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Henderson, Robert.

A series of sermons on
practical and familiar



A
SERIES
OF
SERMONS

ON
Practical and Familiar Subjects,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE
REV. ROBERT HENDERSON,
PASTOR OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN MURFREESBOROUGH.

VOLUME II.

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INDEX

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MRS. MARY WELLES

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SERMON XX.



THE CHRISTIAN HOPE.



PREACHED AT LEBANON CHURCH, IN KNOX COUNTY, IN THE YEAR 1805, ON THE DEATH OF MRS. MARGARET RAMSEY, WIFE OF COL. FRANCIS A. RAMSEY, NOW ALSO DECEASED, AT HER REQUEST, AND FROM THE TEXT SELECTED BY HERSELF.

Hebrews, VI, 18, 19, 20.

“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 on 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 vail; whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

THESE are the words of the apostle Paul, addressed to the christian Hebrews; and the design of them is, that those christians might have abundant comfort and consolation, in the precious promises of God; the performance of which was sealed to them by the entrance of Jesus Christ

into Heaven as their great fore-runner. These Hebrews were a people converted from Judaism to christianity; and who having cast off the yoke of the ceremonial law, were incessantly persecuted by their unbelieving brethren, who adhered tenaciously to the same. In order to confirm these believing Hebrews in their christian profession, the apostle wrote them this letter; in the two first chapters of which, and in the third, from the first to the thirteenth verse, he shews the great superiority of Jesus Christ the founder of the christian religion, to Moses the Jewish lawgiver, arguing very justly from the sonship of Christ, his creation of the world and his universal dominion. In the latter part of the third chapter, and in the fourth, he cautions them against indulging in unbelief, as that provoking crime which would prevent their entering into the heavenly rest; as the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness, prevented their entering into rest in Canaan, to bring them to which, was no small part of the design of that commission which the Lord gave to Moses. In the fifth chapter he enforces this caution, by the most animating representations of Christ's character; of whose divine appointment, gracious administration, and previous sufferings, he goes on to discourse, and promises farther illustrations of this important topic, in a subsequent part of the letter.

In this chapter of which our text is a part, from the first to the ninth verse, he declares his purpose of going on to sublimer truths, and that he would not dwell on the first principles, for the

sake of those who had apostatised from christianity ; whose case he represents as extremely hopeless ; and from the ninth verse to the end he sets before them, the consideration of God's goodness, and his fidelity to his sacred engagements. For having spoken of the hopeless state of apostates, he thus addresses the christians to whom he wrote, in the ninth verse ; " But beloved we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Then the apostle goes on to our text, to exhort them to be diligent and faithful in their duty, and followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises ; and encourages them thereto by the faithfulness of God, " Who was not unrighteous to forget their work and labor of love." " That by two immutable things," &c.

Dear fellow christians, we have the most abundant assurance given us, of the stability and unmoveableness of God's gracious promises ; for they are confirmed to us by two immutable things. God's word and oath, neither of which will he ever violate, though heaven and earth should pass away ; and God's design in giving us these assurances is, that our consolations may abound, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us ; and that we might have this hope, as the anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, to keep us firm and unshaken amidst all the storms and tempests with which we are surrounded while we are in the troubled ocean of this world ; and until we are called home to those secure and peaceful climes, where the pestilent winds of temptation will never

blow, and where storms and tempests will never drive, nor the high rolling billows of sorrow and distress ever threaten to overwhelm us; but where we shall see our lovely forerunner Jesus, face to face, and enjoy the sunshine of his countenance forever.

In treating this subject I design

I. To speak something of this christian hope spoken of in my text, showing wherein it consists, and also some of its properties.

II. What it is to fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.

III. I shall speak something of the billows, storms and tempests, which beset the christian as he sails through the sea of this life, to the port of eternal rest, and which render the anchor of hope so necessary.

IV. I shall endeavor to demonstrate, that the christian hope is the most sure and stedfast anchor of the soul, amidst those threatening storms and tempests.

V. I shall take some notice of the end of this hope, and the happy condition which succeeds to it, when the saints are brought where Jesus is, who has for them entered within the vail; and then conclude with some inferences.

I. I am to speak something of this christian hope, showing wherein it consists, and also some of its properties.

Hope is the expectation of, and waiting for, some future good, something which we have in prospect, but not in possession. This I think is agreeable to the apostle's view of it; Rom. viii, 24;

25 ; “ But hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for.” Hope is a compound passion and may be analyzed into expectation and desire. Its object must always be some future good. It must be future, “ For what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for.” It must be a good and desirable thing, otherwise it might be an object of terror or detestation, according as it might be circumstanced ; but could not be an object of hope. We must likewise conceive it to be attainable, otherwise we will not hope for it. The christian hope in particular, is the christian’s waiting with patience and earnestly looking for the accomplishment of all God’s gracious promises ; particularly that of eternal life in Heaven ; that is, that God will take care of him in this world, and cause all things to work for his good, and in the end bring him to the possession of heaven and eternal happiness. This is truly the christian hope ; see Titus, i, 2. Then the object of the christian hope which we describe, is the promises of a good and faithful God, or perhaps more correctly speaking, it is the blessings contained in these promises, the chief and most comprehensive of which is, God himself who speaks them ; Psalm, lxxviii, 7 ; also, Psalm, cxlvi, 5 ; Jeremiah, xiv, 8. The apostle Paul expressly calls Jesus Christ our hope ; I. Tim. i, 1 ; I. Pet. i, 21. Then in strictness and propriety of speech, God himself speaking the promises is the great object of the christian hope, as he is the substance of all those good things contained in the promises. The christian hope is founded upon,

and preceded by faith agreeably to I. Pet. i, 21 ; “ Who by him do believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.” Here, then, we see the apostle represents the christian as believing in God, before he hopes in him, and faith as preceding hope ; and thus it must be, for how can a man hope for a good, which he does not believe he shall ever receive ? see also, I. Peter, iii, 15 ; “ And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” This reason is our christian experience, or, in other words, our faith in Jesus Christ.

We are also to speak a little of the properties of this hope.

1. It is of a purifying nature. “ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure ;” I. John, iii, 3. And herein is it distinguished from the false hope and delusive expectations of the hypocrite, which shall perish ; Job, viii, 13, 14. If our hope in God, our earnest expectation of, and waiting for, future blessedness, makes us more cautious and circumspect that we may not offend God ; more humble and meek ; more gentle and unassuming toward our fellow men ; more prayerful and anxious to obtain the divine blessing, and daily communion with God ; then I think we may conclude we have the hope of the true christian. But if our hope leaves us incautious about offending God, light and trifling in our behaviour, and puffs us up with a high conceit of ourselves, and a showy disposition in

religious attainments, and leads us to despise others; then I presume there is strong reason to suspect, that ours is the hope of the hypocrite which shall perish.

2. Another property of this hope is that it greatly gladdens and rejoices those who are the subjects of it; Prov. x, 28; "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness;" Rom. v, 2; "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" Rom. xii, 12; "Rejoicing in hope;" And well, my dear friends, may we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. What so well calculated to excite the most divine joy and satisfaction, as the lively hope of that most blessed world, where sorrow will never come, neither the water-spouts of God pass over us any more; "If in this world only," says an apostle, "We have hope we are of all men most miserable;" I. Cor. xv, 19. But blessed be God this is not the case. Our hope casts anchor within the vail; and though we will be humbly thankful for every drop of comfort which a gracious God bestows upon us here; yet it is to the blessed world to come, that our sublimest expectations are raised; and this exalted hope rejoices our hearts even amidst the wintry gloom of affliction.

3. This christian hope is of a very growing nature, and much encreased by experience. Rom. v, 4; "Experience hope," that is, the more the christian experiences of God's goodness, faithfulness and fulfilment of the divine promises, the more confidently will he hope in him; and thus his hope increases.

II. I am to shew what it is in the language of my text "to fly for refuge, to lay hold on this hope." When the apostle speaks of flying for refuge, to lay hold on this hope, we are to understand by hope, in this connection, the great object of the christian hope, Jesus Christ himself, and not strictly speaking, hope, as it is a grace of God's spirit and an exercise of the human mind; and I presume we are justified in this observation by a comparison of some other passages. See Joel iii, 16; "But the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." See also, 1 Tim. i, 1; "And the Lord Jesus Christ who is our hope." Then to fly for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us, is just to lay hold of Jesus Christ by faith, as he is offered in the gospel. Or if we understand hope as most strictly defined, the exercise of the christian mind, looking for and expecting future and eternal happiness, still the flying for refuge to lay hold upon this hope, must imply a receiving Jesus Christ by faith; for the christian hope always supposes saving faith; and without it there is no such thing as christian hope. For a man cannot have a well founded hope of heaven and eternal happiness, without faith in Christ, seeing it is through Christ alone we must obtain salvation, as the sacred writings every where assure us. Without faith in Christ we may have presumption and false confidence, but no true hope.

Flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, implies danger which is likely to

overtake us if we fly not. When a man takes refuge in some strong hold or place of retreat, it is generally from some threatening danger. Those who fly for refuge to this hope see themselves, through the medium of God's word, pursued by the sword of justice, and feel that they deserve it for violating the divine law. They see and feel that they are justly exposed to eternal misery, and undone forever without Jesus Christ. Rom. vii, 9; "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Gal. iii, 24; "Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us to Christ." Then, in a word, to see and feel that we are sinners, that we have incurred the penalty of the divine law, and God's righteous displeasure; to see the fulness and plentiful redemption that is in the blessed Saviour, and to rest on him for the pardon of sin, is to fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. For whenever we have received Christ by faith, we have a rational and scriptural foundation for the christian hope, and not till then.

III. I am to speak something of the storms, billows and tempests, which beset the christian as he sails thro' the sea of this life, to the port of eternal rest, and which render the anchor of hope so necessary.

Those billows, storms and tempests, are manifold, and sometimes very furious; insomuch that the christian would soon founder on the rocks of despair, were it not for the anchor of hope. "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards;" Job. v, 7; and of this trouble, christians have their full share as well as other men, while they are in

this world. It appears to be a part of the divine plan, that all shall taste the bitterness of sin, and christians themselves as well as the rest. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he has the promise of eternal life from a God that cannot lie, and this is the christian hope as suggested above ; but he had no promise that he shall not meet with the waves and billows of distress, on the troubled ocean of life, as well as others. And oftentimes the christian makes the plaintive language of the Psalmist his own ; “ Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts ; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me ;” Psalm, xlii, 7. And in this situation, were it not for the anchor of hope, these waves and billows would certainly overwhelm him. These troubles are various. Sometimes the christian is afflicted in his own person, with severe bodily pain. Day after day, night after night, yea, and often month after month, the child of God is confined to the chamber of sickness and distress ; till he is made to cry out with the illustrious sufferer of old ; “ So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me ;” Job, vii, 3. O sirs ! how necessary is the anchor of hope in such an extreme case as this ? Sometimes he suffers by proxy, when a dear wife, or son, or daughter, lies under long protracted pain. Ah sirs ! this is a world of suffering, in which we are ; and natural, in consequence of moral, evil, has found ten thousand avenues to guilty man. Sometimes the christian is bereaved, and his choicest comfort torn from him by the relentless hand of death, “ That

anker worm of human joy." A darling wife, a beloved son, or an only daughter, is summoned to eternity, and he is left to bemoan his bereaved condition and wet his couch with tears. Oh! how necessary is the christian hope now to raise and cheer his drooping heart, and to operate as an antidote against gloom and despair? Sometimes the believer suffers more intensely still, through the medium of others. His children are not taken from him; they live; but live not to administer comfort to a fond parent, by walking in the paths of wisdom and virtue; but to harrow his heart with the most pungent distress, by a vicious and disgraceful conduct; which to the feeling and affectionate parent is infinitely worse than death. These, and an hundred other waves and billows, trouble the christian's bark, in common with others, as he sails through the sea of this world, and renders the anchor of hope indispensibly necessary.

But the christian is liable to many other storms, which are peculiar to him as a believer; that is, spiritual distresses, with which the man of the world hath no acquaintance. Often his sins beset him in some unguarded hour; and he does the things which he highly disapproves of, in his more reflecting and collected moments; and in this sense it is, "That the good which he would, he does not, and the evil which he would not, that he does;" Rom. vii, 19. And these things fill him with sore distress, which is one of the waves that trouble his sea, and render necessary that anchor of hope, which is sure and stedfast, and enters into

that within the veil, where those backslidings and departures from God will trouble his soul no more.

Sometimes the believer has a serene sky, and enjoys light and love, he draws nigh to God in prayer, and with freedom tells him all his heart. These are his gladsome days, in which his soul exults in the Lord, and which he would wish to last coeval with his existence below. But this is not his favorite lot ; he often loses these bright and pleasing prospects, and his sky is overcast with gloomy clouds. The light of the divine countenance is suspended, and he bewails his dreadful darkness. Now he is ready to cry out with pious Job of old, " Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness ;"² Job, xxix, 2, 3. And again, " Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat, I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments ;" Job, xxiii, 3, 4. This withdrawment of the divine presence, this dark and gloomy frame of mind, is one of those spiritual billows, which often fearfully rolls over the believer, and fills him with sore dismay, and would utterly overwhelm him, were it not for the anchor of hope, which enters into that within the veil, and preserves him firm and steadfast amidst those lowering skies. In these gloomy hours, the great adversary of God and man, that bitter enemy of the christian hope, is exceeding busy with the poor beclouded believer, endeavoring with all his black ingenuity, to destroy his

hope and confidence. How often does he now suggest to the distressed and bewildered christian, that he has no religion, that all he ever thought he had, was mere fancy and delusion, for if he was a true believer God would never leave him thus. And sometimes he is dreadfully successful, in bewildering the poor christian more and more, and brings him for a time almost to the borders of despair. Oh what a dark and gloomy situation is this, and how dreadfully do the billows of distress now roll! The poor and almost desponding believer, hears the thunders of Mount Ebal roar, and in his own apprehension, almost feels the tempest of divine indignation beat upon his defenceless soul, threatening his little bark with an entire overthrow. How necessary now the anchor of hope. And blessed be God that grace, which never fails those who trust the Lord, is sufficient for the drooping christian, and enables him to make his escape from this unpromising and almost hopeless situation. It enables him to raise an eye of faith to the divine promises, and cast himself on the blessed Jesus; and when he is enabled to do this, then he throws out the anchor of hope which enters into that within the vail, and renders his vessel firm and stable amidst all the drivings of these dreadful storms.

Sometimes this malignant enemy attempts to destroy the christian's hope at once, and involve him in oceans of distress by what St. Paul calls the "fiery darts of the devil;" Ephes. vi, 16. By these I understand vile blasphemous thoughts of God, his government and ways, and unbelieving

despairing thoughts of Jesus Christ, and his gracious tokens of redeeming lost sinners. These things, and such as these, are sometimes darted into the mind of a believer as quick as lightning, and appear as unavoidable as death, and almost as dreadful too; and oftentimes the more the pious mind strives against them, the more are they borne upon it. I believe the adversary of souls has sometimes so perplexed christians with these things, as to render them extremely miserable, and more especially in the earlier years of their piety. Oh! sirs, when believers are tossed on such billows as these, how much do they need the sure and steadfast anchor of hope? Perhaps many pious minds have been unduly distressed, on account of these things. If ten thousand of the vilest thoughts of which Belzebub himself is capable, be injected into the mind of a believer, if he is conscious he cordially hates them, and anxiously prays for deliverance from them; that instead of taking any satisfaction or delight in them, he feels them as the punishment of his soul; and to be delivered from which he would give the world were it at his disposal; then I think they are not his sins at all, but the sins of the devil, with whom they originate; and for them he is accountable, and not the poor distressed believer, who feels and hates them.

IV. I am to show that the christian hope is the most sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, amidst those threatening storms and tempests.

When mankind are sorely afflicted in any way, they wish for some support and consolation, and greatly need it too, to buoy up their fainting spirits

that they may not be entirely overwhelmed by their distress; and what else is equal to the christian hope, the high expectation of eternal rest, for this invaluable purpose? Is there any thing else so well calculated to cheer the suffering mind, and prompt it to endure all the will of God with patience and resignation? This hope it was which so excellently supported that amiable friend, whose death gave occasion to our present meeting, during the tediousness of eighteen months painful confinement, and not only prevented her from all murmuring and repining at the allotments of heaven, during so long an illness, but enabled her to meet the last enemy death, with the most perfect dignity and composure. And well might the christian hope thus support her in the trying hour of dissolution, who had lived on it when blessed with health and comfort, and walked so correctly in the paths of virtue and piety, and maintained so intimate an intercourse with her God and Saviour. Let others imitate the bright example, and walk with God as she did, and no doubt they will find an equal support, from the same precious hope, whenever such support is necessary. Is the christian confined to a bed of languishment and suffering? Will not the christian hope best support him, while he reflects that all these sufferings are laid upon him by a God who loves him, and has given Christ to die for him; that they will all work together for his good, and be sanctified to his growth in grace, if he is raised again; and if he is not, they will, by dissolving his clay tabernacle, put him in possession of eternal joys? Certainly

these are considerations better calculated to reconcile the sufferer to his distress than any thing which the world can either give or take away. And does it not appear from matter of fact, that the christian hope is the most sure and stedfast anchor of the soul, under those billows of distress, of which we now speak? Who suffers with the greatest resignation? Who parts with the world, with friends and families, with the greatest cheerfulness and dignity? Is any body who frequents the chambers of the sick and the dying, at a loss to answer these questions? Does not the man of the world, toss like the wild bull in the net, under affliction, and most reluctantly part with his friends and possessions when called to go? On the other hand, with what calmness and submission, do we often see the humble christian suffer all the will of his heavenly father, saying, "it is the Lord let him do as seemeth him good?" With what dignity and resolution does he part with the world, with his family and friends, while a lively joy is depicted on his countenance, and he is lovely and cheerful even in death? How are we to account for so striking a contrast? I presume, sirs, it is to be resolved into the christian hope. Ask the humble christian who suffers all the will of his heavenly father with the utmost magnanimity, what it is which supports him? And he will tell you, it is the sweet christian hope; the blessed expectation of being forever with the Lord. With respect to the poor worldling, we know but too well what is the matter with him, that he is so much afraid of death: And, sirs, it is the want of the

christian hope. He has taken the world for his all, and is now called to part with it, and has no other God. Deplorable condition! A poor sullen soul, forced reluctantly into eternity! Into an awful eternity! Without a God or any well founded hope of future happiness!

Let no impudent opposer tell one, that these are no realities; that the triumphant death of christians spoken of, is only imaginary, or at the best, exaggerated to serve a purpose: I know as well what I see and hear, as the boldest infidel or scoffer amongst them. I have attended a number of dying people, and those of very different characters too, and have seen some of them joyful and triumphant in the hour of dissolution, and leaving the world, and bidding their families farewell, with as much calmness and composure, as if they were leaving them only for a day or an hour; and many of these of the softer sex. Ah! ye unbelieving and dissolute sons of riot, if ye saw an emaciated woman, constitutionally timid in the extreme; an affectionate wife, a tender and feeling mother, bidding a beloved husband farewell! an everlasting farewell! Taking leave of her young and unraised children, and among the rest, the suckling on her bosom, without the least perturbation, nay, with triumphant complacency; her countenance suffused with the most engaging smiles, while, with the language of the holy scriptures, and good sense on her tongue, she comforts those who are weeping round her, without shedding a tear herself! Telling you with her expiring breath, and on the veracity of a dying woman,

that the reason of all this, was the christian hope, that is, the full and unshaken expectation of being forever with the Lord; what would you say to it? Would you, dare you say, the woman is in a high raised delirium, and this accounts for all? If this be a delirium, heaven grant me a delirium while I breathe. But give me leave, sirs, to tell you all with plainness, it is a delirium which I very much fear you will not manifest in that trying hour, unless you experience a change of heart.

Is the christian bereaved? Are his dearest enjoyments taken from him? And do the billows of parting distress pass over his soul? What can so well console his troubled mind as the christian hope? If his wife, his son, or his daughter, died *hopefully* in Jesus, may he not assuage his bleeding sorrows with such pleasing, such rational and scriptural reflections as these? I am called, it is true, to part with my dear *consolation*, but blessed be God it is not forever, it is not an eternal separation; we part, but part to meet again in that bright world, where parting of friends shall be no more; where we shall be forever together, to enjoy each other, and each to enjoy his blessed God, through an eternal day. Let these divine considerations reconcile me to my present lot, while I bless the Lord for the animating hope of a glorious resurrection. Well may the surviving christian, in such a case, join in the sweet song of the poet:

“Farewell bright soul, a short farewell,
Till we shall meet again above;
In the sweet groves where pleasures dwell,
And trees of life bear fruits of love.”

Now, sir, do you think there is any thing else can administer so divine a consolation to the believer, as the christian hope, when these billows of distress break in upon him? The consideration of any part they may have sustained in life, or any thing they may have left behind them, dwindles into a mere nothing, compared with so divine a consolation as that of which we speak. Or even suppose the very worst of the case, that when the christian loses a friend, that friend did not leave satisfactory evidence of true religion; yet the christian hope is still, for obvious reasons, the best anchor of the soul. The christian knows his departed friend is where the best and holiest being in the universe, allows him to be, and that this is perfectly right; and still he hath the sacred hope, that he himself will shortly be where he never can be stript of his enjoyments again, and where the billows of distress will never beat upon his peaceful bosom.

Thus, then, the christian hope is the best anchor of the soul still.

Do the billows of distress break in upon the christian from the irregularities and vices of his family? These certainly are great troubles, but the anchor of the soul still is, the christian hope. The true believer enjoying this hope, knows from his own experience, that the grace and power of God, can as easily reform these unruly members of his family who give him so much uneasiness, as they once did himself, and therefore he hopes in the Lord, that his grace will yet convert them, and

bring them to be heirs of glory together with himself; and this hope preserves him from sinking so much under his distress, as he would otherwise do. But at all events he knows, if he himself is a christian, it will be but a very little while, that these sorrows will trouble him, and the hope of being shortly placed beyond the reach of these and all other troubles, the better supports him now; and what other consideration could do it so well?

When the christian has backslidden from his God, and is convinced of the guilt and folly of his conduct, insomuch that he is dreadfully tossed on the billows of distress, what will best support him, and preserve him from being swallowed up by the waves of despair? Is it not the anchor of hope? I think this is what supported the Psalmist's soul when "deep called unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, and all the waves and billows of the Lord went over him;" Psalm xlii, 6, 11. And certainly it is the hope of pardon and forgiveness, which preserves the soul of every christian from despair, in a similar situation. What else could support him? Did he not hope for forgiveness, he would be utterly miserable; for he knows he has offended God and deserves his eternal displeasure. Precious as faith is which lays hold of the promise, and instrumentally obtains the pardon; yet it is the hope of forgiveness and eternal life, which consoles the believer.

