. This blessing consisted,

1. In full proof, that he was the Christ who had been crucified. They were delivered from all doubt or uncertainty ; they were blessed with unwavering confidence in him for time and eternity ; they were therefore happy ; and the more so at this time, because a little before they had been greatly depressed. Oh, how happy the soul when doubts are banished ! "Hope thou in God,"

said David, "for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

2. This blessing consisted farther, in being eye-witnesses of his ascension. The pain we feel in parting with a friend, is greatly assuaged by the prospect of his being happy. Christ had told his disciples that it was expedient for them, that he should go away. "But," said he, "because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts." They had witnessed his unparalleled sufferings on Calvary; and although he had triumphed over death and the grave, and cheered their hopes by his resurrection, it does not appear that they indulged the expectation of his continuance with them. If he must leave them, what greater satisfaction could they possibly have, than to be with him to the last, to receive his benediction, and to see him ascend?

3. It also consisted in the clear and enlarged views he had given them of the writings of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. He opened their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures. What increase of knowledge, and what increase of joy were they blessed with on this occasion. You know, Christians, that your hearts have often burned within you whilst Christ by his Spirit has opened to you the scriptures, and talked to you by the way. "Ye shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." Happy disciples! to have a divine teacher. How great the blessing! How great the joy!

4. They were blessed with his gracious assurance that he would send the promise of his Fa-

ther upon them, and that they should be endued with power from on high.

The promise of his Father, designs the promise of the Holy Ghost, mentioned in the Old Testament repeatedly. Isa. lix. 21. The Lord Jehovah here promises Christ as Mediator, in these words: "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." See John xiv. 16, 17. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

On the day of pentecost this promise was fulfilled. Acts ii. "And when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The effects were astonishing. Wondrous things were done by the ministry of the apostles, and great indeed was the success of the gospel. They were now endued with power from on high, that is, from heaven; and hence their enemies could not resist the wisdom and power by which they spake.

From that day to this, the Holy Ghost has at different times wrought wonders by the gospel, in the hands of those whom the Lord hath sent forth to preach it to the world.

In the first age the apostles had a power to work miracles, and by them to confirm their own authority to preach, and the doctrines they delivered. With this power they went forth, in the name of Jesus.

In the words of an animated French preacher, I will close this part of the subject.

“Imagine these venerable men addressing their adversaries on the day of the Christian pentecost in this language:—‘Ye refuse to believe us on our depositions; five hundred of us ye think are enthusiasts; or perhaps ye think us impostors, or take us for madmen. But bring out your sick, present your demoniacs, fetch hither your dead; let all nations send us some of their inhabitants: we will restore hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind; we will make the lame to walk; we will cast out devils, and raise the dead. We publicans, we illiterate men, we tent-makers, we fishermen, we will discourse with all the people of the world in their own languages. We will explain prophecies, develop the most sublime mysteries, teach you notions of God, precepts for the conduct of life, plans of morality and religion, more extensive, more sublime and advantageous, than those of your priests and philosophers, yea, than those of Moses himself. We will do more still; we will communicate those gifts to you.’”\*

\* Saurin's Sermons, Vol. II. Ser. viii.

All these things they were enabled to do, after they were endued with power from on high, i. e. after the descent of the Holy Ghost. Even their enemies confessed it, though they could not account for their extraordinary and miraculous power.

The following reflections must close the subject.

1. Christ's resurrection from the dead, and ascension to glory, has explained many of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which before were enveloped in great darkness. The doctrine of the resurrection, which but glimmered in the writings of Moses and the prophets, now shone with an irresistible effulgence. Christ had risen, and become the first fruits of them that slept. The gates of death were henceforth unbarred to the believer.

Christ's visible ascension to heaven, was also a most consoling proof to the disciples, that he was gone to appear in the presence of God for them: that he would never abandon his cause, nor his faithful followers; but that he would employ his all-prevalent advocacy for them, when seated at his Father's right hand.

2. The success of the gospel, at every period, is the effect of what Christ promised should take place after his ascension, i. e. the gift of the Holy Ghost. This promise was remarkably fulfilled on the day of pentecost. What incontestable proof was here exhibited, that Jesus had entered into "heaven itself;" and, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he shed forth that which they then saw and heard." The same

divine influence succeeds the preaching of the gospel, and makes it effectual to the conversion of sinners, in the day in which we live. This influence will be continued, till the plan of grace is accomplished, and all Christ's ransomed people are gathered in.

3. We hence learn, that when our understandings are opened to understand the scriptures; to see the exact agreement between type and anti-type, between prophecies and events; to see them all pointing to Jesus, and centering in him; our hearts grow warm, and glow with sacred love. When he condescends to talk with us by the way, or to meet us in his ordinances, like the disciples of old, we worship him, and return with great joy. He is now gone to prepare a place for us, and has said, "I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am there ye may be also, to behold my glory." Then shall we meet in his temple above, and be continually employed in praising and blessing God, forever and ever. Amen.

F I N I S.



*The following is the List of other Sermons, &c. published by the Author, but not included in this Volume.*

- A SERMON on the repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766.
- A Sermon on the character of a good soldier : delivered before the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company in Boston, June 4, 1770.
- Substance of a Sermon, delivered at the ordination of Rev. SAMUEL SHEPARD, in Stratham, New Hampshire, Sept. 25, 1771.
- A Sermon on the death of Hon. SAMUEL WARD, Esq. member of the Continental Congress, from Rhode Island, and delivered before that body in Philadelphia, March 26, 1776.
- A Sermon on the General Election in Massachusetts, May 26, 1779.
- A Sermon on Charity, preached before the most Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons in Charlestown, June 24, 1785.
- An Oration delivered to the inhabitants of the town of Boston, July 4, 1789.
- A Sermon on the death of NICHOLAS BROWN, Esq. of Providence, (R. I.) May 31, 1791.
- A Sermon on the French Revolution, preached on the annual State Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 20, 1794.
- A Sermon on the ordination of the Rev. STEPHEN SMITH NELSON, preached in Boston, Sept. 15, 1797.
- A Sermon on the National Fast Day, April, 1799.
- A Sermon on the death of GEORGE WASHINGTON, late President of the United States of America, 1800.
- A Sermon on the opening of the New Baptist Meeting House in Charlestown, May 12, 1801.
- A Sermon on the first anniversary of the Boston Female Asylum, Sept. 5, 1802.
- A Sermon on the ordination of Rev. THOMAS WATERMAN, Charlestown, October 7, 1801.
- A Sermon on the first anniversary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, May 25, 1803.
- A Sermon on the death, and preached at the funeral, of Rev. HEZEKIAH SMITH, D. D. of Haverhill, January 31, 1805.