When the christian is under the hidings of God's face, and does not enjoy that sweet access to God, which he once enjoyed, nor that sacred satisfaction in religion which he has often felt, his soul is cast

down and he feels great discouragements ; and probably he would never rise again to satisfaction and comfort in this world, were it not for the christian hope. But when he recollects what the Lord has done for him in time past, and his divine and gracious promises, his hope casts anchor within the vail, and thro' divine grace, his comforts are restored ; so that the billows of distress do not overwhelm him. And when doubts are suggested by the wicked one ; and his most fiery darts shot at the believer, so that his soul is exceedingly distressed, his hope still bears him through, and he is brought off more than a conqueror.

V. I am to take a little notice of the end of this hope, and the happy condition which succeeds to it, when the saints are brought where Jesus is, who has for them entered within the vail.

Hope is extremely proper and beneficial too, to the christian while he is in this world, because he is not yet in possession of the promised inheritance ; but when he gets home to heaven, where Christ has entered within the vail, his hope will of course terminate : what was once the promised good, will then be in possession, and his little bark will be safe in port, where storms and tempests will never drive, where billows of distress will never roll, and where he will not need to cast anchor any more ; “For hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for ?” Rom. viii. 24. In that blessed world faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition. There sorrow shall never come, nor pain and anxiety exist any more ; Rev. xxi, 4 ; “Nor shall the favored

inhabitants of that blessed country any more say, I am sick ;” Isaiah xxxiii, 24. Oh sirs, what a change hath taken place in the condition of those who have died in Christ ; “Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them ;” Rev. xiv, 13. Lately some of them were sickening, groaning, dying ; but are now raised superior to all suffering, and basking in the beams of eternal blessedness ; and flourishing in immortal strength and vigor, before the throne of God and the lamb. Now they shine in the courts of eterual glory ; “clothed in white robes and palms in their hands ;” Rev. vii, 9. Then they defile themselves no more with sin, nor shall they ever feel one painful sensation to all eternity. There we doubt not is that amiable and highly valued friend, whose death we now commemorate, in some honoured seat near her Saviour’s side, enjoying at this moment, the plenitude of blessedness, under the smiles of him, who hath pardoned her iniquities, pitied her infirmities, and said to her, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

The saints now in heaven, while they were in this world, often complained of sore temptation ; but no such things ever obtain in that blessed world of rest, where they now enjoy their Lord. While in this world they had many sore conflicts with the powers of darkness, and sometimes it appeared doubtful even to themselves, how the contest was to terminate ; but now it is entirely ended and they bear the palm of victory forever. In that blessed place, where the saints who died in Jesus

are, the din of arms is never heard, and the martial trumpet sounds no more ; nor is the child of grace ever called, as heretofore, to contend with "principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. There peace forever spreads her brightest banners, and all the blood-bought millions, in that land of rest, enjoy her choicest blessings. There the saints behold forever, the face of that God whom they most ardently love, and who brought them safely through all the storms and tempests of this world, to the fair haven of eternal rest ; "and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them ;" Rev. vii, 15. Oh friends ! what extatic delight and rapture must they feel, who are thus incessantly before the throne of God ? "And see him face to face, without a cloud between ;" They feel no want, they know no anxiety ; "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat ;" Rev. vii, 16. Those calls of nature which they felt here shall trouble them no more ; for through the goodness of God, they are now superior to them all, as the angels are in heaven.

While the saints, now in glory, were here below, they received but little honor from men, nay, they were probably despised by the wicked and ungodly ; many of them moved in an obscure sphere, little heard of, and little known beyond the narrow limits of their own neighborhood ; but oh how great the contrast now ! What honors, what signal honors, are conferred upon them, while "the lamb in the midst of the throne, feeds them and

leads them to fountains of living waters, and God wipes away all tears from their eyes ;” Rev. vii, 17. “Now they are all made kings and priests unto their God ;” Rev. i, 6 ; “And shall reign with him forever ;” Rev. xxii, 5.

When we have paid the last obsequies to the dying saints, and attended their remains to the silent house appointed for all living ; when we have looked upon the narrow tomb, and heard the clods rumble so dolefully upon the coffin lid, a solemn and ineffable kind of gloom possessed our minds, and we almost felt compassion for the apparently solitary situation of our dear departed friends ; and indeed, were it not for the sublime doctrines of christianity, for aught that all the world could tell us, we might contemplate the grave as their last dwelling, and the loathsome worms as their final companions : but glory to God, the gospel, the sweet gospel of Jesus, tells us better things, and through the telescope of faith, we see them seated at the right hand of God ; and thither, in the due season, their bodies shall be brought, and the grave shall lose its boasted prey. Then christians, with respect to our departed friends who have died in Christ, let us not view their situation, for a single moment, as a solitary one. No, blessed be God, their immortal souls, their only conscious part, enjoy at this moment, the most exalted sweets of society, while we are wetting their ashes with our tears. Yes, sirs, they make a part of that refined and numerous assembly which no man can number. Through the grace of God, and the means of those angelic guides, who escorted them

through the valley of the shadow of death, and arrested the waves of Jordan till those favored servants of the Lord had passed over ; they have made a large acquaintance at the court of glory. There they have met with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets ; with Peter, Paul, James and John, and all the apostles ; with Polycarp, and Rodgers, and all the martyrs ; there they have found all their godly friends who have gone before them, and over whom they wept as we do over them ; there the tender mother has fondly ranged the fields of bliss, and found her infant son, and given him an eternal clasp to her now happy bosom ; there the dutiful son has met his honored father, and received a cordial welcome to those bright abodes of joy ; there the solitary and weeping widow has found her beloved husband with whom she spent so many happy hours here on earth, and who was the first among those favored spirits to hail her arrival to the mansions of rest. Ah, sirs, and what is infinitely more, there the saints have met their Jesus, that glorious Saviour who died on Calvary for their redemption, and shall be forever in his society and go no more out.

I hope, sirs, these things are not the mere flights of an unbridled imagination, unsupported by the word of God ; Heb. xii, 22—24 ; “But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the

spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." This certainly goes to justify all that we have said of the heavenly state. Then, sirs, we see that the saints in heaven, and our departed christian friends amongst the rest, enjoy the most delightful society; and a pleasing thought it is. We are social creatures, and our happiness very much consists in the sweets of social enjoyment. Yea, sirs, so much is this the case, that I believe there are very few of our species to whom life itself would be desirable, if deprived of associating with their fellow men. While saints are in this world, they enjoy something of the benefits and pleasures of social converse; but this, like every other enjoyment we possess here, is extremely mixed. Sometimes we enjoy the company of the wise, the benevolent and good; and then how pleasantly our moments pass away. Old time appears to fly with swifter wings, and the sun himself on a fleeter steed, posts faster to his goal. But these, for the most part, are short lived enjoyments while we are in the present state. Anon our duty calls us somewhere else, and to mingle with other company, and of quite a different cast. Perhaps when we enter the next street or the next room, our ears are stunned with oaths and imprecations, as our eyes are shocked with sights of blood and murder. Such is the mixed state in which we are; well, let us make the best of it and live for heaven. There, blessed be God, these interruptions never are; there the ears of the blessed are never saluted with blasphemy and imprecations; there, there are none impious and pro-

fane, but all are wise, and virtuous, and good. Such, O! christians, is the place to which you go, such is the place, the favored place, in which your christian friends who have departed already are; and be ye ready whenever God may call you to join their blessed society.

I come now to draw a few inferences and conclude.

1. Learn from the subject we have contemplated, that if any make pretences to the christian hope, while they are living in subjection to sin and lust, they are only deceiving their own souls and being deceived. The hope of such, however high it may appear to run, is not well founded; it is but the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish. We are informed that he who hath this hope "purifieth himself, even as he is pure;" I John iii, 3. Consequently then, he who doth not purify himself, cannot have a well founded hope. His hope is but presumption, which will fail him in the end. Let us then, dear brethren, examine ourselves carefully in the light of God's word; and if we indulge the christian hope, let us see that it be on a good and sufficient foundation, that we are born of God, progressing in the divine life, and purifying ourselves, even as he is pure.

2. Learn the indispensable necessity of the christian hope, in order to any high degree of comfort and happiness in the present state. This world is a world of trouble, as we have heard; many are the billows of trouble and distress, which roll high on the ocean of life and all men are liable to them. Trouble and sorrow, pain and

bereavements, are not peculiar to the people of God; of these things, sinners as well as christians, have their full share. "Man," as we have heard; "is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." And oh! how necessary is some sovereign antidote against despair; something which will bear the spirits up in the gloomy hour of distress. This, the christian hope, as our subject informs us, is quite capable of doing. It administers ineffable comfort and solace, when every other consideration must fail, while we remember that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" II Cor. iv, 17. But oh, the wretched state of the ungodly sinner; "When deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, and all the waves and billows of the Lord pass over him;" what shall he do? What shall comfort him and be his hope? He has no dear covenanted God, to whom he may apply for solace; no sweet saviour to support him by the aids of his grace; "No christian hope, which looks to that within the veil, where Jesus the forerunner hath entered;" where every sorrow shall be at an end; and pain and trouble roll their floods no more. Despair and raven-winged melancholy seize his wretched heart and make it their gloomy prey; or if he flatters himself that after this life there is none other, and that he shall lie down at the end of his present troubles, and take an eternal sleep with French atheists and philosophers, it is but a poor contemptible hope at the best. If annihilation be a refuge to a soul in distress, it is certainly only such a one as an

awful precipice would be to a criminal pursued by the officers of justice, falling from which, he would be at once dashed to pieces, and thus escape the vengeance of the law. Oh lamentable case! that reasonable creatures, capable of so much better things, should have no better prospects than these; creatures who have the christian hope in their offer, which would best support them now, and not disappoint them in the end.

3. Learn that the part which they act, who fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, is as wise as it is dutiful and obedient. The glory in this case is God's, as it ought to be; but the benefit is the believers. God has so connected the duty and interest of moral agents, that the latter always succeeds to the discharge of the former; and mankind never perform their duty faithfully, but what they promote their interest. The psalmist says when speaking of the commandments of the Lord, "in keeping of them there is great reward," Psalm xix, 11. And again he saith, "verily there is a reward for the righteous;" Psalm lviii, 11. The wisdom of those who fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, appears in this, that thereby they obtain to themselves the very best support under all the troubles of life which can possibly be obtained; one which will best serve to keep up their spirits and administer solace to their minds, under pressures and sorrows of every kind. For whether they suffer in their own persons, or through the affliction and distress of others, still the christian hope, as we have heard, is their best support; because it looks to that

within the vail, and brings that world to view, where sufferings and sorrows will be known no more. Certainly, then, it must be the part of wisdom to lay hold on such a hope as this, one which brings with it so many advantages. Let none say we must not have respect to these advantages, because then the service is not sufficiently disinterested. I presume it is about as disinterested as that of Moses was, of which St. Paul speaks with such decided approbation, declaring that "he had respect to the recompence of reward;" Heb. xi, 26. And Jesus Christ tells his disciples "not to rejoice because the spirits were subject to them, but rather because their names were written in Heaven;" Luke x, 20.

I am as far as any man from teaching that the benefits which God confers on believers, are the only reason why they ought to love and serve him; or that they are the leading motive with any true christian. I firmly believe we ought to love God supremely for his own glory, for what he is, and I have no doubt but this is the primary motive with every true christian; but I am far from setting aside a suitable regard to the rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, in this sacred business, seeing the inspired penmen, and Jesus Christ himself, have not done so; says the Psalmist, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication;" Psalm cxvi, 1.

4. Let christians learn from this subject, that they are not to expect a perfect calm, till they arrive at the port of eternal rest. Storms and tempests, wayes and billows of one kind or another

will betide them while on their passage. The subject has informed us, that this is a world of sorrow, and that christians themselves must have their share of it while here below ; so true is it that "through much tribulation, we must enter into the kingdom of God ;" Acts xiv, 2. Then believers, do not flatter yourselves that you shall enjoy a continual calm while you are out on the troubled ocean of life. You know it is when the mariner is in port, that he enjoys freedom from waves and tempests, and not while he is out on the high seas. There he may have a serene sky, and a quiet placid sea for a time ; but he can hardly flatter himself, that this shall still be the case ; he knows the waves and billows will rise and roll again, with the next storm that blows. The seaman's business is rather to know how to manage the vessel skilfully in the storm, than to sit idly wishing the surges may never rise. So, oh christian ! let it be your business to manage your spiritual vessel skilfully, that you may not suffer wreck from the dreadful tempests which trouble your sea. Endeavour always to have the blessed Jesus with you, and then, in the language of the poet, "you may smile at the storm." But be assured, without this blessed saviour by your side, when the tempests beset you, you will drive before them like a mere wreck on the water. It is not a matter of half so much account to you, believers, never to have your sea troubled and to meet with no storms, as to conduct with fortitude and propriety, while they spend their fury upon you.

5. From this subject, learn the divine excellence and glory of the christian religion. The religion of the blessed Jesus not only commands the most holy duties and teaches mankind to love one another in a degree far superior to what was ever done before, but likewise sets before the christian the most sublime and exalted hope to stimulate him to the discharge of his duty and to support him under all the trials and calamities to which he is liable as he passes through the present world ; even the hope of eternal glory and rest at last, where he shall weep and sorrow no more, but enjoy the most divine delight forever. What religion can be compared in point of excellence and utility, with that of Jesus Christ? The heathen sages, it is true, taught mankind some virtue in their systems ; but at the same time admitted of much vice ; and with respect to futurity, it was left by them all, involved in utter clouds and darkness. The farthest they presumed to go on this interesting point, was a peradventure the soul was immortal, and if virtuous, would be rewarded after death. But blessed be God “life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel;” II Tim. i, 10 ; in every page of which the believer is assured of eternal happiness on the veracity of a faithful God ; the hope of which eternal life is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and looketh into that within the veil.

And, sirs, as the precious religion of Jesus furnishes mankind an infinitely sublimer hope than any other ; so it is a religion better adapted to

human wants and necessities, and goes farther to diffuse human happiness than any other. "Peace on earth and good will towards men," are prominent features in this divine religion; and has it not gone farther to promote these desirable things, than any thing, or every thing else, so far as it has prevailed in the world? Only compare the present state of society, so far as christianity has obtained with what it was previous to the advent of Jesus Christ, and see how much it is ameliorated by this benign religion. See the many hospitals that exist in various parts of christendom, those generous receptacles of the sick, the deranged and the helpless, where they are clothed, fed and nursed, with the most tender and assiduous care. Did you ever read of one of those in all the heathen world? See the many free schools which exist, in which thousands of poor vagrant and beggared children, snatched up by the hand of christian charity, are taught and fed and clothed and blessed and reared to virtue and usefulness. See the many female orphans educated thus, becoming the respectable matrons of future families, and blessings to society in their turn; who, but for the charity of christians, would have grown up, not only under all the pinching want of abject poverty, but too probably, in all the baseness and infamy of prostitution. See the helpless and grief-worn widow, with her train of fatherless children, hungry and naked, shivering with the cold, and covered only with tatters, in a bleak and bitter winter, crying, piteously crying, for fire and for bread; see these dear fellow creatures, warmed

and fed, clothed and cheered by the generous charity of christians ; and then you see something of that benevolent religion, which never was intended by its divine author, to evaporate in noise and sound. Oh Voltaire, Bolinbroke, Hume, Chubb and Tindall, with Paine and all the rest of your little retailers ; what have you done ? or rather, what have you impiously wished and attempted, though unsuccessfully, to do ? For notwithstanding all the audacity of your attempts ; “He that sitteth in the Heavens hath laughed, and the Lord hath had you in derision ;” Psalm ii, 4. But I feel it my duty to expose for a moment, your malicious and infernal attempts. You have impiously and unfeelingly attempted to cut off that hand of christian charity, which has relieved so many thousands of the sons and daughters of want. You have said by your conduct, let the sick and friendless stranger, lie down and die without attempted pity or relief. You have said, let the thousands of poor children, in all the populous cities, both of Europe and America, whose parents are not able to school them, grow up in ignorance and vice. You have said, let the thousands of female children, who are without father or mother, or friend, grow up under the most distressing poverty, and come forward in the world, in the haunts of prostitution. You have said, let the forlorn and weeping widow continue to furrow her cheeks with hopeless tears, and feel all the rigors of want ; let her tender bosom heave and palpitate with anguish and distress, while she hears her helpless babes, whose father sleeps in the

dust, cry for bread and none to give them. For by endeavouring to shake the faith of christians, and to eradicate christianity, the known and acknowledged source of the charities, which have blessed and relieved so many fatherless children, you have virtually said all these things, and a thousand more. Yes, ye enemies of human happiness, you have said, by attempting to overturn christianity, let the thousands, and the millions of the poorer orders of society, whose lot in life appears even to yourselves a hard one, be deprived of every comfort and be completely miserable; for there are thousands of poor people, who live extremely hard, and who notwithstanding, appear cheerful and happy; supported by the exalted hope of the gospel; and that in a condition, as to temporal comforts, to which, if you were reduced, your first thought would probably be the halter or the blade; and can you be so cruel as to deprive them of the only comfort which they enjoy amidst such a numerous train of ills. Cease, ye thoughtless sons of violence, cease from your unfeeling attempts to rob so many of your fellow men of their dearest enjoyments. Were christianity even a fable or imposture, as you profess to deem it, it is certainly a very pleasing and profitable one to millions of the human race; and at the same time, so perfectly innocent, that your zeal is but poorly employed by attempting its destruction.

Now, christian friends, those are the men who talk in swelling language, about revolutionizing the world, breaking off the shackles of prejudice,

and making mankind happy ; judge of them for yourselves.

It only remains now before I close, to call to recollection for a moment, the character, virtues and exercises of that amiable friend, who assigned me this subject for your present improvement. And in doing this, I design no adulation, either to the living, or the dead ; for as it respects either of them, it is the object of my abhorrence. Yet, to state a few facts honestly and fairly, may be profitable to stimulate others to tread the paths of wisdom, piety and virtue.

With this lady, I had the honor of an intimate acquaintance for the fourteen last years of her life ; and know, perhaps, as well what her religious exercises were, her hopes and fears, her joys and sorrows, her encouragements and discouragements, as any of her male acquaintance in the world, her husband excepted.

Mrs. Ramsey was born of, and raised by respectable parents, in Mecklenburg county, in North Carolina. She received an early and careful religious education, and as good a literary education as was given to any ladies in the part of the world where she was raised, which, with her own native strength of mind, qualified her highly, to take her share with respectability, in rational and improving conversation. From my earliest acquaintance with her, I have always esteemed her, possessed of a very considerable share of understanding, highly improved and cultivated ; which was one thing amongst many, that endeared her society very

much to me. I believe I can say with the strictest truth, I have never been any length of time in her company, without feeling myself edified either by her good sense or piety. She possessed considerable constitutional and some systematical reserve, especially in the company of gentlemen, and in mixed companies; but I presume not to a degree faulty in a lady. If her remarks in company were fewer than those of some other ladies, they were always pertinent and replete with good sense; and I believe I never heard her make one, which I thought she ought not to have made. One striking trait in her character, which raised her very highly in my estimation, and the imitation of which, I earnestly recommend to all, especially to my female friends, was her entire freedom in all her conversation from the low arts of scandal and detraction. She appeared quite devoid of taste for those mean and ignoble things. Often has she lamented and expressed her sorrow at them in others, while I believe none had room to remark them in herself. Conscious of her own merit, she never attempted to shine at the expense or disadvantage of others; too much of which, I am sorry to say, I have often seen.

She was amongst the greatest practical philosophers of my acquaintance, either male or female. Several breaches were made in her family before the Lord called herself home. She buried three sons. One of these was her oldest; a fine promising boy about eight years of age; another was her third son about five or six; the other was her

youngest son, an infant. On these occasions, which were certainly very trying ones to a feeling and affectionate mother, though tender, she was always calm and collected, and the most successful comforter of her husband when likely to be swallowed up with much sorrow. Shortly after these severe trials, she detailed the circumstances respecting them to myself, and scarcely shed a tear. This I never construed into any want of sensibility, or the most warm and hearty affection for her children, of which she certainly possessed as much as any lady of my acquaintance, but into her great command of her passions, and her cordial submission to the appointments of heaven. Of these she gave a signal display shortly before her departure. Feeling that her dissolution was at hand, and being apprehensive that if Mr. Ramsey should vent his grief in her presence, it might have an undue ascendancy over her passions, she requested him by a friend, to suppress his trouble as much as possible; "for," said she, "it is but dying, and let us part like heroes."

As a wife, she was faithful, affectionate and dutiful; as a mother, she was tender, feeling and moderately indulgent; while at the same time, she was strictly and religiously careful of the conduct and morals of her children. In the exercise of benevolence and charity, she was equalled by few, and exceeded by none, whenever there was a call in divine providence, to the exercise of these important duties. This call was given her sundry times in the course of my acquaintance with her; and it always met the most cheerful

and ready compliance. Two strangers were cast on her care, and that of her family, to end their days. They both lay a considerable time before they died, and during all their lingering illness, they received from this worthy lady, though very weakly herself, the most tender and assiduous attention. And perhaps dying men, who were deprived of their own connections, in their last illness, never had less cause of regret, whilst in her they found all the tenderness of a sister or a mother. Respecting the last of these gentlemen who died in her house, she writes thus to a friend. "I intended to have spent a few days in Knoxville with my friends, and to have proceeded to your house to spend the remainder of the court days, but Mr. Lawrence is unable to remove, and it appears inhuman to leave him alone with the black people. He appears providentially cast, particularly on my care; I hope I will be strengthened for duty." Thus it appears it was that best of all motives, a sense of duty, which induced her to forego the society of her friends, and confine herself at home with a dying stranger whom providence had sent a thousand miles from his father's house to die in her's, and whom she had never seen till a few weeks before; while her husband, an officer of the superior court, was necessitated to be from home. This, sirs, is the kind of religion I love and wish to see propagated throughout the world. A religion which consists, not in making a noise, or court-ing observation; but in doing good and blessing mankind. This is like the saviour of sinners, in imitating whom all our duty consists; this is like

the religion of which the apostle James speaks ; or rather, it is the very thing itself ; “ Pure religion and undefiled before God even the father is this, to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world ;” James i, 27. Now, if visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction, be religion, then I suppose for a lady to deny herself the satisfaction of her friends, and shut herself up at home to take care of a dying stranger is religion too ; and such a religion as the gospel recommends ; “ 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 ;” Mat. xxv, 35.

She obtained a hope in the redeemer at a very early period of her life, and through the remainder of it, was for the most part, subject to those religious joys and sorrows, hopes and fears which are the general lot of most christians. For about the seven last years of her life, however, she appeared to me to improve much in the divine life, and to maintain a very growing intercourse with heaven. From that time she was much more detached from this world, and more assiduous in her preparations for a better one. For the most part, I believe, she maintained a comfortable hope, that her peace was made, and her sins forgiven ; this hope, however, was not entirely uninterrupted. She sometimes had her fears and doubts that all was not right ; which led her to the most careful examination of which she was capable, into her spiritual situation ; the happy result of which was generally the confirmation of her hope.

In a letter to a particular friend, dated September 13th, 1803, she writes as follows ; “I had understood that times of revival of religion, were trying times on old professors. This excited me to self examination from the scriptures of truth ; and from the most impartial enquiry which I was enabled to make, I had to conclude, that I had indeed believed in the scriptural way ; and I could find no other way but resting on Christ the rock of ages. Thus was I rejoicing and solacing myself when our sacrament came on, where I was considerably strengthened by the preaching of the word, particularly my faith on the sabbath was lively and strong.” In the same letter, speaking of a particular week after she had seen her friend, she writes thus. “That week was spent in a violent contest between faith and unbelief. Sometimes I must, I did rejoice ; at other times I could not, but almost despaired. In these despairing moments, the throne of grace I ever found delightfully accessible through the blood of the Mediator, and it was my only refuge.”

In a free conversation with myself about her spiritual exercises, the last I ever had with her previous to her confinement, she said ; “I have been much perplexed for some time past, with doubts and fears respecting my peace with God. I have examined and re-examined ; the general result was a hope that I had true religion ; however my doubts would still return and fill my soul with trouble. At length I came to a resolution that I would not vex my soul any longer with these things. Here is my duty plainly before me,

whether I have religion or not, I am required to cast myself on Jesus Christ at all events; to love my God and discharge my duty. This, through grace, I am determined to do; and henceforward it shall not be so much my business to doubt and examine and re-examine, as to act faith on the blessed redeemer, and discharge all known duty, leaving the event in the hand of God." "And" continued she, "since I have taken this ground, I have had much more comfort and satisfaction, and went on much more smoothly in the discharge of my duty; and thus I am determined to walk." Thus was she exercised just before she became confined to her chamber and her bed. During her confinement I had the opportunity of seeing her but seldom, living at a distance of thirty-five miles, and when I did see her, had but little conversation with her, on account of her extreme debility. In what little conversation I had with her, she discovered no alarm at death; on which, however, she calculated with certainty.

With respect to her exercises in her last hours, and since I saw her, a friend writes me thus. "As to her exercises from the time I first visited her, after my return about three weeks before her death, I would inform you, that, that calmness, equanimity, resignation, detachment from the world, and almost entire command of her passions, which marked her journey through life, shone more conspicuously, and were by her possessed in a more eminent degree."

This lady often through life, expressed a desire that she might end her career on the sabbath,

because she thought on that day, there was greater intercourse between heaven and earth. In this she was gratified. On the Lord's day, July 7th, about twelve o'clock, she serenely breathed her last; and has joined, as we confidently hope, that immortal company on high, "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb; and are therefore before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them;" Rev. vii, 14, 15; "Therefore let us not sorrow even as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also, which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;" I Thes. iv, 14.

SERMON XXI.



ON THE DEATH OF THE LATE PIOUS AND VALUABLE COL. FRANCIS A. RAMSEY, OF KNOXVILLE.

Isaiah, LVII, 1.

“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.”

MANY are the allurements held out in the sacred volume to induce mankind to the practice of virtue and moral goodness; as well as many terrible things exhibited there to deter them from walking in the paths of vice and impiety. One is the very different end with which death may be said to call for the man of virtue and piety, from those with which he comes for the wicked and ungodly. To the latter, death is most emphatically the king of terrors, and the most grim and dreadful enemy, as he deprives him of the few poor paltry enjoyments which he had in this world. While to the former, he performs the part of a friend, as he releases him from pain, sorrow and anxiety, and puts him in the full possession of his eternal inheritance. Thus, St. Paul informs us, for “him to die was gain;” Phil. i, 26. And in our text death is manifestly represented as acting the part of a

friend to the righteous man in taking him away from the evil to come; "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." In the last part of the preceding chapter, the prophet represents, in strong terms, the exceeding corruption of the jewish people, and more particularly, that of the watchmen or publick teachers; "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark, lying down, loving to slumber; yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds which cannot understand; they all look to their own way; every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be as this day, and much more abundant." And then, in our text, as a farther testimony of the people's corruption he informs us, that "the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart."

The following propositions, I presume, are contained in my text.

I. That even in the most corrupt times, God has still a seed to serve him; and there are still a few that are righteous.

II. That the death of the righteous is a publick calamity, a great loss to society.

III. That whatever loss the publick may sustain in the death of the truly religious, yet it is the believer's own great personal advantage.

IV. That when the best characters are taken away by the hand of death, and the loss appears

not to be felt and lamented by the public, it is a strong symptom of insensibility and depravity. My design at present is to illustrate and confirm the truth of each of these propositions, and then conclude with some inferences and application.

PROPOSITION

I. In the worst of times, God has still a seed to serve him, that is, there are still a few righteous.

Sometimes when the friend of God, of virtue and of man, takes a serious survey of the morals and conduct of society at large, he is almost tempted to draw the conclusion of the prophet of old. But as the prophet was so far mistaken, that when he thought the people were wholly devoted to idolatry, God had in Israel seven thousand men, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, nor partaken of the idolatrous worship; so we hope it is yet. In the very worst times of papal darkness, God still had his witnesses; Rev. xi, 3; "And I will give power unto my two witnesses and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth." And in the very worst times we have ever known, there have still been a few, who appeared not to defile their garments with the general pollutions. And God represents himself as having his elect in the very worst of times; Mat. xxiv, 22; "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Are any desirous to hear the righteous farther characterised, let them know then, that the

righteous revere and venerate the name of the most high God; Psalm lxxxix, 7; "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." This is the divine requirement; with this holy requirement the good man complies; and this is a very important trait in his character. The righteous are punctual in their assignations with heaven, and in paying the Lord the sacred honours that are due to his exalted name. The divine requirement is that we shall worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The good man does it; he complies with his duty; and this is a prominent trait in his character; this is giving to the Lord the glories due to his name, as is the christian's duty to do. The righteous man reverences the sabbaths of his God, agreeably to divine requirement; Exodus xx, 8; "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy; Isa. lvi, 2; "Blessed is the man that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." Isaiah lviii, 13, 14; "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord;" The righteous man deals justly with all men, and gives to every man his due. This is expressly required at his hand, and he accordingly performs it; Mat. vii, 12; "All things therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the

prophets." See this righteous man's character, as held up to public view; Psalm xv, throughout; read it at your leisure, it is worthy your most serious attention. The righteous man bridleth well his tongue, knowing how great a matter a little fire kindleth; Psalm xxxix, 1; "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." James i 26; "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue that man's religion is vain."

II. The death of the righteous is a public calamity, a great loss to society. That righteous and good men are a great blessing to society, and in a measure its safety and defence, is evident from the word of God and matter of fact. Gen. xviii, 26; "And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare all the place for their sake. Compare verse 32, latter part, same chapter; "And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake." But alas, the ten were not found in that devoted city, and it was destroyed. II Kings ii, 12; "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Here Elisha plainly communicates by his language to the intelligent mind, that the prayers, counsels and examples of the prophet Elijah were as much to Israel as the chariots and horsemen which were set for its protection and defence; Mat. xxiv, 22; "But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened."

Is it asked how the righteous are such a benefit to society as we represent? I answer, in sundry ways.

1. By their prayers. All righteous men are rayerful men ; and they not only pray for themselves, but also for others ; they pray for the public ; for their country. Now, who can tell what blessings may descend on our country and nation, in answer to the prayers of the people of God ? “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, availeth much ; ‘If one Elijah obtained plenty of rain when there had been a draught of three years and six months ;’ James v, 18, what might we not expect an host of pious and prayerful men to do ? Thus do pious men benefit the church, the commonwealth, the nation ; thus do they draw down blessings by the pious violence of prayers ; thus do they become “the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,” as Elisha calls them.

2. Pious and Godly men by their counsels greatly benefit the public. Suppose a righteous man by counselling his neighbours should fill them with an abhorrence of those base and shameful crimes which are the bane of social happiness, the disgrace of human nature, and which often bring the perpetrators of them to an untimely and ignominious death ; would not this be doing a great deal, and serving society in a very important and interesting manner ? And this, there is no reason to doubt, has often been the case. Good men at any rate counsel their families and benefit them very much, and in doing so, greatly serve the public. The public is made up of families and individuals,

and if the families and individuals are all good men, the public cannot be bad.

3. **By authority.** Is the good man clothed with authority, he will take care not to bear the civil sword in vain; he will employ his authority for the promotion of justice and judgment, and the suppression of vice and impiety; he will be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to, and encourager of them who do well; his authority at all events, will be used for the suppression of vice and encouragement of virtue in his family; and how great is the sum of good he may do here.

4. **By his example.** Thus the righteous man becomes a blessing to society. The tendency of good example is to counteract corruption and moral turpitude, and often does incalculable good in society.

III. Whatever loss the public may sustain in the death of the righteous, yet death is the believers personal gain; it is his gain, because he is thereby freed from all the remains of indwelling sin, and serves his God to absolute perfection. As the child of grace does not feel himself entirely free from sin in the present life, it is often his great grief and trouble; but in that bright world to which he goes sin shall never infest him, as no unclean thing ever enters into these pure and holy regions. Certainly, then, it is the believer's gain.

2. Death is the believer's advantage, because it removes him beyond the reach of pain, sorrow and anxiety; "Because the righteous are taken away from the evil to come." While the believer is in this world he is liable to much pain and

sorrow as well as other men, and often drinks deep into the cup of affliction and bitterness, as the experience of the most religious testifies. All have sinned, all are liable to suffer; witness Job, David, and other eminent saints; witness the experience of all the righteous; "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards;" Job v, 7. The troubles of good men are various and manifold; they partake of many troubles which are common to them and other men; such as sickness, pains and diseases of various kinds. Some troubles which christians undergo, are peculiar to themselves as christians. Then, surely, to be delivered from all these, must be a singular advantage to the righteous.

3. Death is the believer's gain, because it not only terminates all his troubles, but puts him in possession of eternal joys, and those the most sublime and exalted; Luke xxiii, 43; "And Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" Mat. xxv, 21; "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The affair of pious men entering into purgatory at death, or remaining in a state of dormancy until the morning of the resurrection, is only a popish fiction, or the empty dream of vain philosophers; such is not the doctrine of the sacred scriptures. The enjoyments of the righteous in glory will be most exalted and sublime; God himself will be one great and essential ingredient in this enjoyment. The testimonies of a good conscience will be another which will go far in their sublime and holy bliss. The most exalted society, and all its delightful

sweets will consummate their unparalleled felicity ; Heb. xii, 22--24 ; "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

IV. When the best characters are taken away by death, and the loss of such appears not to be lamented by the public, it appears to be a strong symptom of insensibility and depravity. If good men be such a blessing to society as we have represented, then, not to feel the loss of such men, too plainly proves that the cause of moral goodness, to which they gave so much support, does not lie very near our hearts ; and if so, it manifests very plainly their depravity, as that heart is certainly deeply depraved that has no regard to moral goodness ; it also argues insensibility, not to feel for the loss sustained.

1. Learn from this subject that God is determined to support his own cause until the end of time in spite of earth and hell. As we trust has been demonstrated, God has always had a seed to serve him, even in the very worst of times. No period has existed, when there has not been some souls more or less, that were engaged in holy and devout exercises.

2. Learn how highly we ought to esteem the righteous. Are they as we learn from this subject, a safety and defence to the public ? If there are but

ten righteous in the city, will God spare it for the ten's sake? Is the righteous and holy man the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof? Are godly men more to the city for its salvation and defence, by their prayers, their counsels and their conduct, than even the men of war, and the hosts of battle? Surely, then, we ought affectionately to love them. We are the obliged partakers of high and signal benefits through their instrumentality. Ah, how often do wicked and ungodly men, thoughtlessly and ungenerously abuse and vilify the saints of the most high God, when perhaps they owe the very blessings they enjoy to the intercessions of the very men whom they delight to abuse. Who can tell but the fruitfulness of our charming seasons, the due proportions of sunshine and rain are procured by the intercessions of those men? The strong probability is, they are. Witness the case of Elijah's prayers which procured rain in sufficiency, when the clouds had withheld their showers for three and a half years.

3. Learn that to feel that society has sustained a loss in the death of such a character, is a proper exercise on such an occasion, but not murmuring that God should do as he will with his own. To murmur and repine at the dispensations of divine providence, or take it ill that God should do his will with his own, would be highly offensive to that sovereign power who has an undoubted right to do his pleasure. But to feel that society has sustained an exceeding loss on so mournful an occasion is right enough, and what well exercised and dutiful mind does not feel it so?

4. Learn how readily good men, real and sincere christians, ought to die at God's call; death will be their ineffable gain; they shall then quit a world of trouble and sorrow, of distress and pain; and this seems to be a good reason why they should be reconciled, and cheerfully retire to that blessed world of joy and delight and felicity reserved for the saints beyond the grave.

5. Learn the indispensable necessity of all being righteous and serving God, that death may be their gain. And be it sensibly and feelingly remembered, that death will soon call upon us all. O brethren let us all be in readiness.

6. When the righteous die, though there is much ground to lament their loss, as respects society, yet there is none as respects themselves; the gain is theirs, they enter into the blessed habitations of glory; they shall go no more out, but be forever with the Lord and enjoy him through the revolutions of eternity. Rather let us hail their happy spirits in the mansions of eternal rest, than sorrow on their account.

A few observations respecting that very valuable man whose death has given occasion to this discourse, will close our design. Here permit me to observe that I am a little afraid I may be subjected to a suspicion of adulation; than which nothing in the world is farther from my design. But my good opinion of the deceased, from upward of a thirty year's acquaintance seems so high, that when I have stated my opinion of this individual's virtues and good qualities in simplicity and in sincerity, I fear suspicion; however, no fear of this

kind will prevent me from stating my opinion just as it is, without disguise.

Col. Ramsey, whose death gave rise to the present discourse, was born of respectable parents in the state of Pennsylvania, May 31, A. D. 1764. He early received an accurate English education, and such an one as fitted him very well for any kind of ordinary business, which in the course of divine providence might afterward be thrown in his way; such as surveying, clerk's office, or the like; being a young man of a very enterprising disposition, he came to the western country with the consent of his parents, while his years were yet very tender, in order to do as well as he could for himself; this must have been whilst he was yet in his teens; for when my acquaintance commenced with him in Washington county, which is now in this state, and then belonged to North Carolina, I think he was under twenty one. Being a youth of remarkably soft, polished and easy manners, he soon stood remarkably high with the first families in that section of country, and received their patronage greatly to his advantage. The first business in which he engaged for a support in this section of country, I believe was the art of surveying. But shortly after this, he received the clerkship of the superior court of Washington district from the Hon. judge Campbell, which ever after afforded him a genteel support as long as he remained in the district. He stood at that time very high with the circle of his acquaintance generally; and though he was a young man of great gaiety and vivacity, and indulged moderately in some of what

were viewed at that time the more fashionable amusements of the day, yet I never knew him, even then, amongst all the heat and ardour of youthful blood, charged with one single immoral action; nor do I believe it ever was in the power of either malice or envy to charge him with any thing of the kind.

I do not believe that Col. Ramsey at this, or any other period of his single life, made any public profession of the christian religion, or at all events if he did, this circumstance was not known to me.

About the end of his 24th or sometime in his 25th year, he made a public profession of religion, and became a member of the presbyterian congregation in Washington county; at that time under the pastoral charge of the venerable, the devoutly pious and reverend Samuel Doak; a society which you may rest assured were not lax in their terms of admission; but entirely the reverse; and one of the most respectable societies in point of intelligence, pure morals, and fervent piety, within the circle of my acquaintance. From this time to the hour of his death, he maintained his christian profession with the highest credit and manifest correctness.

Permit me to drop a remark on his marriage and its happy influence on his best interests. He made his addresses to a young lady of celebrated beauty, enlightened mind and polished manners, in Mecklinburg county, North Carolina, the daughter of M. Alexander Esq. and succeeded in obtaining her hand and her heart. This lady was a professor of

religion before Col. Ramsey married her, and as he himself has informed me, very profitable afterward to his spiritual interests, by her prudent and judicious counsels and advices. She became the mother of five sons and a daughter, or peradventure, six sons and a daughter; if six were the number of sons, four of them died young, only two having arrived at maturity. This amiable woman lived with Col. Ramsey about sixteen or seventeen years, and died about the 37th or 38th year of her age; after which he married a Mrs. Fleming, a very amiable and reputable widow lady of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, with whom he lived several years, perhaps ten or twelve, and who also died before him, leaving him one son. With this lady he also lived in bonds of strictest harmony and conjugal affection, as he had done with the other. Sometime after the death of this second wife he intermarried again with a very worthy, and highly respectable lady of Knoxville, Mrs. Hume, with whom he lived but a few months till divine providence saw proper in the depth of his inscrutable counsels, to call him to another world, and as we confidently believe, to a crown of immortal glory in the heavens. Mrs. Ramsey still survives.

As a good husband, I will not say that Col. Ramsey cannot be equalled; but it is utterly impossible that he should be exceeded; in conjugal affection, tenderness, fidelity and indulgence, his conduct exhibited lucidly all that was noble and praise worthy. Every thing that denotes the generous and manly mind, and the feeling sympathetic

husband. Yea, I have thought he went even to excess in some instances. During the last illness of his first wife, who according to the best of my recollection, was confined about eighteen months to her chamber, he was very seldom off his own plantation, and not much out of her room, though a man of considerable business, which was very near impairing his health materially, and I think it not unlikely that this extreme confinement did affect his constitution to some disadvantage. This I thought might be going a little too far; but if it was, let our good nature easily excuse it, as it is by no means the general sin of the present age. Overdone attention to a weakly suffering wife is not the sin that stains most the character of my acquaintance.

As a father, Col. Ramsey was affectionate, tender and indulgent; but at the same time duly awake and eagle-eyed to the faults of his children, and would not pass them without suitable and merited animadversion. He was strictly careful of his children's morals, and governed them as every discreet and intelligent parent ought, mostly by reason, admonition and advice; but when his duty imperiously made the demand, he would proceed to a prudent and discreet use of coercion. This was always resorted to with tenderness and reluctance, and never with a surly and angry temper. Ah, happy spirit, now in the realms of glory, thy example in family government was one of the most complete and finished thy ardent and surviving friend has ever seen.

As a master, Col. Ramsey was tender and indulgent. When his duty as a family governor compelled him to administer stripes to that unfortunate and degraded class of human beings called slaves, I believe he administered them with much reluctance and feelings highly painful.

As a neighbor, this valuable man was amongst the kindest and the best. Humanity, sympathy and compassion abounded in his benevolent and feeling heart.

As a friend, he was amongst the most ardent and sincere. In choosing, he chose, and then confided till death. On this subject I have a right to know something with much certainty. With the ardor of his friendship I was honored for the thirty last years of his life, and something upward. This friendship commenced when I was nothing but an obscure, unnoticed school-boy. And from that time until the time he surrendered his willing spirit up into the hand of him who gave it, this ardent, this reciprocal friendship never suffered a particle of diminution to my knowledge, nor one single moments interruption. The polish and suavity of Col. Ramsey's manners were certainly equal to those of any gentleman I have ever seen in any country. Plainness, simplicity and sincerity, marked them in every stage; they were the very language of nature, and at the greatest possible remove from every tincture of show, ostentation or vanity. To all which things he appeared the most entire stranger.

In the strictest hospitality this good man abounded. His house was the stranger's home, and the

sick stranger's asylum. Within my certain and personal knowledge, two sick men, both from as foreign a country as New-England, were taken by this feeling gentleman, this sympathetic christian to his house, the mansion of the distressed, and there comforted and cheered as much as dying men could be by this hospitable and charming family. This was done by this valuable man when he knew they must die. In short, those dying men were taken to this welcome retreat, lest they could not receive that strict attention to which dying men are entitled in the noise and bustle of a public house. Here those strangers terminated their carthly career, waited on with all that tenderness and attention which they could possibly have received in the houses of their fathers and mothers. I make these statements not merely on the flattering report of some third person. I conversed with these dying men, and speak partly from the things I saw, and the balance from what those men themselves told me. The name of one of those suffering and obliged strangers, was Lawrence and the other Lang. O my benevolent Lord God ! father of divine mercies, this is the religion for me ; a religion which does not evaporate in noise and sound, but consists essentially in blessing the needy, and doing good to the helpless. Brethren let us compare it a little with that which is represented by Jesus Christ himself as standing well the scrutiny of the great burning day ; "Then shall the king say to them on the 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." Men of reflection, women of sober reason, turn your attention here and see what good men are. The crowning trait of this good man's character was his devout, his fervent and evangelical religion; "For he was a good man and full of the holy ghost, and of faith;" This is a remark of a sacred writer respecting Barnabas, an evangelist of the apostolic age, who was sent to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem to promote the gospel. And these words, "That he was a good man and full of the holy ghost," will certainly apply as well to Col. Ramsey as to any of the human family I have seen. His religion so far as I could judge, was fervent, rational and spiritual. He was a strict and regular attender at his church. I liked then, and do now, his views of attending divine worship much better than I do those of your run about-people, who will leave their own worship any time to wait on the preaching of any stranger who may come the way. I recollect to have heard him once make some strictures on this subject many years ago, when the Rev. and worthy Mr. Anderson, now of Maryville, preached a part of his time at Lebanon, in the fork; I think one of his observations was as follows; "If a strange minister of fair character should preach in Knoxville when we have no preaching in the fork, I should be glad to attend and hear him; but if Mr. Anderson was preaching in the fork,

and Doctor Rodgers from New-York was to preach on the same day in Knoxville, I would not go to hear him. This sentiment met the approbation of my mind as strictly correct and proper then, and it does so yet.

Col. Ramsey was a strict performer of family prayer, which duty he discharged with great fervour, and manifest devotion of spirit, and required the strict attention of all his family, white and black.

In retired devotion he was strictly punctual, and for many years appeared to me to spend more time in it, than any other of my acquaintances.

He was a strict reprove of vice wherever he thought it necessary and prudent, and more especially, in the latter part of his life, when increased years and an established reputation for piety and correctness, rendered it the more proper for him to take these liberties, and added weight and dignity to his reproofs. And his reproofs were always administered with so much of the meek and gentle spirit of the gospel, that they scarcely ever gave the least umbrage or offence; and I have not the least doubt, were productive of no small sum of spiritual good.

When Col. Ramsey's last end approached, though I did not witness this closing scene, yet I have satisfactory reason, and that from various sources to believe, he met it with that entire resignation and dignified composure which might reasonably be expected to terminate such a life as he had lived. I have had letters from some of those who were present and witnessed his last

end, which were entirely satisfactory on this subject, though they have got so misplaced amongst my papers, that I cannot now lay my hand on them to make any particular quotations. Suffice it to say, he died as he had lived, a humble, fervent, pious christian; "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, the end of that man is peace;" Psalm xxxvii, 37.

This, sirs, is a plain, simple, unvarnished narrative of this very valuable man, formed entirely on my own knowledge and observation, and known to be true; it is not borrowed from others. I have known, and therefore have I spoken. Col. Ramsey may have had his spots, and so has the sun; yet it illuminates all the solar system. He was but a man, and no doubt had his imperfections. The speaker, however, knows too little about these to be justifiable in making any observations on them, and entertains no doubt, but that weighed in the balance with his thousand virtues, they would be found lighter than the chaff of the summer thrashing floors.

Permit me now, my friends, without feeling yourselves in the smallest degree neglected, to close this discourse with a few words addressed particularly to the surviving members of this good man's family. And first, my dear madam, would I address a few things to you, his surviving widow. Though you have passed through life thus far, with a high degree of reputation, credit and dignity, for which you ought, and for which I hope you do feel thankful to the supreme disposer of all events; yet, you too, have had your

trials; trials, bitter and poignant. You have deposited in the silent house appointed for all living, three husbands, each a respectable and worthy character. This I am warranted to say from my own personal knowledge of those gentlemen, and also from well known public opinion respecting them. Each of those worthy men, we hope, reaps the fruits of his doings now in the happy mansions of everlasting rest. I hope, madam, it will be the great and assiduous care of your future life, so to order your conversation, and so to approve yourself to God, that you may at last be accounted worthy to be received through the grace of God to the same habitations of eternal rest, where you may be forever with the Lord. And permit me, my dear madam, to indulge the pleasing hope, that should I be accounted worthy through grace to enter the kingdom of glory at last, I shall there see that dear friend whom I have now the pleasure to address, as safely seated in glory as any husband she has ever buried. May the God of blessing bless you; may he crown the evening of your life with his richest mercies; may he conduct you gently down its steep, and when your sun is called to set, may he decline in smiles; and when he sinks beneath the horizon, may your favoured spirit, now no longer a fit inhabitant for the lifeless clay tenement, be received to the habitations of eternal glory, there with the blood bought millions of the lamb to enjoy the God of love and mercy with Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and all the splendid retinue of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect through an eternal day. These,

madam, be assured are the unfeigned breathings of a heart that has loved you and wished your best happiness for forty years.

My dear young friends, the three sons, and the only daughter of that respected friend whose character I have this day pourtrayed, and who, through life, was dear to my heart as a brother, will you receive from me a word of advice administered in the simplicity and unaffected sincerity of my heart? Will you strictly endeavor to approve yourselves to God, children worthy of such parents as you have lost? Will you copy their bright and worthy example? Will you fear God as they feared him? Will you tenderly, dutifully and affectionately recollect and strictly act up to the pious counsels and admonitions of your father? You know they were most salutary, pious and tender. You know how replete they were with all the yearnings of an affectionate father's heart. These tender counsels and admonitions even to this hour reverberate in your ears, and permit me to hope, are not without their salutary influence on your hearts. Shall their pious accents ever be forgotten by you? I trust never, never, never. About your valuable and amiable mother, I should reasonably suppose you recollect but very little; you were advanced too short a distance beyond the threshold of life to have any thing like a perfect impression even of her personal appearance. Her good sense would well have enabled her to have given you the most correct and salutary advices, whilst the goodness of her heart and the fervor of her piety would not have suffered her to neglect so important a duty to

her beloved offspring. But at a very early period of your lives you were deprived of this tender, this enlightened and faithful guide of your youth. But whenever you realise the best advices of your father, which you well recollect, associate with them those of your mother, and rest assured that had she lived, she would have been with him in the best advices of which he was capable.

SERMON XXII.



COMFORT FOR THE AFFLICTED AND DISTRESSED



Isaiah, LIV, 11.

“O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundation with sapphires.”

WHOEVER, my brethren, has any experimental acquaintance with a life of true godliness, must know something of the pains, the sorrows and anxieties of christians as well as their comforts and their joys. This is a mixed state in which we are, and christians have their peculiar sorrows and joys, as well as their share of such as are common to them with other men. The christian scriptures, it is true, speak of very high and exalted joys belonging to those who believe firmly in an unseen sorrow; “Whom not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;” I Peter i, 8; “Great peace saith the Psalmist, have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them;” Psalm cxix, 165; But should any understand by those and many other similar expressions in the writings, that uninterrupted peace, and high never fading and extatic joys, are the certain portion of every sincere christian,

or of any individual christian, at every hour of his christian life, I presume they would grossly misunderstand the sacred writers. Very pleasant and sensible joys are beyond doubt, in some measure, the happy and desirable lot of sincere christians; but they are liable to extreme interruption in the present mutable state of mankind from a variety of causes. And the fact is, christians are as often represented in the lively oracles of God, as mourning, sorrowing, sighing, depressed and dispirited, as rejoicing in God and their everlasting inheritance; Psalm xlii, 7; "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" Psalm xxxviii, 1—4; "O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thine hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me;" Heb. x, 32, 33; "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, while ye were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, while ye became companions of them that were so used;" II Cor. iv, 9—12; "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that

the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So, then, death worketh in us, but life in you ;” Also my text ; “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, &c.” In the first part of this chapter there is an address given to the gentile church, and a promise of great enlargement ; “Sing O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child ; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations ; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes ; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.” From the 4th to the 10th are made the most gracious promises of deliverance, and that they shall never be forsaken. In the words of our text, the church is addressed, as being in a most deep and dreadful state of affliction, without comfort, and a very gracious promise is made of deliverance in due season ; from this her affliction and distress, and of being edified and built up in faith and piety. Now, as the church is thus represented as being in a deep state of affliction, doubtless so may every individual member of it be. The doctrine, then, manifestly contained in my text is this, that the Lord’s people while in this world, are liable to deep spiritual trouble and affliction ; but have the promise of God, that in due season he will deliver them from it all.”

I. I Will speak a little of those spiritual troubles to which saints are liable while here below, represented by being “tossed with tempest, and not comforted” in my text.

II. I shall make a few remarks to distinguish the exercises of real and genuine piety, under such trials and difficulties, as shall have been mentioned from the exercises of those who are not genuine christians.

III. I shall point out what I conceive to be the duty of christians under those exercises and trials that they may obtain deliverance.

IV. Show that God will sooner or later work deliverance for all his dear people, and then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. I am to speak something of those spiritual troubles to which christians are liable while in this world, represented by being tossed with tempest, and not comforted, in my text. Here my observations are to respect such troubles as are peculiar to them as christians, and not such as befall them in common with other men.

1. I presume one great matter of spiritual trouble to christians, is their doubts respecting their interest in the covenant of grace and the divine favor. Many christians while in this world are liable to these; perhaps very few are clear of them; sometimes they may have a lively hope, or sweet assurance; but anon, sin prevails and sweeps their joys away. These doubts about their acceptance with God, are sources of much distress; nay, they amount even to tempests of sorrow. So dear is

true religion and acceptance with God to their hearts, that they cannot be brought into tears with respect to the reality of these things, without feeling much moved. And by how much the more a christian loves and adores his God, by so much the greater will his trouble be when made to question his acceptance with him ; just as the more a tender husband loves his wife, the greater will his sorrow be if he loses her.

2. That prevalence of sin, from whence result these doubts, is in itself a great source of distress and spiritual affliction to the believer. Sin is certainly a great source of distress to the pious mind, when brought to sober reflection. Do any ask me here, how sin can be burdensome and distressing to the pious man, seeing he commits it, as those things do not generally distress us much in which we engage with our own consent? To this question I answer, that the soul, in the unguarded, unreflecting hour of temptation, sometimes does things which cause extreme grief at another time ; witness Peter's denial of his master ; Mat. xxvi, 74, 75 ; "Then began he to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew ; and Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly." Do you ask if the temptation is an excuse for the crime, I answer no, there is no excuse for sin. Our duty at all times is, supremely to love God, and religiously to keep his commandments, and there is no excuse for failing in the discharge of our duty. Do you ask me farther,

how is it that one christian professor complains from day to day of the corruption of his heart and the failings and shortcomings which he feels with respect to his duty to God, sometimes exclaiming with the apostle ; “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” And another professor boasts that he has not committed a sin for years, and yet, from an intimate acquaintance with both those men, and an attentive observation of their conduct, the former appears to you the most holy ? What conclusion, say you, am I to form with respect to these professors ? In answer to your question I will inform you what opinion I have in such a case, and the ground of that opinion, and leave you to form your own conclusions as you see proper. My conclusion has uniformly been, that the man who humbly confesses his sins, and whose life exhibits lucid evidence by a holy and unblamable walk and conversation, that his heart is right with God, I view as the most pious man. Now hear my reasons for this conclusion. The opinion of Jesus Christ weighs much with me. See that opinion plainly expressed ; Luke xiv, 11 ; “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted ;” This is a favorite maxim of the redeemer, and repeated oftener perhaps, than any other he ever used. Be assured, sirs, humility is a cardinal grace according to the christian system ; compare I John ii, 7, 8 ; “Little children let no man deceive you. He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil ; read at leisure the parable of the

pharisees and publican ; Luke xviii, 1—14 ; But do you farther ask if this humble confessing man be the most holy, why so many confessions ? This by no means proceeds from his being in reality a worse man than he who boasts of his perfection ; but from his being the subject of a higher degree of spiritual and saving illumination. And every real christian must know, the more the human mind is enlightened, the more the man will discover of his own vileness ; “I have heard of thee, says Job, by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” So does the speaker think it will be with every sincere saint.

3. I think doubts presented by the great enemy of souls and of God respecting the authority of the sacred scriptures, and the reality of religion, are sometimes a painful and distressing affliction to the believer. Objection after objection, respecting christianity and God’s ways of dealing with mankind, are extremely painful to a soul that loves God. Do you ask if it is possible that a christian can ever entertain a doubt on such a subject as this ? I may not understand, perhaps, what the querist means by *entertaining* a doubt ; but I believe christians and pious men may feel such doubts, and have done so both in ancient and modern times ; Psalm lxxiii, 13 ; “Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency ;” verse 21, 22, of the same chapter ; “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

So foolish was I and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee."

4. I think foolish, vain and worse imaginations, are an extreme calamity to some christians ; to how many, I know not. The imagination is that active roving power of the human mind, whereby we form the images and representations both of words and things in our minds, and is the source of much happiness and misery both, to human kind. Perhaps there is no power of the soul to which satan has more access, or with which he has more to do, than with imagination. In manifest testimony of this truth, see how he acted on the imagination of the immaculate redeemer ; Mat. iv, 8 ; "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Now this we know could be done no otherwise than in the saviour's imagination, for two substantial reasons. First, no human vision can extend to the thousandth part of the whole world, were it even a plain. Second, the globularity of the earth must of necessity prevent the lower hemisphere from being seen. Now the devil having such access to the imagination, in presenting the images both of words and things, has it in his power, when not restrained, to occasion us much wretchedness, and to render us a terror to our very selves. O what horrible things have some christians experienced on this subject ; some of which must never be told ? O what horrible images has he presented ? What dreadful thoughts has he suggested to the unspeakable terror of the

humble believer? What tempest tossings have the righteous experienced here? And while vile polluted images have been pressed on the believer's imagination, and vile blasphemous thoughts suggested to his mind, how has he been afflicted and not comforted? True it is, the imagination is not a moral faculty of the human soul, and therefore the bare presenting an image, or a thought, involves the soul in no guilt, as was the case with the holy saviour. Yet, vile and polluted images pressed on the imagination by the foul prince of darkness, or the vile blasphemous thoughts suggested to the mind, gives a christian of a tender conscience extreme pain; though if he resists them sincerely, they involve him in no guilt. It is only when these vile things are dwelt on with delight, that they become sinful. Do you ask why they need be painful if not sinful? I answer, when the humble, pious, modest christian walks the street, or passes the squares on his business, and hears vile and guilty wretches swearing in the most vile and guilty manner, and impiously blaspheming the name of the everlasting God. It is not his sin, when these vile blasphemies and imprecations reach the organs of hearing; but it certainly gives him pain; otherwise he must be exercised very differently from Jeremiah the prophet of the Lord; Jer. viii, 22; "For the hurt of the daughter of my people, am I hurt, I am black, astonishment hath taken hold on me." Here appears to be great pain experienced by a pious man, although he was involved in no guilt by these wicked people's transgressions. Yet such was the pain felt, that

his very visage was changed. Again, hear him exclaim, chapter ix, verse 1; "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." We cannot exclude these vile images and thoughts by an act of volition, but we can abhor them; and doing so, we are not guilty, though miserable. All the Lord's people are not called to navigate these deep and turbid waters; some are. O christian brethren, how ought He to pray to be delivered from temptation.

5. The hidings of God's face is another great source of affliction, and want of comfort to the people of God. That there is such a thing, and that the scriptures expressly speak of it, there is no doubt; Job xiii, 24; "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" Job xxxiv, 29; "When he giveth quietness, who then, can make trouble? And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? Psalm xxx, 7; "Lord by thy favour, thou hast made my mount to stand strong, thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled;" Psalm xliv, 24; "Wherefore hidest thou thy face? Isaiah xlv, 15; "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the saviour." Do you ask me what I understand by the hidings of God from his people, which I have stated to be matter of affliction to the saints, and which I have so plainly proved from scripture? I answer, I understand that the deity sometimes in his divine sovereignty, and for the trial of his people's faith, does not manifest himself to his children, as he has done at some other times, and withholds from them

those comforts and refreshments which they have experienced at other times, in waiting on the ordinances of divine institution; and not that the deity ever departs from one place to another; with regard to locality he knows no change; he is always every where throughout the universe, which he hath made.

II. I am to make a few remarks to distinguish the exercises of real christians, under these trials, from the exercises of those who are not such.

1. The true christian when he labors under doubts about his acceptance with God, is anxious and uneasy, and endeavours to render the matter more certain by a course of duty, and searching the scriptures, and waiting on divine ordinances. The hypocrite or formalist rests contented without any certainty about the matter.

2. I presume another distinguishing trait in the true believers exercises is, that he is more anxious to be delivered from sin, than from uncertainty about his final destination; while the hypocrite, or insincere professor, has very little anxiety for freedom from sin, provided he might somehow escape the wrath of God in the end. Under any doubt the true christian may feel respecting christianity, he is exercised extremely differently from the worldling, or irreligious man. The true christian's doubts are attended with painful anxiety; "For if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do;" Psalm xi, 3; "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, till I went into the sanctuary of God; there understood I their end;" Psalm lxxiii, 16, 17; The pious man

wishes the truth of christianity, and thinks that the duties it prescribes ought to be practised amongst reasonable creatures, even admitting that the gospel history was a fable. The irreligious doubter wishes it false, that he might be freed from the duties it enjoins. When the man of genuine piety feels a doubt respecting the truth of christianity, it brings him to earnest importunate prayer to God, that he may be so confirmed in the belief of christianity, as never to feel another doubt to eternity; "Lord help my unbelief," is his importunate cry. Not so with the irreligious doubter, who secretly desires that the gospel history might be untrue. To the true christian, all is gloomy, dark and dreary, without the light of the sun of righteousness. The true and sincere christian, when vile polluted images, and wicked blasphemous thoughts are suggested to his mind, feels that he hates them; Psalm cxix, 113; "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love." He strives against them, he flies to his God for relief, and prays most importunately for deliverance; he feels them as a cross, and they vex his righteous soul from day to day; he examines his own heart very carefully to see that he does not indulge them. When likely to be overwhelmed, his only refuge is his God; Psalm lvii, 1—3; "Be merciful unto me O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high, unto God, who performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and shall save me from the reproach of him that

would swallow me up ;” Psalm lix, 16 ; “I will sing of thy power ; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning, for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble ;” Isaiah xxv, 4 ; “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” Now, sirs, wicked and ungodly men, have many vile images impressed on their impure imaginations, and they are full of vain thoughts, yea, often indeed ; they have scarcely any other sort ; but they indulge them, they are voluntary, and of consequence sinful. Under the hidings of God’s face, the true believer is restless, and discontented, and seeks earnestly after a departing God.

III. I am to show what is the duty of christians under those afflictions, tempests, and sorrows of a spiritual nature, that they may obtain deliverance.

The prophet of the Lord shall inform us ; Isaiah I, 10 ; “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Then you see brethren, trusting in the name of the Lord, and humbly confiding in God, is the great thing. Again, the blessed Jesus himself, shall be our sacred instructor in this holy concern ; Mat. xi, 28 ; “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Here the laboring and heavy laden soul is invited to Christ for rest, and a promise given that they shall obtain it ; II Pet. ii, 9 ; “The Lord knoweth how to deliver

the godly out of temptation ;” Joel ii, 32 ; “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And may we not most reasonably conclude, that as the Lord has not withheld his own son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, that so he will with him also freely give us all things?

IV. I am to demonstrate that God will sooner or later bring deliverance to all his dear people. Two things are at once full to this point. The sacred scriptures positively assert it ; Mat. xi, 28 ; “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;” Psalm xxii, 5 ; “They cried unto thee, and were delivered, they trusted in thee, and were not confounded ;” Prov. xi, 8 ; “The righteous is delivered out of trouble ;” John vi, 40 ; “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

It will redound to the divine glory, to save all whom he calls to the knowledge of the truth ; whereas it would be quite dishonorable to the divine majesty to suffer any whom he had called to the knowledge of the truth to perish.

1. Learn from this subject that the great design of religion is not to deliver mankind from all pain and suffering in this world ; but to make them holy, and deliver them from all suffering and sorrow in the world to come. Let none conclude they are rejected of their God and cannot be christians, because they are the subjects of some, yea, even of much misery ; Christ was the subject of more,

innocent, spotless and undefiled as he was. Hear his outcry on the cross; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mat. xxvii, 46; O how did devils beset him? Moreover, sufferings and afflictions, even of the deepest kind, are never exhibited in sacred writ, as being in the smallest degree an evidence that a man could not have religion. But, on the contrary, it is very plainly represented that God's people are all partakers of affliction; Heb. xii, 6; "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And have not the very best saints, of whom we have an account in sacred record, been the subject of deep affliction? Witness David, Job and others; all have sinned, and it appears to be a part of the divine plan, that all shall taste the bitterness of sin.

2. Learn that those, who are true christians and will diligently examine their own hearts, may come to some tolerable knowledge of their spiritual state. We find even in their darkest hours, there is an evident difference between their exercises, and those of wicked and hypocritical men. The true believer can never reconcile himself to the habitual, wilful indulgence of known transgression. He is conscientious in his endeavors to please his God.

3. Let christians, in all their difficulties, afflictions and troubles, cast themselves humbly on the Lord, exercising confidence in his grace and love. Let them not sink under discouragement, nor be tempted to despondency. Let them resist the devil and he will flee from them. Neither be

discouraged, christian brethren, nor think your case altogether singular; "There has no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

4. Let not the spiritual troubles and difficulties which befall the believer, discourage unregenerate sinners from embracing the gospel and devoting themselves to the service of God. O sinners, you know you have your troubles too, and none to deliver. All mankind have their share of calamities. Natural, in consequence of moral evil, hath found a thousand avenues to the hearts of poor, suffering, sinful men. Sufferings are not peculiar to christians; nor need the unregenerate calculate on avoiding their share by standing aloof from the gospel and religion. And seeing it is a part of the divine plan that all must suffer here, it appears to me it is the part of christian wisdom, prudence and discretion, to secure an interest in the divine favour, that when all the toils and sorrows of the present state are over, we may, through divine mercy, be received to that blissful world of rest, where sorrow never comes, where trouble rolls its boisterous billows no more, but where the pious mind shall be tranquil and serene forever, in the enjoyment of the adorable God, and enjoy the most exalted bliss, and the most desireable society, while souls immortal shall continue to exist. May this be the final and happy lot of every soul in this assembly for the Lord Jesus' sake. AMEN.

SERMON XXIII.



THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT, ITS NATURE, NECESSITY, AND EXTENT, STATED AND ILLUSTRATED.



I. John, II, 2.

“And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

THE doctrine of the saviour's atonement and propitiatory sacrifice, is one of the great and fundamental doctrines of christianity, and lies at the foundation of all gospel religion. The new testament writers concur in asserting this doctrine, and insist on it in the most direct and positive manner. St. Paul's epistles are full of it, and Christ crucified is his darling theme. St. Peter also abounds in the same, and uniformly insists, that the salvation of men is procured by the death and sufferings of the blessed Jesus; I Pet. i, 18, 19; “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb slain without blemish and without spot;” I Pet. iii, 18; “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for

the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit." St. John insists expressly upon it in my text, as well as elsewhere, that he is the propitiation for our sins. And the writer of the acts of the apostles insists that according to the gospel there is no salvation in any other name but that of Jesus Christ; Acts iv, 12; "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved."

Indeed, sirs, the doctrine of Christ's death for sinners, and his divine and sacred atonement, is not a doctrine peculiar to the new testament, but is also plainly asserted in the old; Isaiah, xlii, 21; "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he shall magnify the law and make it honorable." This is the doctrine of the atonement; Dan. ix, 26; "And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself." This is the same doctrine of vicarious suffering.

Jesus Christ was, and is, the great medium of access for guilty men to their God, under every dispensation of his gracious covenant, and upon his propitiatory sacrifice, our acceptance entirely depends. It therefore highly becomes us to study and understand this important and interesting subject; "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

It is proposed to enquire in the sequel of the following discourse;

I. Into the nature and necessity of this propitiation, and

II. Into its extent. And then conclude with some inferences.

1. We are to enquire into the nature and necessity of this atonement or propitiation; "For he is the propitiation for our sins."

By a propitiation I mean that act, whatever it be, by which a person offended with another, is induced to exercise toward the offender, favor and kindness. This I take to be the strict and correct meaning of the word in general. In a religious sense, and the general scripture sense, the propitiation is that for the sake of which the almighty God, who is justly offended with fallen and guilty sinners will show himself favourable and kind to them, be at peace with them, pardoning most graciously their iniquities and transgressions. I do not think it strictly correct to say that the atonement or Christ's propitiation is that which renders the deity placable toward guilty offenders. For he was always placable toward sinners and disposed to forgive them. But I presume it is literally and strictly proper to say that the propitiation is that which removes the obstacles, which obstructed the egress of mercy and rendered it consistent with the dignity of the divine character and government, to exercise that forgiveness to the penitent sinner, which he before felt disposed to exercise toward the penitent sinner. I think this matter according to the sacred records, stands thus. Jesus Christ's advent to our world, and the atonement he made, result from God's placable and

forgiving disposition toward offenders, and that it is not strictly correct to say that his forgiving disposition rises out of the atonement. For this is not correct according to the sacred records. Now, sirs, let us see the fair and legitimate bearings of holy writ on this question, whether the atonement rises out of the deity's placable disposition, or that placable disposition out of the atonement; John iii, 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." This passage from the tongue of the blessed Jesus, shows at once how the matter is. And it is plain, that the propitiation does not render the deity propitious, strictly speaking; but simply renders it consistent with the honour of God, and the dignity of his government, to extend to lost and ruined sinners, the mercy which he already felt. God loved the world and sent his son; and had not the deity thus loved the world, would the son ever have come?

As to the necessity of a propitiatory sacrifice, it lies here. God was offended with sinners, and would be appeased in no other way. That God was offended with sinners, is manifest, both from his word and works; Psalm vii, 11; "God is angry with the wicked every day;" Zachariah i, 2; "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers;" 15th of the same chapter; "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen:"

From the providence of God it appears he is displeased with them. This is manifest from all

the natural evils to which they are subjected on account of sin. Immediately on the fall we find the Lord cursing even the very ground for their sakes; and threatening the female world with sorrow, in conception and child birth; Gen. iii, 16—19; “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee: And unto Adam he said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I command thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” This conduct certainly savors strongly of sore displeasure, and evinces it beyond contradiction. That God continues to be displeased with mankind, and did not say this in haste, and afterward found reason to repent of his conduct, appears plainly from the daily and literal infliction of the threatened punishment. Is there a mother in this assembly that is not a living and painful witness of the verification of this threatening? See that laborious husbandman drenched from head to foot with perspiration under the beaming ardors of a July sun. Does not this show that the threatening is verified? But for the curse originally impressed on the earth, on account of man’s

transgressions, might not the earth produce corn, the wheat, the cotton and every thing else necessary for man's subsistence and comfort as spontaneously as the noxious vegetation.

2. It appears plainly that God was displeas'd with the human race, from the signal displays of his awful vengeance in the flood of Noah. Ah, hear the awful thunders roaring, see the vengeful lightnings flashing, see those heavy, angry looking clouds pour out their contents, not in necessary fructifying showers, but in mere cataracts for forty days and forty nights together; see the fountains of the great deep broken up; see the waters prevailing; see the plains covered; see the inhabitants necessitated at length to abandon their habitations; see them ascending the mountains and eminences from the close pursuing wave. Ah, how dolefully those women shriek, how lamentably those children yell, while they hold fast by their parents as they ascend; see them presently make the highest summits, whence they are speedily swept off, and the great world of men all lost, except Noah and his wife, his three sons and their three wives. Does not this sufficiently evince God's displeasure with wicked and ungodly men? Full to the same point is the extraordinary ruin and overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, the worse than beastly cities of the plain. Ah, see the flames from heaven, attended with sulphur, seize upon those devoted cities and reduce them to ashes. O how marked is the signal vengeance of an angry God here? Witness to the same dreadful point, all the plagues, pains and fevers we feel

from day to day, and death itself in the end; and stand thoroughly convinced that God is exceedingly displeased with sinners.

We now proceed to enquire why the eternal God, who is thus displeased with guilty men, will be propitiated in no other way than by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ his adorable son.

We are to remember here, that God is the moral governor of the universe, and that he will maintain the rights of justice and the dignity of the divine government. And that whatever will answer these great ends, and nothing else will propitiate him.

Now, mankind being all fallen sinners, can make no atonement for their past sins by their repentance and future obedience. As all the repentance possible, and all the obedience of which they are capable is their indispenable duty at every hour; for the divine requirement is, that we must at every hour love the Lord with all the heart, soul, strength and mind.

Whoever would propitiate the justly offended deity, must obey the preceptive requirements of the divine law to the most pure, spotless and sinless perfection, and sustain the wrath of God due to the sins of believers. And whoever does not do this, can never be an effectual propitiatory sacrifice. Whoever does this, becomes a propitiation; Jesus Christ has done this, therefore Jesus Christ has become a propitiation. Very well am I aware that many divines object to using the word *wrath* here, and to saying Christ was punished in the room of the sinner. Now, I do think for my own part

that christian divines ought to be better employed than in keeping up a privy contention about mere words, where there is no difference of ideas. When I use this phraseology, I do not mean that God was angry at, and displeased with, his adorable son for his undertaking. I believe the eternal God was just as well pleased with Jesus Christ when he cried out on the cross "why hast thou forsaken me?" as he is this day; and all I mean by using such language is this; the wrath of God was certainly due to sinners, Christ certainly suffered for sinners and in their stead, and strictly on their behalf. Isaiah liii, 5; "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." Now, sirs, give me leave to ask what was due to sinners? Was it not the wrath of God? II Chron. xxviii, 11; "For the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you." "He that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" I John iii, 36. Now, sirs, provided Jesus Christ undertook to suffer in the sinner's place, pray what great impropriety is there in saying he suffered the wrath of God; seeing the wrath of God was strictly in scripture account and scripture language due to the sinner, in whose stead the saviour suffered. Jesus Christ came to suffer in the sinner's place; but the wrath of God was the sinner's due, therefore, Jesus Christ came to suffer in the sinner's place the wrath of God due to the sinner. Be it always recollected however, that I do not mean that God was displeased with his son at all, but that he loved

him to perfection, and entirely approved his conduct at the very time the vengeance was inflicted on him. Nor did I ever know an individual in all my life that believed the deity was sorely displeased with his son Jesus Christ when suffering in the sinner's stead on Calvary; as he is sorely displeased with the obstinate and impertinent sinner when inflicting the torments of hell upon him.

And with due deference to better judges, I think, when I represent Jesus Christ as punished for sin, I am representing scripture truth fairly, and using language in its well known and general acceptance, as I think I always do use it. Doctor Johnson in the definition of the active verb *to punish*, gives it two explanations and no more, "To chastise; to afflict with penalties." Now, if I say Jesus Christ was punished for our offences, am I saying any thing very different from Isaiah, when he declares the saviour "Was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Now, sirs, is not objecting to this diction making a distinction without any difference. Is it worthy a man of science and candor. Let such useless and ungrounded distinctions henceforward cease amongst christian theologians.

2. We are to enquire into the extent of this propitiation. Our text informs us "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Various are the opinions of different denominations, and different individuals respecting this and similar declarations of the sacred writers. Some

believe the saviour died for the elect only, or those individuals who shall eventually be saved, and they explain the universality of the passage thus; that some of those men for whose sins he is the propitiation, are chosen out of all nations, ranks and conditions of men; some are chosen from the rich and the great; some the poor and obscure orders of society; some from the learned, and some from the unlearned, some from the free, and some from the bond, some from the rulers, and some the ruled. Thus they satisfy themselves the sacred writer just means some of all ranks and conditions of men.

Others insist he died for all men strictly and intentionally to save them, but after all, some for whom he died will go to hell. Others insist he died for all men, with an express determination to save them, and that according to this, the divine design, all will eventually be saved, though some will go to hell and stay there a while as they pass along. None of these explanations satisfies me. I will state my objections to each and then state as lucidly as I can what appears to me the consistent sense of the apostle. The universality in the first of these opinions, viz: That some of this whole world for whom the propitiation is made, are chosen from all nations, ranks, tribes and conditions of men, does not satisfy. This sense of the passage is entirely too far fetched, too foreign from the manifest dictates of easy, plain, unbiassed common sense. I will hazard the opinion if you will propose the question what the apostle here means by the whole world, to a hundred boys of good,

plain, common sense, unbiassed by party opinion and party prejudice, that not five of them will answer as the first opinion states. To suppose that the whole world means some chosen out of all nations, or the whole elect world, is taking too great a liberty with the sacred writings; and indulging unlimitedly in this way of interpretation you make the lively oracles of God speak any thing you wish. To insist that Christ died with a design to save all men infallibly, but that some for whom he shed his blood will eventually be lost, is indeed to make his death, in a great measure, void. This, then, will not do, it is quite contrary to holy writ, and the very teachings of Christ himself; John, 6, 40; "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day;" v. 44; "No man can come unto me except the father who' hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day;" John, x, 29; "My father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my father's hand." These scriptures need no comment, nor shall I give them any. But they do not appear to me to comport well with the idea that some souls whom Jesus really intended to save whom he shed his blood, will finally be lost.

The other opinion which I suggested to be the opinion of many, that he died for all men with an express intention to save them, and that all will infallibly be saved, though many must go to torment for a while. This opinion will not do

because it is directly contrary to the whole teachings of God's word on the subject. That the torments of hell are strictly and literally eternal, is the doctrine of God's word generally, and the new testament in particular. This is a subject on which we know nothing with certainty but from God's holy word. Permit me to turn you to the teachings of God's pure and holy spirit on this subject; Mat. xxv, 46; "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal; Rev. 14, 11; "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name;" Mark, ix, 44; "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." These words, and similar passages, plainly show that the torments of the wicked are without end. The worm, their own conscience, dies not, but torments them forever; "The fire is not quenched," the wrath of God is poured out without mixture, and that as long as souls endure.

Now, brethren, my text asserts that Christ is the propitiation, not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world; and the apostle Paul saith, Heb. ii, 9; "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Now, I presume the import of these passages is just about the same.

Now, sirs, I presume the import of these phrases is this; that Christ has made an atonement which appeases the deity and reconciles him to

penitent sinners ; an atonement which renders it perfectly consistent with the perfections of deity to bestow happiness and salvation on whom he will ; and that there is ample and sufficient merit in the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ for the salvation of all men. And the apostles declare that he tasted death for every man, and that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; that none need be discouraged from making application to the saviour.

According to my views of the atonement the warrant is perfectly equal to all men who hear the gospel to believe on Jesus Christ. The invitation is to all, and the utmost encouragement is set before them to make application, and if they do not, the fault is exclusively their own. Hear the generosity and universality of the invitation ; Mat. xi, 28 ; “ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;” John, vi, 37 ; “ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out ;” John, vii, 37 ; “ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.” My views of the atonement farther are, that before even one single soul can be saved, Christ must shed his blood ; “ For without shedding blood is no remission ;” Heb. ix, 22 ; “ For this is my blood of the new testament shed for many, for the remission of sins ;” Mat. xxvi, 28. Christ’s death and sufferings manifest most clearly God’s regard to the rights of justice, to the maintenance of holiness, to the dignity of the divine government. This being done, no obstacle lies

in the way of the salvation of any men, nor of all men, who hear the gospel of Christ and embrace it. For that which is a sufficient atonement for the sins of one man is a sufficient atonement for the sins of all men. And I see no impropriety in my saying what the inspired apostles John and Paul have taught me to say and have said before me, "That Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," and that "Jesus Christ by the grace of God might taste death for every man." Thus those inspired penmen have said, and thus I am willing they should say, and am willing to believe them when they do say it. And to tamper with the word of God, and distort it from its plain manifest meaning by saying the whole world means the whole "elect world," and that Christ "Tasting death for every man" means every "believing man," is unjustifiable, unwarrantable, limiting the sacred records, and dangerous to the souls of men. Let us say what the apostle has said, and be therewith contented, that Christ has become a propitiatory sacrifice, "For the whole world," without any unwarrantable limitations about it. With regard to the number of souls that will be saved through this atonement I satisfy my own mind by answering, and am entirely pleased with the answer, just as many as an infinitely wise, immaculately holy, and sovereign God sees proper, and not one more nor one less. This is a question my own mind asked me thirty-eight years ago, this is the answer I then gave it, with the holy bible in my hand, and with which I have ever since

rested satisfied, and intend so to do till God shall call me home, and with this laconic answer am I so entirely satisfied that I never intend to seek any other. My own mind asked me how comes it to pass, and where lies the fault, that all are not saved since God is gracious, and a propitiation made for the sins of the whole world. With the bible in my hand, and I humbly trust the fear of God before my eyes, I answered thus; the fault is exclusively the sinners' own, and the character of deity spotless and clear. The passages which were presented to the view of my mind, and on which this answer is principally predicated, were and are, such as the following; John, v, 40; "And ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" Mat. xxiii, 37; "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not;" Luke, xix 41, 42; "And when he came near and beheld the city he wept over it saying, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace but now they are hid from thine eyes." Any comment on these passages of sacred writ, which fell from the lips of the holy Jesus himself, so plain and full of significancy, appears to me entirely useless. With regard to the answer given above to the question, what number of the human family will be saved? which answer was in the following words; "Just as many as an infinitely wise, immaculately holy, and sovereign God sees proper." If any wish to

know the passages of sacred writ on which the answer is founded, they shall be gratified ; II Tim. ii, 19 ; “ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his ;” John, xiii, 18 ; “ I speak not of you all, I know whom I have chosen ;” Rom. ix, 17 ; “ For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth ; therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” Are any of you ready to say this is a hard saying, who can hear it ? The saying is not mine ; it is his who spake by the afflatus of the holy ghost ; and they who find fault, find that fault not with man but with God, and to him they must answer it.

1. Learn from this subject how anxious sinners ought to be in their application to Jesus Christ for salvation. Is the Almighty God offended with sinners and offended justly too ? Is Christ the only mediator between God and man ? Is he the only propitiation for our sins ? Ought we not then most anxiously to seek an interest in his gracious favour ? Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, in him there is eternal salvation and in no other. “ Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved.” Let us then, dear brethren, be all earnestly engaged in “ Seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his

thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon ;” Isaiah, lv, 6, 7.

2. How great the encouragement all have, to cast themselves on the divine mercy and trust in the Lord Jehovah forever, in whom there is everlasting strength. “Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Now, no one man has a right to say to others I have more encouragement to apply to the saviour than you: Christ died for a certain number of the human family and for no more ; he suffered to make a propitiation for my sins, but not for yours. The encouragement to one sinner is just as ample as to another, and the assurance of the saviour is, that he who cometh shall in no wise be cast out, as we have seen above. Let all be solemnly engaged and most earnest with their God ; “ From the days of John the baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force ;” Mat. xi, 12 ; “ Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them ;” Ezek. xxxvi, 37. Christian salvation is of grace, and of grace alone, beyond controversy, according to the sacred word of God ; Ephes. ii, 8, 9 ; “ For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” But, notwithstanding this, we have a part assigned us which it is our duty to discharge and that with fidelity. This part is to seek the Lord with all our hearts, and to

discharge all the duties incumbent upon us according to the requirements of the divine law. The scripture command is, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" Heb. xii, 14. Let us, then, seek the Lord, brethren and sisters, with all simplicity and Godly sincerity, by devout and humble prayer and supplication; "Let us seek him by breaking off from our sins and showing mercy to the poor, if peradventure, it may be a lengthening of our tranquility;" Dan. iv, 27. No overtures of salvation by grace made by the Lord in the gospel, are designed to relax the sinews of our industry. We are to be just about as earnestly engaged in attending to all the various means of grace, as though we were to be justified by our vigorous exertions, and when we have done what is our duty to do, let us account ourselves only unprofitable servants, and confide for acceptance with God on the merit of him, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world!

SERMON XXIV.



RATIONAL MOTIVES ADDRESSED TO ALL, TO INDUCE THEM TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.



Proverbs, III, 1—4.

“My son, forget not my law ; but let thine heart keep my commandments ; for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee ; bind them about thy neck ; write them upon the table of thine heart ; so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”

MANY of the human race, my friends, I presume greatly mistake the nature, design and tendency of true religion. They seem to think that all its benefits and rewards respect another state of existence, and can be looked for beyond the grave only, and that no benefits accrue from it in the present life. In the estimation of these people, if we get religion ever so shortly before we die, every end will be answered that this sacred thing can answer at all. In that event we shall be secure of everlasting happiness, and this according to their mutilated scheme is all it promises. Now, I conceive for my part, that true

religion is the highest dignity and happiness of human nature in all states of existence ; and that its rewards are not altogether confined to another world. True it is, its highest rewards are to be conferred in a future state, and there it is, that the devout and pious man looks for them in the highest degree, but not exclusively. And to conceive that true religion has no other rewards attached to it but these, is extremely erroneous, and antisciptural. The sacred pages uniformly represent true religion as conferring on its possessors, present, as well as future, rewards ; “Great peace,” saith the psalmist, “have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them ;” Psalm exix, 165. That peace is a blessing and advantage to the human soul, I presume, will not be denied by any. The king of Israel, speaking of religion, saith ; “Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace ;” Prov. iii, 16, 17 ; “Godliness with contentment,” saith St. Paul, “is great gain ;” I Tim. vi, 6. But perhaps nowhere in the sacred records, are the present advantages of religion spoken of more decidedly, than in the words of my text ; “My son, forget not my law ; but let thine heart keep my commandments ; for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee, &c.” Here we find length of days, long life, and peace promised to the recollection of God’s law, and keeping his commandments. And favour and good understanding with God and man are promised as the reward of mercy and truth, when written on the table of the heart.

But it must be recollected, it is to true and genuine religion that these good things are promised, and not to a mere show or profession of the thing. It is when the heart keeps the commandments of God, and when mercy and truth are bound about the neck and written on the heart. design,

I. To explain and enlarge on the duties enjoined.

II. I shall a little explain and enlarge on the rewards promised.

Then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. I am a little to explain and enlarge on the duties enjoined.

1. The first is not forgetting the law of God; "My son, forget not my law." It is much to be feared this is an injunction greatly violated by multitudes of mankind. How many are there, who are going on in their courses of business and amusement, or which is much worse, in their guilty pleasures and dissipations, quite forgetful of God and his law, to the extreme injury of their own souls, and the great dishonor of God; "Forget not my law." We ought ever to remember, that we are not our own, that we are dependent on God; that he has a right to give us law; he is our creator, preserver and benefactor. Hence is founded his righteous dominion. He has given us a law, and furnished us with a rule for our conduct in all cases whatever. By this law, we are to be regulated; when any thing occurs in the course of our conduct, in the least degree doubtful in its nature; we ought not, as a great many do;

appeal to our passions, our selfish inclinations, and carnal propensities, to know how we are to proceed in this doubtful matter. They will very often lead us astray. We ought to consult the law of our God and do as that directs, how contrary soever such course may be to the froward inclinations of our own minds. This is to remember the divine law, and it is to remember it in just such a way, as is our indispensable duty. We ought to remember that so far as we violate this law, we are exposed to condemnation at the hand of Almighty God. This consideration ought to excite us to the greatest diligence and care. Let us remember what a fearful thing it must be to fall into the hand of the living God.

2. The second direction given in my text is, to let our hearts keep the commandments of God. Seeing God has a right, as above suggested, to give us law, it is our incumbent duty strictly, and in good faith, to keep the commandments he gives us, and that both in heart and practice. When we observe the commandments of God strictly in our practice, this will pass with men, as they are incapable of scrutinizing the motives of our conduct; but this will not pass with God unless we keep them in our hearts. It must be known to every one who reads the sacred records, that God always requires the heart in his service, and never will be pleased with a moral agent without it. I think, we then keep the commandments of God in our hearts, when we pay attention to the divine law for God's sake, and for conscience sake. When we would be just as careful to perform our duty to God if

none of our fellow creatures knew any thing about it, as we would be if the whole world were looking on. Some people will perform certain duties carefully and with great apparent zeal, provided they are duties of a splendid nature, and likely to recommend them highly to public notice, and popular applause. But these same persons, if they thought the public would know nothing about it, would move very heavily in the discharge of duty, or leave it entirely undone. This is certainly not keeping the commandments of God in the heart. Such is the vanity of many men, that they will go almost any length, to gain a little empty applause, and stand well with the public. We then keep the commandments of God in our hearts, in the strict scripture sense, when our obedience to the divine law is rendered from principles of pure and impartial love. When the christian can say with the psalmist ; “my soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.”

3. The next direction of my text is, not to let mercy and truth forsake us ; but to bind them about our necks, and write them on the table of our hearts. These good things we are not to lose sight of in all our intercourse with our fellow men ; “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.” Mercy is a disposition to pity, relieve and assist the needy, the helpless and suffering, who cannot relieve themselves so far as we may have it in our power, and in this view of it, is extremely important in society, and repeatedly enjoined in the sacred writings. An apostle exhorts to put on bowels of mercies ; Col. iii, 12 ; “Put on therefore, as the elect of God,

holy and beloved, bowels of mercies." Mercy, also, has respect to offenders, and means a placable disposition toward them, and a readiness to forgive them their trespasses against us. To this, we are also, ardently exhorted by the apostle; Ephes. iv, 32; "And be ye kind, one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake hath forgiven you, so also do ye." And Christ himself hath taught us to pray for forgiveness, as we forgive others; Mat. vi, 12; "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Now, sirs, if we make our forgiveness of those who have offended us the measure of that forgiveness for which we pray, ought we not ever to maintain a forgiving disposition toward our fellow men? Otherwise, would we not be in the utmost danger? Truth is the conformity of our words to our thoughts, and is plainly opposed to every thing like falsehood, prevarication and dissembling. The rules of truth are exceedingly often violated amongst mankind, and much guilt contracted in this way. Hypocrisy, dissimulation and insincere pretences have prevailed so much in modern times, that they appear to be almost the order of the day.

But these things are all opposed to that truth, which we are exhorted in my text, to bind about our necks, and write upon the table of our hearts. When we speak with our neighbors we ought to speak truth, and nothing contrary thereto, agreeably to divine direction; Ephes. iv, 25; "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."

When we make promises we ought to fulfil them to the extent of our power, and not to do this, is certainly to trespass on truth. Many make promises, and are not at all particular to discharge them. This is extremely wrong, and is very injurious to society. And it is often very injurious to the person himself, who is guilty of it. For whenever it is ascertained by the public, that a man pays but little regard to his promises, the public will not long pay much regard to him, unless he is very plenty of property; then commercial men will credit him, relying on coercion to get their own.

The direction is, that we bind these sacred things about our necks, and write them on the tables of our hearts. I presume we are to understand by this figurative language that these things ought to be very dear to us, and entirely sacred in our estimation. We ought certainly to delight in them, and perform them from principle, for conscience sake; and in obedience to the commandment of God. If we promise a man a sum of money on a certain day, I think we ought to furnish him as punctually as possible, not only because we think he will compel us eventually, to discharge the debt, but we ought to do it for duty's sake, and for conscience sake. And when we do so, in all cases we bind truth about our necks and write it on the table of our hearts. And when we perform mercy to our fellow men, not to attract the notice of men by our liberality, and thereby emblazon our names; but because God has commanded it, and to diffuse human

happiness. Then I think we write mercy on the table of our hearts, and comply with the very spirit of the direction contained in my text.

II. I am a little to enlarge on, and explain, the rewards promised in my text.

1. The first reward promised is length of days or long life. I do not presume God has bound himself by promise, that the man who is obedient in remembering the divine law, and keeping the commandments of his God in his heart, shall certainly live to a very advanced age, the contrary of which we often find turn out to be the fact. But I presume we are fairly to understand the sacred writer as teaching that the native tendency of obedience, and keeping the commandments of God, is to prolong life and will do so, unless divine providence sees proper, for his own inscrutable reasons, to order it otherwise. And will not this sentiment well stand the test of sober reason and experience? Do not half the human family shorten their days, and fall victims to an untimely death; "Through surfeiting and drunkenness, chambering, and wantonness," intemperance and debauchery? See the drunkard wasting his vitals, destroying his health, and wrecking his constitution by the inflammatory draught; see the gluttonous man overloading his stomach by his enormous meals; how does he oppress nature, and put it to the expence of a fever and a vomit, in order to discharge the unwieldy and offensive load? Does not every man of common sense know that these things must injure the constitution and impair the health? Nature will not long suffer

these things without retaliation. Violence is seldom done to nature's laws but what the guilty offenders are the miserable sufferers in the end, nor can it be reasonably expected it should be otherwise.

See that man of irascible passions, even in the very prime of life, in full, high, and unimpaired health, rush, impetuously rush, into the cold and icy arms of death, impelled by the hell-sprung principles of vengeance and ambition. What else instigates and urges on the bloody duellist? Now, had this man possessed the happy, the gentle and engaging spirit of the gospel, might he not have lived as long as you and I, and other men? See how lifeless he lies! See how ghastly his looks! Ah guilty wretch! See how ferocious, how decomposed his features are! Rage and outrage and vengeance are depicted on his lifeless visage. Ah the manifest reason is that these are the guilty passions which were regent in his breast at the moment his sullen and reluctant spirit took its flight, and so the features settled. See the men and women addicted to impurity, pining away under the most loathsome of all diseases, self contracted, and the fruit of their guilty amours. Now, might not these men and women have lived as long as others, had their principles and practices been strictly pure. Have they not procured their own dissolution, by their irregular indulgences? Are they not fairly chargeable with a species of suicide? Now, sirs, the men who forget not God's law, but keep his commandments in their hearts, certainly escape all these things which sweep

down so many of the human family to an untimely grave. Will not every tolerably informed physician tell you that temperance, and a due regimen of the passions is essential to good health and longevity? For my own part I most decidedly believe, that due temperance and moderate industry are the two best physicians in the world, and that if we would sufficiently employ these two, we should seldom need to apply to any other. Now, the man who keeps God's commandments exercises temperance, for God's law condemns all intemperance. No man can be a pious, godly man, and at the same time be intemperate. Piety and godliness include love to God and love to man, strict justice, and at the same time sobriety and strict self regimen.

2. The next thing promised in my text as the happy result of keeping the commandments of God is, "Peace;" "Peace shall they add to thee." I presume the peace mentioned in my text means principally, though not exclusively, peace of conscience, peace in our own minds; and brethren, is not this a great matter? If a man could command the wealth of both the Indies and was honored by the world, what would he be even then, but a splendid wretch, if an eternal war existed in his own bosom, and if he had not peace in his own mind? Do not our happiness and enjoyments depend very much on the peace of our minds? And is there any thing in the universe which can be an adequate substitute for this great and invaluable blessing?

That not forgetting the law of God, and the

keeping his commandments in our hearts, is the way best to promote peace of mind, will admit of no doubt. Certainly to be at peace with our God is the fair and ready way to be at peace with ourselves. How can that man be reasonably supposed to have any true and solid peace in his own mind who is eternally at war with heaven? Peace with God is essential to peace in our own bosoms. And with this accord perfectly the sacred records; Isaiah, xlvi, 22; "There is no peace saith the Lord to the wicked." But to have a humble hope that our sins are pardoned, and God reconciled to our souls, is the very way to have peace, substantial peace, in our own hearts; Psalm, cxix, 165; "Great peace have they who love thy law and nothing shall offend them." Conscious rectitude is a most charming thing; when the humble believer can look at his own conduct from day to day and say, that by the grace of God he has been enabled to maintain it unblamable and without rebuke, it affords him substantial peace; indeed he is happier than a king. But keeping the commandments of God is the ready way also to have peace with others; such a man gives not provocation or offence to others; neither does he conduct in such manner as is calculated to stir up strife and contention. Now, sirs, this careful, guarded, unoffending conduct goes greatly to keep down strife and contention, and is one of the things which make greatly for peace, and which we are commanded by the apostle to follow; Rom. xiv, 19; "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may

edify another." When such a man receives injurious treatment from wicked and unreflecting men, he is not bitter and forward in his resentments, but passive, good natured, and forgiving, having already made his calculations for the strong probability of meeting with ill treatment, at least on some occasions, from the men of a wicked and ungodly world. Having thus made his calculations to meet with such things, when they befall him, they do not take him at unawares, and he is still ready to act with coolness and deliberation; and he farther well remembers the opinion of the wise man; "That a soft answer turneth away wrath;" Prov. xv, 1; and that a "Soft answer breaketh the bone;" Prov. xxv, 15. He is not hasty in his spirit to be angry, well recollecting that "anger resteth in the bosom of fools;" Prov. vii, 9; "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."

3. The finishing stroke of the reward promised in my text is, that those who let not mercy and truth forsake them but bind them about their necks, and write them on the tables of their hearts, shall find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. That keeping the commandments of God, being holy and righteous, is the ready way to find favour with God, we have no doubt; Prov. viii, 17; "I love them that love me." We do not mean by this observation to be understood as disclaiming the atoning merit of Jesus Christ, in the great article of justification and acceptance with God. This doctrine we view as the great foundation stone which God has laid in Zion; and on

which believing sinners must build the fabric of their immortal hopes. But is it not the commandment of God that we believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ? "For this is the commandment of God, that ye believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another;" I John, iii, 23.

And does not the apostle John pronounce a blessing most expressly on those who do his commandments? Rev. xxii, 17; "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life," &c. How far this favor shall be shown them in the present life so as to be manifest to their fellow men, is a separate question. But certain it is beyond all controversy, that God will lead them through this world in that way his infinite wisdom sees best for them, and in the end will receive them to the habitations of eternal glory.

That the exercise of mercy and truth is as certainly the way to conciliate the favor of men, I presume there is full as little doubt. When a man manifestly abounds in all the kind, tender, and social affections; when he is generous and compassionate to the needy and suffering, sympathises with those in deep distress, and is strictly just to all, is he not the darling of society, and highly esteemed by all the well thinking part of the community? This, I presume, is at once conceded by all the fair and candid, and the concession is predicated manifestly on the face of universal fact. When a man's reputation is fairly established for truth and integrity, when it is clearly

ascertained, that his word may be safely believed and his promises relied on, does it not give him a standing with his acquaintances, which is not generally obtained by faithless and prevaricating men? Is not such a man the one who will generally be confided in and pass well with society? Is he not generally esteemed the man of real and substantial worth? Whatever arts of low and selfish cunning, chicanery, and intrigue a man may possess, yet I presume he is never esteemed by society a man of sterling worth, unless he be known to be a man of fair dealing and rigid truth. This latter is the man who will pass current in society, in every country, and in every age.

1. Learn from this subject that true and genuine religion does not consist in rites and forms, and external acts of worship offered to the deity, without a good life. We must remember God's law, we must keep his commandments, and exercise mercy and truth, if we would approve ourselves to God and man. The very essence of true and genuine religion is love to God and our fellow men; but to satisfy a fair and candid enquirer of the sincerity and real genuineness of this love where it is professed, there must be a corresponding life, a life conformable in some good degree to the holy requirements of the divine law. And without this corresponding and regular life the evidence never can be satisfactory to any candid and impartial enquirer that the love is sincere, if we judge according to the scriptures, and there is certainly no other safe ground on which to judge;

John, xiv, 15; "If ye love me keep my commandments;" John, xv, 14; "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you;" I John, iii, 7, 8; "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil;" I John, v, 3; "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and that his commandments are not grievous." Thus is it manifest from the sacred records, that no evidence can prove to the satisfaction of our minds, if they are well informed and view the subject right, that professions of love to God are genuine and sincere, short of keeping the commandments of God. Let us all then, dear brethren, who profess the holy religion of the redeemer, be careful to maintain good works; so shall we prove our love sincere according to the teachings of the blessed saviour, so shall we do good to the world of mankind, for "These things are good and profitable to men;" Titus, iii, 8.

2. Learn from this subject, that whatever regularity of conduct we may manifest before the world; yet are we not possessed of true religion unless our obedience and good conduct proceed from a heart right with God. This lies at the very foundation of all real and genuine religion. We are required in my text, be it recollected, to keep the commandments of God in our hearts, and to write mercy and truth on the table of our hearts. These directions plainly show how much the heart is accounted of in the sight of God. And the sacred scriptures require to the same amount elsewhere;

Prov. xxiii, 26; "My son, give me thine heart." A sacred writer says elsewhere; "Then shall they seek me and find me, when they shall search for me with all the heart." Thus we find, God expressly requires and calls for the heart in his service, and without this, God never was pleased; neither ever will be. On this you may rely with infallible certainty.

3. Learn the great and prevailing reason why so many professors of religion reap none of its comforts. The great reason is their hearts are not in the matter. We are not to expect any thing or pursuit to make us happy, unless the heart is in it. Such an expectation is weak and puerile; it has never been realized, and it never will, and every man of tolerable understanding knows it, and it is contrary to all human experience, that ever we should be happy in those pursuits where the heart is not. The heart is almost all in all, in pursuits of almost every kind; and religion above all things, will not do without it. Hear, my friends, and be convinced, that without the heart, in the sacred thing we call religion, you never will succeed. Why, sirs, recollect that if you put two boys to reading dead languages, say Latin and Greek, one of whom has his heart in the business, and the other feels his heart directly opposed to it; the one whose heart is delighted with it, will double the other, and in fact more than double him, suppose all other things to be equal. So much does it aid every pursuit, to have the heart engaged in it. Surely, then, we never ought to attempt the discharge of religious duties without the heart.

4. Learn that those who are truly religious, and keep God's law in their hearts, have made the wisest as well as the safest, choice. A life of temperance and holiness, is usually a life of proportionable health and happiness. So true is the declaration of the sacred writer; "That wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace; Prov. iii, 17. And permit me here to ask; what does the debauchee, the man of vicious life and practice make, by all his sinful courses? The fair and rational answer must be, wretchedness and misery in this life, and the displeasure of God, and eternal ruin, in that which is to come. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine, when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

5. Learn from this subject, that the opinion, that all the rewards of a religious life, lie beyond the grave, is an extremely dangerous one, as it is calculated to favour procrastination, which generally ruins the soul. While careless sinners draw the conclusion, that no reward is attached to a religious life in this world, and that all its rewards respect the world beyond the grave; they will be disposed to put off the matter of seeking religion; the probable consequence of which is, that they will lose their souls. The strong and rational probability is that death will surprise them into the

other world without the least opportunity of making their peace; and then eternal ruin must ensue. Let us guard against this fatal mistake; "Let us seek the Lord while he is to be found, let us call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him return to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon;" Isaiah lv, 6, 7.

SERMON XXV.



THE ANXIOUS SINNER'S EARNEST ENQUIRY FOR
SALVATION.



Acts, II, 37, 38.

“Now when they heard this, they were pierced in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

THE connection of these words is this. The apostles of our Lord continuing in the city of Jerusalem, after the ascension of the redeemer, until the day of pentecost was fully come; the time appointed in the divine mind, to endow them with power from on high, there came suddenly a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind; and filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and sat on each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. And there were at that time Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven, dwelling at Jerusalem, and they heard the apostles every man;

in his own tongue wherein he was born; verse 6—11, verse 12; “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this? Others mocking said, these men are filled with new wine. These, I suppose, were the native Jews of Jerusalem, who understood none other language than the Hebrew, and to whom all these strange languages appeared like jargon. Peter makes a very ingenious and able defence against this foolish and infatuated charge. He alleges in this defence the charge was not reasonable, for even drinking men were not generally drunk at so early an hour of the day, for it was then only the third hour, that is, our nine o’clock. And he goes on to show that all this extraordinary appearance was a literal fulfilment of an ancient prophecy by Joel, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, whom with wicked hands they had crucified and slain. And he concludes his defence by telling them that they ought to know assuredly, that God had made this same Jesus, whom they had crucified and slain, both Lord and Christ. Consult the chapter at leisure from the 14th to the 36th verse inclusive. On hearing this, they were in the language of my text, pierced in the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles “Men and brethren what shall we do?”

It appears, then, that conviction now seized the hearts of these bloody Jews, who had crucified the Lord of life and glory. The spirit of God accompanied the preaching of Peter, and it was made life and spirit to their souls. When the spirit of God accompanies the preaching of his word, then

it is powerful to the awakening and conviction of sinners, and never till then. O that my God would instruct me to discretion, and teach me what to say on the present occasion, which might be blessed to the production of the same powerful effect on your minds, that was produced on the minds of Peter's hearers, by his rational, pathetic and earnest address. I propose to show ;

I. What ought to produce the same compunction in your minds which Peter's hearers felt.

II. I will describe a little, the views and feelings of the mind in such a situation as these hearers of Peter were in, when they cried out as in my text, "men and brethren, what shall we do?"

III. I shall attempt to show what such enlightened and convinced sinners ought to do, and what they must do, or be lost. And then close with a few inferences and application.

I. I am to show what ought to produce the same kind of compunction in your minds which Peter's hearers felt.

And here let me say in one word, your sins. You, as well as they, are sinners. You never crucified the Lord of life and glory as they did ; neither did you ever nail him to the tree. Of this you never had the opportunity ; and therefore, you could not do it. But have you not spurned this dear saviour ? Have you not set at nought, and sold him ? Have you not repeatedly declared, by turning your backs on his sacred ordinances, from time to time, that he should not reign over you. Then you are as guilty as they, and ought to feel such compunction as they felt. Are there not a

thousand proofs of this amongst sinners? And the loudest testimony borne by their conduct, that they are enemies in heart to the blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What says the profanity of numbers of you? Is it not a loud and awful declaration that your hearts are enmity, direct enmity itself, against your God? How else are we to account for such oaths, and such direct attacks on the almighty himself. There is no other principle on which it can be done. Profane language is the mere ebullition of the enmity of the sinner's heart. Then, profane man, if you consider the matter well, will you not stand convinced that you as well as Peter's hearers have much ground for compunction? What says the mispence of the sacred sabbath of the Lord? Does not this argue a heart not right with God. If we love the Lord, will we not be disposed to keep his commandments? "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and that his commandments are not grievous;" but is not the commandment of God express, that we shall remember the sabbath day; to keep it holy? Now, sirs, how can we be holy men without a disposition to keep the sabbath holy? It appears to me as one of the most extraordinary things, that any man who makes any claims to religion, should set himself in opposition to the sanctification of the sabbath; or try to show that the fourth commandment of the decalogue is not as binding as any other precept of the same. It appears to me that to the truly godly man the sabbath is the delight. He esteems it holy and honorable. It meets the

ardent wish of his heart. And I think we may take it for granted, we may view him as an enemy in heart to God, who is entirely opposed to the sanctification of the sabbath. What says the mispence of time with respect to many others, and their entire neglect of the great duties of religion? How many amongst us, my friends, are destroying the precious jewel, TIME? How are we suffering it to run to waste? My friend, how old art thou? Thirty, forty, or fifty years. What hast thou done in these years? Hast thou secured an interest in the divine favor? Hast thou made thy peace with God? Hast thou secured thine eternal well-being? Must not many put a negative on all these questions? Then, my friend, have you not ground for compunction? Or can you misimprove the most precious opportunities and incur no guilt? Can you squander away jewels, and be blameless? Nay, more, have not many of you not only misimproved the golden opportunities which an indulgent providence hath thrown in your way, but have you not employed this precious thing to the worst and most pernicious of purposes, promoting sin and transgression in corrupting others, and drawing them into the way of transgressors which is hard? Brethren, review your conduct, and answer conscientiously. If your conscience brings the charge against you, have you no ground of compunction? And might you not well exclaim with Peter's hearers, "What shall I do to be saved?" What says the malignant, defamatory tongue of many, who delight in reproaching their neighbours? Is not there great ground of

compunction? The good man delights in the welfare of his fellow men, and the happiness of his friends is happiness to him. Can any thing be a plainer mark of a wicked and depraved heart, than a manifest disposition to injure the character and lower the standing of our fellow men? Certainly, then, those amongst us to whom these remarks apply have no small ground of compunction as well as Peter's hearers. What says the attachment of many to levity and dissipation, and that attachment too often found even in the hoary head, and the decline of life. Ought not years to teach wisdom and the hoary head to be always found in the way of well doing? How very unseemly and improper for a grandfather, and sometimes a great grandfather, to be seen indulging in all the tricks and levity and freakishness of a boy. Have not such ample reason to be pierced in the heart at the recollection of their exceptionable and wicked conduct, and to exclaim with Peter's hearers, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" What says the inattention of many to the worship of God? How is this sacred, this rational duty neglected by a great proportion of the human race? O how many are there in every part of our country living in the neglect of God's holy worship! How is God's house and service neglected? How many amongst us whom we scarcely ever see in a worshipping assembly, but who, when other people are humbly and devoutly attempting to honor God by waiting on him devoutly in his sanctuary, are strolling through the country, paying unnecessary visits, or peradventure, engaging in

scenes of riot and debauch? Have not these great grounds of alarm? Are they not directly violating the laws of the Almighty, and drawing down the divine vengeance on their own devoted and careless heads? May not they with much propriety exclaim as in my text, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" How many amongst us are living in the entire neglect of family devotion? Are they not living then in the neglect of an important duty, and therefore offending God? Have they not ground of compunction as well as Peter's hearers? Do you ask me if there is any direct commandment for family prayer? I answer, the thing is manifestly required by fair implication in the word of God, and therefore is as binding as though there were the most direct commandment. See to this point, Jeremiah, x, 25; "Pour out thy fury, O Lord, upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Now, sirs, permit me to ask, if the fury of the Lord is to be poured out upon the families that do not call upon the name of the Lord, if this is not equal to the most positive declaration that families ought to call upon that name? How much is closet devotion neglected amongst us? With regard to a direct and positive commandment for this particular duty, there certainly cannot be the least doubt; Mat. vi, 6; "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door about thee, pray to thy father who is in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." What say the many backsliders amongst us?

who once had some hopeful appearance of religion but have now exchanged that appearance for the spirit of the world? Does not this plainly show that the heart is not right with God, and that we have great ground for compunction and regret, and that we have sufficient reason to exclaim with Peter's hearers, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

II. I am to describe the views, feelings, and exercises of the human mind in such a situation as these hearers of Peter were in, when they exclaimed as in my text, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

1. One view the human mind has of itself in such a situation is, that it is a poor, condemned, and sinful creature; condemned justly too for the dreadful and aggravated violation of God's righteous and equitable laws. The sinner in such a situation feels that it would be just and righteous in Almighty God to cut him off in sin and appoint him his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. Another view the sinner has of himself is, that he is in a most miserable and helpless situation, that nothing without relief from his pitiable and deplorable condition can make him happy. If you give him wealth, honor, rank, or elevated station, still he cannot be happy or enjoy himself without deliverance from his present deplorable condition. He sees and feels, that without the special grace of God he is undone forever, and realises that solemn and most significant question of our blessed Lord, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mat. xvi

26. Another thing the soul sees and feels when in this situation is, that he is helpless, and impotent as he is guilty, and liable every moment to sink to everlasting ruin; that he cannot save himself, by any exercises or exertions of his own. Strictly does he realise in his present deplorable condition, and most sensibly does he feel, all the force of that declaration of our blessed Lord; John, xv, 5; "For without me ye can do nothing." O how sensibly does he feel his impotency, and how mortifyingly too! O how sensibly does the sinner feel his liability to sink down to hell at any moment an angry God may see proper! No marvel then if like Peter's hearers, he cry with utmost anxiety "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Another thing he feels in this situation is great anxiety for deliverance from his painful and unpleasant feelings. It is an unpleasant situation for a rational creature to be in, to see himself exposed, and justly, to the vengeance of the most high God, and fearful of the divine wrath overtaking him every moment. The soul under these circumstances is wont to cry for deliverance. And thus it was that Peter's hearers exclaimed, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And thus exclaims the anxious soul still, when he sees himself exposed to the divine vengeance.

III. I am to show what such enlightened and convinced sinners ought to do, and what they must do, or be lost.

It is to be observed, the answer given by Peter to those who asked him and his brethren what they must do, was to repent and be baptised every one

of them for the remission of sins. I would give the same direction to those who ask the same question, with this difference only, that inasmuch as a great number of the men and women who anxiously put this question in the present day, "What shall we do?" have already been baptised authoritatively, it is not necessary to repeat the baptism, as we entertain no doubt of the divine right and validity of infant baptism, when administered by proper authority. This was quite a necessary and proper direction for Peter to give his hearers, as they had never been baptised at all. We too give the same direction to all adults who have not been baptised. If a man who has never been baptised, ask us with apparent anxiety, what he shall do? We give the same direction with Peter; "Repent and be baptised for the remission of sins." But that we all should repent, is just as necessary as that Peter's hearers should, for we all, as well as they, are sinners. And repentance toward God is an essential ingredient in the religion of a sinner; Luke xiii, 3—5; "I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This repentance, sirs, does not consist in horror of conscience, fear of hell, or slavish dread. But in disapproving of sin, loathing it, and turning from it unto God with full purpose of, and cordial endeavors after, new obedience. Its object is sin, not punishment. Could a man shed rivers of tears and the only reason were, because he stands exposed to everlasting misery, it would never prove him to be a genuine penitent. But if the object of repentance is sin, as done against God, and his

penitential tears flow because he has done wrong, and offended a God of infinite benevolence and glory, he appears to be possessed of those holy principles that are well pleasing in the sight of God and speak him an heir of grace. These were certainly the principles of the psalmist's penitence, as expressed in his penitential psalm; "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee and thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight;" Psalm li, 2—4. Genuine repentance extends to sins of the heart, as well as sins of the life; Psalm xix, 12, 13; "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also, from presumptuous sins;" Rom. vii, 24; "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thus does it appear then, from the exercises of King David and St. Paul, that true repentance extends to sins of the heart, as well as sins of the life. And I conceive with their experience accords that of every true saint. To the true believer, I presume, a heart, hard, stupid, impenitent, and that will not melt into penitential sorrow at the recollection of a saviour's blood, is a greater grief and trouble, than all the external aberrations of his life.

It must be easily observed, by every attentive reader of the sacred writings, that when the divine writers mention only one of the graces of the spirit as being religion, or as a certain evidence of religion, all the other sister graces are evidently

implied. For example, if they mention love as religion, repentance is always implied, and so is faith. If they mention repentance as religion, as is the case in my text, we are confident faith and love are both implied ; so of faith. When faith only is mentioned, as that in which religion consists ; love and repentance are manifestly implied. When Peter's hearers asked, what they should do to be saved ? Peter answers, repent and be baptised every one of you for the remission of sins ; he does not mean to exclude love and faith, as not being as necessary as repentance. They are altogether as necessary, and are both plainly implied.

1. Learn that those amongst us, who ought to feel ourselves sinners as well as Peter's hearers, and who ought to repent, and in fact must, or be eventually lost, are very numerous. Though we have not indeed, with wicked hands crucified and slain the saviour as Peter's hearers did, because we never had the opportunity ; yet, have we not wounded this dear redeemer in almost nameless other ways, and many of them very aggravated ones ? And do we not therefore need to repent as well as they ? Brethren "let us look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one that mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness for him as one in bitterness for a first born." And I presume, sirs, whenever we compare the exercises of our hearts honestly with the requirements of the divine law, we shall see ground enough for deep and unfeigned repentance. O brethren, how far have we all come short of the requirements of the divine law ? Does that sacred law require us to

love the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind and strength? O how far have we failed! Have we not here then, ground of deep and undissembled contrition? Does not the divine law require us to keep ourselves from idols? Have we complied strictly with this requirement? Do you say you hope I cannot charge the guilt of idolatry upon you, in a country where there is no such thing as idol worship? Indeed, my friends, it affords me no pleasure at all to charge you with any sin whatever; nor is it for the sake of enjoying pleasure, I do so. When I set your crimes before you, and would convince you of them, if in my power, it affords me no pleasure, but the reverse. But for you it is safe, that you may be brought to repentance and be engaged to serve the Lord. And I am commanded as a watchman on the walls of Zion; "To cry aloud and spare not; but to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins;" Isaiah lviii, 1. With regard to idolatry, which is literally the worship of images, I have not the least idea there is a man or woman in this assembly guilty of it, as I presume there is no body here who has ever bowed to an image. But, my dear friends, what is the very spirit of idolatry? Is it not preferring some other being to the sovereign God in our affections? Now, if it be correct to view this as idolatry, are there not many of us idolaters? Do not many of us prefer some other being to God, in our affections? Some perhaps a wife, some an husband, some peradventure, our money; some perhaps a little popular applause, or a little elevation

on the pinnacle of glory. Now, sirs, according to my humble views, it matters but little what the object is which we prefer to God. I conceive we may justly be said to be guilty of the spirit of this crime whenever we give any created being a higher place in our affections than we give the great God, whatever may be the object. Then have not many of us great ground for repentance? The divine law requires us to reverence the great God, and denounces the divine vengeance against all who profane his holy and venerable name. Are any of my audience ready to draw a very favourable conclusion respecting themselves with respect to this matter, alleging they have never been chargeable with profanity? Have you, my dear friends, considered the extent of this commandment? I presume, sirs, this commandment of the decalogue is often violated when we do not directly swear by the divine name, in the most profane and vulgar manner. Is not this holy name always profaned, when used in a light, vain, thoughtless, and irreverent manner? Whenever it is introduced into conversation lightly and on occasions not sufficiently solemn and dignified to justify the use of this venerable and holy name. How often do we hear this holy being appealed to in ordinary conversation, in the most manifestly light, thoughtless, and irreverent manner? Are not all such light and irreverent appeals a profanation of the name of God? I appeal to common sense. What extreme neglect of the sacred sabbath exists amongst us? Ought we not to repent and turn from these violations of the divine

law? I am aware numbers do not admit the obligation of the sabbath, and profess to view it as having been abrogated with the ceremonial law; for what good reason I am not able as yet to see. The command for keeping the day holy, is a part of the moral law, not the ceremonial, and as it is one of the commandments of the decalogue I do not see why we should conceive of it being done away any more than the third, the seventh, or any other. For my part I view lawgivers, and their powers, and laws, in the following light. When a competent power enacts a law for a community, I view the law as binding, if it be not unconstitutional, until the same competent authority repeals it. I have never found that any commandment of the decalogue has been repealed by the lawgiver, and therefore it is still binding. I have found a change of the day made by the competent authority, but not a repeal of the law. How many are guilty of a dreadful breach of the sixth commandment of the decalogue? Not only in that flagrant manner which is noticed by the laws of the community, and receives at their hand condign punishment; are not all attempts to do violence to the persons of our fellow men, all assaults and batteries, and all attempts to do them personal injury, under the influence and at the dictates of an angry and malignant temper, so many violations of this commandment? How numerous, then, are its violaters? And how do they need repentance? And how am I bound to view your conduct in the light of this commandment, as a fair and candid investigator of divine truth, ye

blood-stained duellists, with hands and garments, ensanguined from the veins of your fellow men, not slain in honorable battle, in defence of an insulted, injured, invaded country, but slain in single combat, a combat which grew out of nothing but pride and ambition. O ye Burrs, and ye Barrons, and ye, whoever you may be, like minded with these degraded savages, I have a message to you from heaven's holy sovereign, if perchance this little backwoods discourse should ever be seen by you, and that message I am disposed to deliver, whatever you may think of it. That message I will deliver in the language of my text, "Repent, and be baptised, if necessary, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." I trust you are not beyond the reach of divine mercy, if ye sincerely repent of sin and seek your God. But, without that repentance, I am as sure you are eternally undone, as I am that God's word is true; "Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; I John, iii, 15. Is it hoped by those very honorable men that I will not call them murderers? I know not what else to call them with so much propriety according to the word of God, the laws of society, and common sense. I presume whoever takes away the life of his fellow man wilfully, otherwise than as an officer of justice, and in obedience to the laws of his country, is a murderer. The duellist takes away the life of his fellow man wilfully, with evil temper toward him, not in obedience to the laws of his country, but in express violation of those laws, therefore the

duellist is a murderer. To say that duellists have certain laws of honor by which they are regulated in this concern, and that they risk their own lives, is saying nothing to purpose. If the Almighty God has given us a set of laws by which he requires us to regulate our conduct, and which forbid murder, has any set of men a right to establish any system of laws in opposition to these? How absurd the hypothesis? Does the greatness of those men, and their elevated standing in society, exempt them from amenability to the scrutinies of judgment, and the damnation of hell? Permit me to answer this question by asking another. Does the greatness of these mighty men preserve them from sickness and death in common with their menial servants, from corruption, darkness, and the worm? Then shall I admit that they may form laws destructive of God's laws, and triumph over deity himself. When I find they can say with effect to sickness, when invading them, stand off thou pale, unwelcome messenger, and thou grim and ghastly monster death, approach not my dwelling, I will admit, that they shall destroy mankind at pleasure, and like other cannibals, feast on their flesh, and drink their blood at will. Burr shall not only have leave to kill Hamilton, but to eat him, and Barron shall drink with impunity Decatur's blood. But till then, I must view them as subject to God's law as other men, and when they violate that law by wilful, deliberate, and premeditated murder, I will call upon them in the sacred language of my text to repent of this their great and aggravated wickedness. Duellist, have

you read the bible enough to answer me the following question: For whom is tophet ordained? Ah, you say I have not made myself much acquainted with that stale, old fashioned book, and I do not know very much about its contents, and yet I am a man of some reading too; but Voltaire, Volney, Chubb, Hume and Tindal, are my favorites, from whom I am proud to learn. So I would have supposed, sir, and in you and your murders, the world have a correct and lively specimen of that to which such writers lead. But come, my blood stained friend, I must not quit you so; suffer me for once to introduce you, very politely and gentleman like, as you are so finished a gentleman, to the good old prophet Isaiah, and hear him answer in his plain and honest way, the question which you have so politely declined, "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it;" Isaiah, xxx, 33. This, my man of blood, is the true answer to the question; the answer of which you so politely declined. How many of the grossest violations of the seventh commandment daily take place in society? The evidences are numerous, glaring, and indisputable, in every section of the country; and when we take into view the Saviour's explanation of this commandment as given, Mat. v, 28, who will plead exemption from guilt? How numerous then the violaters of the divine law? How universal the necessity that exists amongst men of repentance? And did time suffice

to examine the remaining commandments of the decalogue on which we have not particularly remarked, would we not still see a proportionable increase of crime, and an additional cause for compunction ?

2. Let us enquire a little whether we ever have felt such a compunction as that which Peter's hearers appear to have felt, when they exclaimed in my text, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Have we ever felt ourselves in a state of condemnation? Have we ever seen and sensibly felt the misery and wretchedness of that state in which we are? Have we felt that nothing can make us happy without deliverance from this deplorable condition? Have we felt that we are helpless as we are wicked? Have we sensibly felt our liability to eternal ruin as sinners, whenever the Lord may be pleased to take the forfeiture at our hands? Have we felt deeply and sensibly that our condemnation would be just? Now, sirs, if we have not gone this far in religion, it is certain we never have gone farther; as it is to be presumed fairly they have never accepted of Jesus Christ as a saviour, who have never felt that they stood in need of him.

3. Learn that this is a painful situation of mind to be in, and from which the soul is wont to feel strong desires of deliverance.

4. Let us all take occasion to fly from it by repentance and faith, and lay hold of the offered mercy of the gospel speedily and without delay. Which may the good Lord of his infinite mercy enable us all to do for the redeemer's sake. AMEN.

SERMON XXVI.



AN EXPOSTULATION WITH THE HAUGHTY REJECTERS OF GOD'S COUNSELS.



Luke, VII, 30.

“But the pharisees and lawyers, rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptised of him.”

THESE are the words of Jesus Christ respecting the conduct of the scribes and pharisees, touching the ministry of John the baptist.

The connection of the words is this. John on a certain occasion, when he himself was a prisoner, sent two of his disciples to Jesus Christ to ask him expressly, whether he was the Messiah that was to come, or whether they were to look for another. And while John's messengers were in waiting he cured many of their plagues and infirmities and evil spirits, and to many that were blind he gave sight, and then told these messengers to go and report to John the things which they had seen and heard, and gave them no other answer. And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak to the people respecting John, and to question them what they went out into the wilderness to see? “A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately are in king's houses,”

&c. &c. verse 24—29; “But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptised of him.” I presume, sirs, as did these scribes and pharisees of old, so do millions of the human race yet. They reject the counsels of God against themselves. I design through divine aid, to show,

I. What that counsel of God is, which so many of the human race reject against themselves.

II. What the rejection of this counsel is, or in other words, who are rejecting it against themselves.

III. I shall expostulate a little with them, and propose a few arguments and dissuasives against their conduct, designed to induce them to desist from the same, and embrace the offers of mercy as proposed in the Gospel.

1. I am to show what that counsel of God is, which so many of the human race are rejecting against their own souls. By the counsel of God I understand that device or scheme, which the deity, in his infinite benevolence and wisdom, hath devised for the purpose of redeeming lost and guilty sinners. St. Paul, we find, appeals to the elders of the church of Ephesus, that he had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsels of God; Acts xx, 27; “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Now, sirs, we are at no loss at all to know what the burden of St. Paul’s preaching was. We know it was the scheme of salvation through Jesus Christ; see Acts xx, 21; “Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;” I Cor.

1, 23; "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God; I Cor. ii, 2; "For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" Gal. vi, 14; "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This counsel of God, or scheme of saving sinners through Christ, assures us, that in Christ alone we are to expect salvation, and in no other way; Acts iv, 12; "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved;" II Cor. v, 19; "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" I John ii, 2; "For he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

2. We are informed according to this counsel of God, that all who believe on Jesus Christ shall be saved from wrath through him; Mark xvi, 16; "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;" John iii, 18; "He that believeth on the son, hath everlasting life he that believeth not the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" Rom. v, 9; "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

3. According to this counsel we are assured that it is not only our privilege, but likewise our

indispensable duty to believe on Jesus Christ ; I John iii, 23 ; “For this is the commandment of God that ye believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another.” And it informs us honestly what will be the dire consequence of neglecting this duty ; Mark xvi, 16 ; “He that believeth not shall be damned ;” John iii, 36 ; “But he that believeth not the son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

4. We are required by this counsel of God, to depart from all iniquity, and to walk in newness of life ; II Tim. ii, 19 ; “Let every one who nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity ; I John iii, 3 ; “And every one that hath this hope in him purifyeth himself even as he is pure.”

5. This counsel of God assures us if we are truly religious, there is a delightful heaven, which we shall enjoy forever ; I Peter i, 4 ; “To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you ;” Heb. x, 34 ; “For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance ; John xiv, 1—3 ; “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

6. The counsel of God to us is to be most earnestly engaged to seek our heavenly inheritance.

and that in preference to every thing else ; Mat. vi, 33 ; “ But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ;” Mat. vii, 7 ; “ Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you ;” II Pet. i 10 ; “ Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if ye do these things ye shall never fall ;” Luke xiii, 24 ; “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

7. The counsel of God is for us to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength ;” Mark xii, 30, 31.

8. This counsel of God is “ to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ;” Heb. xii, 14.

II. I am to show what the rejection of this counsel is, or in other words, who are rejecting this divine counsel. It is certainly rejected by all who do not comply with it. But here I shall descend to a little greater speciality.

1. These persons reject the counsel of God, who set themselves in opposition to Jesus Christ, and his most glorious gospel. Deists who will not receive the record which God hath given of his son. Does Christ declare in our text, that the pharisees and lawyers had rejected the counsel of God, because they had not been baptised with John’s baptism ? Surely, then, they reject this counsel who do not receive the record God hath given of his son ; I John v, 10 ; “ He that believeth on the son of

God, hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not, God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record God gave of his son." But deists, my friends, although they reject this counsel with contempt and disdain, are not the only persons guilty of this offence. Many others join them in rejecting this counsel.

2. Those who hear the sacred word of God but will not do it, reject the divine counsel against themselves, whether they speculatively believe the word of God or not; Jeremiah, viii, 8, 9; "How do ye say we are wise and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it, the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are discouraged and taken; Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Mark, vii, 9; "And he said unto them full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may hold your own traditions." To believe the word of God speculatively, or merely to give credence to any particular system of divine truth, where the heart is not affected suitably with it, will answer very little end in promoting the salvation of the soul; "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" Rom. x, 10. God every where in his word requires the heart in his service, and without this it is utterly impossible to please him.

3. Those who scoff at the sacred word of God and its divine truths, reject God's counsels; II Peter, iii, 4; "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their

own lusts, and saying where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation of God." Now, sirs, these scoffers, who thus make light of the divine word, certainly reject the counsel of God against themselves.

4. Those who are lovers of carnal pleasures more than lovers of God. Such as will not give up their frolics and scenes of folly and dissipation for Christ's sake; II Tim. iii, 4; "Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" Isaiah, v, 11, 12; "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night and wine inflame them! and the harp, and the tabret, and the vial and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands; Amos, vi, 1, 4, 5, 6; "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph." It is admitted at once that the practice of the people here pointed out by the sacred penmen, and of those exercised in like manner at the present day, are not by any means such aggravated offences as those of many others that might be named. Yet they go to show with perfect clearness, that the persons who delight in them

are estranged from God and have no genuine piety, for if they had they would certainly find other objects of delight than these frivolous things, even the ever blessed God and his holy cause.

5. Such as will not wait attentively on God in the ordinances of divine institution. Such as will not read his sacred word, or acquaint themselves carefully with its holy contents. Surely such as these reject the counsels of God against themselves. It is the word of God which contains his counsels, or rather, this word is his very counsel. But how many are there amongst us, who scarcely look into their bibles once in a month? Do they not prefer a common newspaper to the sacred word of God, and that, too, even on the holy sabbath? These, I presume, are rejecting the counsels of God. Such as will not wait on the preaching of the divine word when they might do it with conveniency. The great God, in his infinite wisdom and benevolence, has instituted this as one way in which to make his counsels known; Mark xvi, 15; "Go ye forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Now, when we will not hear this word, are we not rejecting the counsels of God? How many instead of attending reverently at the house of God, spend the day in visiting, in business, in pastime? Surely these reject the counsels of God. Will any plead their guilty cause and say they could not help it!

6. Such as are putting off religion until some future period, and will not attend to it at the present time. To say I will not attend to religion now, is

certainly to reject the counsels of God ; because God has not promised us any other time. To day is the time, and the divine word knows nothing of to-morrow ; II Cor. vi, 2 ; “Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.”

7. Such as are profane in their language, and ungodly in their lives, and will not attend to the admonitions of Almighty God to desist from their guilty practises.

III. I am to conclude this subject by expostulating with such as reject this counsel and using such arguments and persuasives with them, as appear calculated to induce them to desist from this foolish conduct, and to embrace the precious gospel, according to the invaluable counsel of God.

1. My dear friends, I beseech you to consider what will be the end of this course. And solemnly remember there is no other way for you to escape the wrath of God, but by embracing the gospel of grace, according to the precious counsel of God. Will you encounter all the danger of rejecting this counsel ? Can you endure the vengeance of eternal fire ? Can you lie down in eternal pain, and become the subject of immortal woe ?

2. Let me entreat you not to undervalue the wisdom and goodness of the deity. Have God's counsels been employed from eternity respecting your salvation ? And will you contemptuously reject them, and thus incur the divine vengeance ? What is this but virtually to tell the deity that his kindness is cruelty, and his wisdom folly. And can you thus treat the Lord Jehovah, and be

blameless? Can you thus conduct without incurring the severe displeasure of the Almighty and jeopardising your own immortal souls? I beseech you, my dear friends, desist from your folly, and incur not the sore displeasure of the Almighty. * He is wise in heart and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him and prospered.?

3. Permit me, my dear friends who reject this counsel of God, to call up to view, for a moment, that eventful day when you must be done with the world, when carnal pleasures and vicious pursuits can support you no longer. Is not death a melancholy day to such as have no God? How, O how, can you meet this melancholy event, without any hope in the gospel of grace, and without having complied with the counsel of God? While friends are weeping round your dying pillow, waiting for your last gasp, and wetting your couch with their tears, what must be the agonies, the insupportable agonies, of your souls? Transfixed by keenest pain, haunted by the ghosts of murdered hours, pressed by the awful forebodings of eternal damnation, and no hope in the gospel of God! O deplorable condition! Who can endure it, and not be completely wretched?

4. Permit me to ask you, who reject the counsel of God, with what advantages does a course of vice and irreligion present you, that you thus reject the counsel of God for its sake? Does the siren song of carnal pleasure bear you above the common ills and calamities of life? Or with all your guilty pursuits have you not your full share of these, as well as other men? Cannot the man

of religion enjoy himself as well as you? Of what valuable enjoyment, I pray you, would religion despoil you? Would it break your rest or injure your peace to have your sins pardoned and be in a state of friendship with the everlasting Jehovah? The courses of sin can never satisfy you; "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

5. Permit me to expostulate with you on the blessings you forfeit in the heavenly world. *There* are blessings the most substantial, refined, and durable. The enjoyment of God; of angels; of the spirits of just men made perfect; these are all lost by a spirit of sin and rebellion against God.

6. Let me expostulate with you on the value of that precious immortal thing which you lose; a soul. "Weigh well its value, by its duration; the price given for it, the blood of the son of God as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot;" I Pet. i, 19; "Now what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mat. xvi, 26.

7. Let me expostulate with you on the disingenuousness of your conduct as relates to the blessed saviour. Consider, O sinners, what the blessed Jesus has done for you, and then see if you can justify to your own mind your treatment of him. May the Lord of his infinite mercy enable us all to consider this matter well, and ground the arms of our rebellion, for the Redeemer's sake. AMEN.

SERMON XXVII.



SIMPLETONS, SCORNERS AND FOOLS, IN THE SCRIPTURAL ACCEPTATION OF THE TERMS, ENTREATED TO DESIST FROM THEIR SIMPLICITY, SCORNING AND FOLLY, AND TO ACCEPT THE OVERTURES OF DIVINE MERCY.



Proverbs, I, 22.

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.”

THESE, my brethren, are the words of divine wisdom personified, addressed to the sons of levity, madness, and folly, expostulating with them on the unreasonableness of their conduct. This chapter contains a great deal of most excellent counsel delivered by King Solomon its author. In verse 7, we are taught that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; in verses 8 and 9, the best of counsel is given to the youth ; “My son, hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother ; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck ;” In verse 10, and downward to the 19th inclusive, he cautions sinners against evil company, and its snares and dangers. Consult the passage at large.

In verse 20, he informs us; "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets;" 21; "She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words saying;" In the language of my text; "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"

These words manifestly present to our minds this idea, that the conduct of sinners in hating wisdom and knowledge and goodness, is extremely foolish. I design to show,

I. When people may be said to be acting the simple and foolish part suggested in my text, or in other words, who are these simpletons, scorners and fools.

II. Why the part these people are acting must be viewed as the most extreme simplicity and folly.

III. I shall expostulate a little with them on the extreme simplicity and folly of their conduct, and propose a few dissuasives against it.

I. I am to show when persons may be said to be acting the foolish and simple part suggested in my text, or in other words, who are these simpletons, scorners and fools. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?

1. They certainly are simple ones, and loving simplicity who are neglecting heaven and their immortal souls for earthly good of any kind. Say wealth. Now, there is a number of people who are so engaged about accumulating wealth, that they take no time to adjust the things which

belong to their peace ; no time to pray ; to read God's word ; nay, not even on the sabbath day. Even these hallowed hours are stolen from religious purposes and devoted to the pursuits of the world. How is this sacred day abused by thousands of the human race ? How is it devoted by many to sloth, to indolence, to business, to amusement, to visits ? Say honor. Some in the pursuit of preferment and elevation are neglecting God and heaven and things divine. Their grovelling souls appear to be taken up altogether with advancement ; and to obtain the good opinion of the public, goes farther with them than to obtain the favour of God their maker. Say carnal pleasure. Many are so taken up with a course of what the world calls pleasure, the gratification of their carnal propensities, that for sake thereof, they forfeit everlasting happiness, and debase themselves by indulging in every species of sensual gratification ; such as intoxication and impurity. These are simpletons to all intents and purposes. Now, if these are simpletons who are proposing to themselves some gratification of their avarice, their appetites and ambition, what shall we say of the swearer, the liar, the mischief maker ? Are they not simpletons too ? Yet how many of mankind are thus volunteering in the cause of darkness and serving the devil most disinterestedly ? This is committing wickedness for its own sake, which is certainly disinterested wickedness.

But there are scorers also mentioned in my text ; "And the scorers delight in their scorning." These, sirs, are they who not contented with

neglecting religion, actually despise it, and make it the matter of their ridicule and contempt; abusing it, and endeavoring to render it despicable in the view of others.

Fools are also mentioned in my text; "And fools hate knowledge." Here it is manifest divine wisdom gives them the epithet of fools, who hate knowledge. And how many are of this description in the world? How many amongst our acquaintances? Yea, how many amongst ourselves? Do they not manifestly hate knowledge, who decline all the means of instruction, when they might conveniently wait on those means? Do they not hate knowledge, especially religious knowledge, which is what our text contemplates, who let the bible lie by them, shut up from week to week without opening this sacred and invaluable book, even on the hallowed sabbath; but will rather spend its sacred hours in visiting or sleep, than employ them in reading the holy word of God. Do they not hate religious knowledge who neglect every mean of information which divine wisdom hath appointed?

II. I am to show why the part they are acting must be viewed as extreme simplicity and folly; "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?"

1. The part they are acting is extreme simplicity, because they are proposing happiness to themselves where it never will be found, from the enjoyment of the world, and the things of it. That this world cannot make mankind happy is manifest from human experience. No man has realised

this happiness. Witness the case of King Solomon as you find his experience recorded; Eccles. ii, 1—11; “I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine; yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what is that good for the sons of men, which they should do under heaven all the days of their life.” Now, from these three first verses of the chapter, it is manifest the king’s design was to put the matter fairly to trial how far the world and its enjoyments could satisfy the human mind and make a man happy. This he plainly avows to be his design in the third verse. The subsequent verses, four, and downward, will plainly show us whether or not he was in an eligible situation for acquiring happiness; “I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted me trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my

wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy ; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour ; and this was my portion of all my labour." Now, sirs, is there not combined here every ingredient for the promotion of human happiness, so far as happiness depends on, or can be promoted by, sensual delights ? Here are concentrated wisdom, wealth, honor, greatness, servants and music. Is there any thing wanting ? Nothing. All the ingredients of felicity are here. The man must be happy. I would suppose he knew best himself. Let him speak ; verse 11 ; "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do ; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Then, we find, he that made the experiment, fairly pronounces it all vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit under the sun.

2. The part which wicked and ungodly men are acting would be extreme folly, if they could even obtain as much happiness from the world as their own fervid and sanguine imaginations promise them ; " For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" Mat. xvi, 26. Now, sirs, if men expose themselves to everlasting torments for present pleasures, are they not acting the part of extreme folly, how great soever these present pleasures may be ? What proportion is there between time and eternity, or between present and future enjoyments ?

Is not this letting go the greater for the lesser good? And, sirs, is not this always the part of folly? Suppose, sir, you have two notes due, one for five thousand dollars, the other for fifty, and you can possibly collect either of them, but cannot possibly collect both? Which does common prudence say shall be abandoned, and which collected? Cannot every child of seven years answer? Let go the smaller to collect the greater, if both cannot be secured.

3. The conduct of sinners is extremely foolish because they are pursuing the very courses which will actually lead to pain instead of pleasure. Yea, my friends, so far are those sensual indulgences which sinners pursue from leading to felicity, that they lead a directly contrary course. Witness the conduct of the drunkard, and his deplorable situation; his sickness, his fever; his family peace destroyed, his wife's affections alienated, his children discouraged, his credit sunk, his standing in society let down. Take these things, careful observer into view, and then say whether his indulgences lead to happiness or misery? Witness the adulterer, who by his irregular conduct, alienates the affections of a lawful, perhaps a very amiable wife, destroys his family happiness and peace, and induces a long train of evils, for all which he hath nothing in return but the illicit embraces of a base harlot, who fixes on him a loathsome and degrading disease, which shall be as rottenness in his bones. Witness the angry, ill tempered, and malignant man. Ah! what groans are those I hear in that adjoining room?

O how hollow they are! Ah how like the groans of death! And such indeed they prove to be. They grow faint! they cease! The patient has just expired! As the last hollow groan ceased, the miserable sufferer gave up the ghost, and reluctantly! O how reluctantly! surrendered his blood stained, sullen soul, into the hand of him who gave it. I enquire the cause; I am informed the death resulted from the passage of a leaden ball through his bowels, and which left his body close by the spine. I enquire farther how he received this mortal wound? No general war prevails, my peaceful country is not invaded. I am informed he fell in a duel, resulting from the following circumstance: The deceased a few days ago entered the common room of a public house in which some gentlemen were already seated. A favorite dog followed him, and took his station very near to one of the gentlemen previously seated, who had his riding whip in his hand. And notwithstanding this young gentleman had no appearance of self conceit or vain glory; yet, he thought himself entitled to company something more respectable than reynard, and gave him a cut round the flanks with his horsewhip, for the purpose of making him clear the room, in which he easily succeeded; reynard's high toned, and right honorable master, resented the stroke given to the dog, a quarrel ensued, which terminated in the field of downright honor, where the master of the dog received the wound which has just ended his earthly existence. [Founded on fact.] Do the scriptures speak the truth when they tell us that

“Bleedily and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;” Psalm, lv, 23.

4. The simplicity of sinful courses appears manifestly in this. If ever the sinners who are pursuing them repent at all, repentance and reformation will be so much the more difficult, by how much the longer the sinner has indulged in his transgression. Now, sirs, to render a thing which we ourselves have to do, and really calculate on doing, much harder by our own act and deed, is certainly the part of extreme folly. This folly is manifest at first blush.

5. The course sinners are pursuing is extremely simple, because the service in which they are engaged is so perfectly unreasonable. Whatever course of human conduct contradicts every dictate of right reason, must be a foolish and simple course. But such is that the sinner pursues. What reason is there why we should revolt from God our rightful sovereign, and devote ourselves to the adversary of souls? What reason is there that we should violate the reasonable commandments and law of our God, and offend his divine majesty?

III. I am to conclude by expostulating a little with sinners on the simplicity and folly of their conduct, and urge a few dissuasives against it; “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

Now, sinners, I do most earnestly beseech you to stop, and think seriously, what you are doing. Consider you cannot harden your heart against God and prosper; “He is wise in heart and

mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?" O sinner, you are not in the road to happiness even in this world! Even in this life the believer is much happier than you. You are in danger, sinner, the most awful and dreadful, and I tenderly beseech you to consider it before it be eternally too late! You are liable to die at any moment and be lost, irrecoverably lost! You are in danger of sinning away your day of grace, and provoking the almighty God to swear in his wrath, you shall not enter into his rest. By your sinful courses you are planting your dying pillow with thorns, and however conscience may now be stifled by guilt, or lulled to sleep in the languors of pleasure, it will probably roar loudly then, and O! how dreadful its accents! You have to die sinner and appear a naked and disembodied spirit before your God. The death of a despairing impenitent sinner, O how dreadful! That of a saint how tranquil, how serene, how desirable! A crown of immortal glory is in your offer; O sinner! have you no ambition to seize the blessed prize? Now is your time. O how long will ye love simplicity? Eternal happiness, how sweet the sound! You have souls, my dear friends, of incalculable value, Are you willing to lose them forever? Those souls, sirs, are exalted in their powers and capacities; I hope you will not be willing to lose them. Those souls are eternal in their duration, O can you think of losing them to all eternity? By turning from your sins, you will gratify all holy beings in heaven and on earth so far as they shall be

acquainted with it; “Likewise I say unto you there is joy in presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,” and I presume the same sacred occurrence affords joy likewise to pious souls on earth. The Lord Jesus Christ died for sinners, and shall he die in vain, with regard to you? Shall this benevolent saviour die to atone for our vilest sins with his precious blood? And shall we cry out, crucify him? May the Lord forbid it of his infinite mercy. AMEN.

SERMON XXVIII.



THE MAN OF GOD ENGAGING HIS HEART TO
APPROACH UNTO GOD.



Jeremiah, XXX, 21, last clause.

“For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?”

FROM the 18th verse of this chapter to the words of my text, the restoration of the Jews to their own land and the distinguishing blessings of the gospel are particularly predicted; “Thus saith the Lord, behold I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded on her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry; and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few, and I will also glorify them and they shall not be small. Their children also, shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near unto me; for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord.” Here we

may observe there is an approach unto the Lord made ; and an engagedness in the person making that approach that his heart might be in it. In treating this subject I design the following order ;

I. I shall show what it is to approach unto God in the sense of my text.

II. In what particular ways or duties we are to approach unto God.

III. By what means we should endeavor to engage our hearts to approach unto God, and then apply the subject.

I. I am to show what it is to approach unto God in the sense of my text.

Approaching a particular person simply, means coming nigh unto that person so that enjoyment may take place and that there may be mutual communications between the person thus approaching and the person approached. While we are at a great distance from any individual of our fellow men, we cannot have that intimate communion and fellowship with him, which we could and would have, if near. Though, through the happy discovery of letters, friends may have a kind of communion and intercourse with each other even at the distance of half the circumference of the earth, yet, much the most dear and sweet communion they have, is when they can approach each other, and converse face to face.

Now when the great God enquires, as in my text ; “who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me” we do not conceive of it as necessarily implying corporal motion, or that it has particular respect to locality or change of place.

With regard to place, we never can be nearer to God at one time than another. In this respect he is intimately nigh to every one of us ; for "In him we live, move and have our being;" Acts xvii, 28. With regard to God's essential presence, he is as near us one time as another. In this respect he is as near to the greatest sinner on earth as the greatest saint, and as near to Belzebub in hell as to Gabriel in heaven. Approaching God in the sense of my text, is having communion and fellowship with him. And persons are then said with propriety to approach unto God when they have spiritual intercourse and fellowship with him, and only then. For notwithstanding we are encircled in his being, and he is in a literal sense intimately nigh to every one of us ; yet, while we are in a state of sin and enjoy no communion with God, we are in a moral and spiritual sense at an infinite distance from him ; Ephes. ii, 13 ; "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Then we see at one time those christian Ephesians were far off from God ; at another time they were brought nigh, though no doubt, they lived all the while in the same towns, nay, very probably, in the same houses. Then this plainly confirms what we have said above ; for whenever a soul has sweet communion and fellowship with God he may be said, with strictest propriety, to be brought nigh to God. Nor is it at all material to this spiritual approach in what part of the universe such soul may be.

But in order to entire satisfaction on this subject,

it is necessary to make a few observations on this communion and fellowship with God.

There is certainly a particular kind of communion and fellowship, which can and does take place betwixt the man of piety and his God, when that eternal being causes his light to shine on the christian believer, and on the road that leads him to the lamb ; and when he is made to exult in God his saviour. And to the truth of this, every christian believer can in a greater or less degree bear his testimony. This sweet intercourse is better understood by the true believer who feels it through grace, than expressed to him by any third person. When God causes his light to shine upon the believer, so that divine truths are more clear, plain and impressive than usual, and the soul sweetly delights in contemplating them, and viewing the glorious and lovely character of God, then I think it may be said, there exists communion and fellowship with God. When the soul approaches in heart to God and communion, and fellowship takes place between them, the unbounded love of God to a lost and ruined world is sensibly realized, and the soul warmly loves his God in return ; Psalm xxix, 3 ; “My heart was hot within me ; whilst I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue ;” Luke xxiv, 32 ; “And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened the scriptures.” When the soul has a deep-felt sense of sin, not only as dangerous, but as vile and improper, and hates it as done against an infinitely holy God, and dishonorable to him, and

feels holy meltings of soul that ever he has been guilty of a thing so vile and base, then I think he may be said with much propriety to approach God, for here is communion with him. When the soul of a worshipper has sweet liberty in prayer and enlargement of heart, feeling desires after conformity to God and communion with him which cannot be expressed; and the spirit maketh intercessions for him with groanings which cannot be uttered, then, I presume, communion may be said to take place betwixt God and that soul, and we may be said to approach him. That it is sometimes the case with the true believer, that he has his heart so filled with divine things, and so overwhelmed with a sense of the divine goodness, that he has not sufficient command of language to express his feelings, and that the spirit of God in this case grants him special and divine assistance by an enlargement of heart which can be expressed by a kind of groanings only, is the manifest doctrine of St. Paul; Rom. viii, 26; "Likewise the spirit, also, helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." When the believer feels a sweet resolution of will into the divine will, and happy in the consideration, that God reigns and is sweetly delighted with the divine government, and with all the proceedings of the deity, it may be said, I presume, here is spiritual communion and a sweet approach to God. Suffice these observations on this point. We proceed to consider;

II. In what particular ways and duties the believer ought to approach God.

We have already observed that God is not to be approached corporally, but spiritually; and that we may approach him and have communion with him, he has appointed certain ordinances of divine institution, and in those we are to approach our God. We are to approach him in reading his word. This is ordained by the great and adorable saviour himself; John v, 39; "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." And, sirs, I presume there is no doubt but that God's people often find sweet intercourse with God when engaged with earnestness and reverence in reading his sacred word. O christian, have you not found this sacred word sweeter than honey or the honey comb to your taste? Has it not in a thousand happy instances been found to prove life, and power, and quickening to your souls? Can you not well remember the time and place, and the dreadfully perplexed situation of mind in which you were when you applied to these lively oracles to try if you could find there the path of duty, and what the Lord would have you do? And O how have you been illuminated, blessed, and favored in consulting this holy book? Have not your fears been given to the wind? While you read of the holy Jesus, his undertaking, his obedience, his excruciating torments, even unto blood and death for sinners, all he did, and all he suffered for the guilty, and also, the influences of the blessed spirit, have not the clouds, and darkness that enveloped your soul, even unto much dread and trembling been dissipated, as the

morning clouds and early dew, before the golden ruler of the day, when rising in all his majesty and glory? O my christian brother, O my sister in Christ, what says your favored experience on this subject? Do you answer

“Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart ?”...WATTS.

In this, my christian friend, the brother who addresses you pledges you with all his heart and soul. May the Lord of his infinite mercy grant, that we may all live and die clasping the gospel and the precious redeemer it reveals to our hearts. So shall it be well with us. How exceeding the change which the grace of God makes on the human mind with regard to this precious gospel! Well does the speaker recollect the feelings of his own heart with respect to this matter. He was early, very early in life, taught to read the holy scriptures by his mother, as she sat at her spinning wheel. And he could read that sacred book with considerable ease before he ever saw the inside of a school house. And at that early period of his life, and long after, certain passages of this sacred book pleased his juvenile mind very much; more particularly, he was much delighted to see how the old eastern monarch and his ungodly courtiers were disappointed about burning the very virtuous Hebrew youths, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And he was delighted to see these Hebrew youths who had done no wrong to any human creature, walking quite at ease in the burning

fiery furnace, and even the very hair of their heads not singed, nor the smell of fire had passed on their garments. Do you ask, sceptical sir, what idea a child of seven years of age formed of men being in a fiery furnace and not being burnt? Did he not see that fire consumed every thing combustible that came within its reach? This he acknowledges he saw, sir, and this he sees yet. But his calculation was, that the almighty God made the fire, and consequently, that he could restrain, and control what he made at pleasure. And he now thinks the same, when a full half century is added to the seven years. You say, your credulity is put a little to the trial. This appears a little too logical for a child of seven years. Give me leave to help you out on this subject. I do not wish your mind to labor on my account. This child of seven years was blessed at that time with a sprightly active minded mother, about thirty-five, who was at great pains to assist his infantile calculations, just as mothers ought, and still he thinks the same on the most mature reflection of which he has been capable for forty years. O mothers! Sacred name, how I revere it! Be faithful to your solemn trust; discharge your duty well; the world will owe you much, and grateful men will pay it. Mothers! When I see you in the nursery, furnishing the milk of human kindness to one lovely child, and holding out the page of moral and religious instruction to another, using every pious endeavor to form his mind aright and "teach the young idea how to shoot," however others may think, be assured there is one man who thinks he sees you.

performing an office as all important to the best interests of society as the orator himself who makes the senate of a kingdom ring with the thunder of his eloquence.

The narrative of Joseph and his brethren, captivated my mind in very early years to a still superior degree, and if this piece of moral painting has its parallel for all that is tender, interesting, and pathetic, the speaker never saw it, nor can you furnish him the sight. But, notwithstanding he was charmed, even in childhood, with such interesting narratives as these, yet when he came to feel the power of God's grace, and the illumination of the holy spirit, the bible appeared to him like a book he had never seen before, every thing respecting things divine appeared so novel. He read it with avidity. Every page almost of this sacred volume presented something new; something divinely interesting. He read; he wondered; he adored! We are to approach God in the preaching of the word. This is likewise an ordinance of divine institution; Mark, xvi, 15; "Go ye forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This certainly made it the duty of our Lord's disciples and their successors in office to preach the gospel; compare Heb. x, 25; "Not forsaking the assembling ourselves together as the manner of some is." This certainly makes it the duty of people to wait on a preached gospel, and ordains that they shall do so. Consequently, then, we are to approach our God by waiting on a preached gospel. How often have the children of God had sweet

communion with the blessed redeemer, their heavenly friend, in waiting on the christian ministry, and hearing addresses on divine subjects? How has the truth come home to their hearts and served for their quickening, reproof, or comfort? Experienced christians can answer these questions, and testify the truth. Have you not often found a preached gospel, spirit and life to your soul? Let the humble believer answer. In prayer and supplication, the christian believer is to approach his God; and this in various ways. See the command for retired prayer, for every individual believer to pray by himself, for himself; "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door about thee, and pray to thy father who is in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." O how often has the humble christian found his heart enlarged in this devout exercise? Prayer is sweet to the new born soul, because therein he draws near his ever blessed God, and thus has communion and fellowship with the father and with his son Jesus Christ. Public prayer with, and as a part of, the great congregation is of divine appointment, and is one of the ways in which christians are to approach their God; Psalm c, 4; "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise, be thankful unto him and bless his name;" Psalm xxix, 2; "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness?"

I presume family prayer is another way in which christians ought to approach their God;

Jeremiah, x, 25 ; “ Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.” Now, sirs, if the fury of God is to be poured out upon the families that call not upon his name, the deduction is as plain as it can be, that families ought to call upon his name. We ought to approach our God in the solemn seals of his gracious covenants baptism, and the Lord’s supper. How often has the humble believer approached his God with sacred delight in these solemn ordinances, and had sweet communion and fellowship with him ? How often in rising from the hallowed communion table has the christian believer been enabled to make the language of the spouse in another case his own ? Song, ii, 3, last clause ; “ I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” How dear are the ordinances of God to his humble followers ?

III. We are to show by what means we are to engage our hearts to approach unto God. Here, my brethren, we may observe that services offered to God without the heart, are not acceptable, because it is the heart which God principally requires in his service. No outward forms can ever please God or find acceptance with him, while the heart of the worshipper is wanting. We are then entering on a very important part of our discourse and our duty, when about to show how we are to engage our hearts to approach unto God.

1. As one way of engaging our hearts to approach unto God let us remember as above, that this is the principal thing, and that without it God

will not be pleased. We often lose sight of this great matter, and thus set down contented with a form of Godliness without the power. Perhaps we perform with some decorum the external round of duty, but where is the heart? Is it not often almost forgotten? Brethren, these things ought not so to be; "God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

2. Let us remember that God always sees our hearts and services and is not at the least loss to know, when the former is wanting. Let this stir us up to engagedness of heart to call upon God, and approach him humbly and earnestly. God, my brethren, is not to be mocked with empty pretences when the heart is far from him; and ^{if} be it realised, he is not capable of imposition by empty pretences, as mankind are. He knoweth perfectly well on all occasions what is in man.

3. Let us carefully remember on all occasions that when the heart is wanting there is no service at all performed acceptable to God; and that thus God will view it. Now, I presume, there are many persons in the world who would feel very uneasy if they thought they performed no religious service at all, who feel quite contented when they have gone an external round, though the heart be wanting; but let all such know assuredly, that nothing to purpose is done, if the heart be wanting; Prov. xxiii, 26; "My son give me thine heart."

4. Another good way by which to engage the heart to approach unto God is often to examine how we have performed religious duty, whether the heart has been in it or not. I presume one

great reason why the heart of many professors of religion is so little in the duties they perform, is that they scarcely ever call their hearts to an account to see whether they have been engaged or not. They just go the external round of duty, and suffer the matter to pass off without the heart, and never so much as seriously enquire whether the heart has been in it or not. Brethren, let us carefully and conscientiously, by the light of sacred writ, enquire into the state of our souls agreeably to divine direction; "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates;" II Cor. xiii, 5.

5. Let us remember and contemplate the amazing love of God to us, and the incomparable excellence of the divine nature, till our souls are all on fire, and we have thus affectionately approached our God. This we shall find a successful way of engaging our hearts to approach unto God. How excellent is the loving kindness of our God? How rich his grace; John iii, 16; "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." O what love is displayed here! God giving his own son to die for lost and guilty sinners! Contemplate that love aright. God, the everlasting and adorable God, exalted above all creature comprehension or possible praise. This exalted, this glorious being adored, by Cherubim and Seraphim set his blessed love from eternity on lost and guilty man, and in order to deliver him from everlasting ruin, deputed his adorable

son on the generous errand of man's salvation. Is not this a theme divinely calculated to excite our hearts to approach unto God. How honorable the rank Almighty God has given us in the scale of being! Psalm viii, 5—9; "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Is not this exalted and honourable standing given us by the creating God sufficient to attach us inviolably to his cause? How gracious the care this universal God has exercised over us from our earliest moments until the present hour. Who, I beseech you, took care of us, and safely guarded us from the thousand dangers which impended us, when feeble infants we hung upon our mother's breast? Was it not the God of babes? Was it not that same Almighty Being who protected the babe of Bethlehem, when sought by Herod and his men of blood? But, O sirs, how unavailing all the efforts of a Herod and his barbarous soldiers when the mighty God of Jacob is there. And shall not all the tender mercies of our God, and all his loving kindness, engage our hearts to approach unto God; who crowns our lives with mercy, who supplies our daily and returning wants, who covers our tables with plenty and to spare? Is it not that bountiful God of the

universe “who enquires in my text, who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?” And, O brethren, shall not all this loving kindness engage our hearts to approach unto God? Who sends the due proportions of rain and sunshine so essentially necessary for fructifying the face of nature? Ah, see those beautiful cornfields, how luxuriant their growth. What plenty do they promise? Is it not the Lord who makes the grass crown the mountains, and the corn grow so luxuriantly for the benefit of man? Will not these sacred considerations induce our hearts to approach unto God our supreme benefactor, and humbly acknowledge our obligations?

6. Another good way to engage our hearts to approach unto God is, to consult the experience of eminent christians who have gone before us, of whose heart exercises we have some account, until we grow ashamed of our dulness and negligence, and our hearts become engaged unto God. Thus we see in our own nature, and very near to our own times, how far human nature may go. And thus are we likely to be quickened in the service of God. I recommend this plan the more readily, because I think if I am not very much deceived, I have felt the benefit of what I recommend.

7. Another mean by which we may stir up our hearts to approach unto God is to consider that without this we cannot enjoy, to any high degree, the comforts of religion. It will always be a dull drawling thing where the heart is not; but where this is, it will be sweet and delightful. Then it is

certainly a matter of the utmost importance to have our hearts stirred up and engaged to approach unto God.

1. Learn from this subject that a great many professors of religion, who have long had some form of religion are strangers to the power of vital godliness, and to approaching God in the sense of his word. This is not done by a mere outside and show in religion; but by having the heart sweetly engaged in his service. Without the heart in religion, it is impossible to please God or meet his sacred approbation.

2. Learn that true heart religion is an extremely spiritual thing, and external duties are only the body of this refined soul. To do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God, are certainly important external duties of the christian religion and such as every true christian will be careful to practise and such as every faithful minister of Jesus will be careful to preach. But these are mere external things, and rather strong and lively evidences of religion in the heart, than that sacred thing itself. Religion is radically seated in the heart, and consists essentially in a right temper of heart toward God and man, with such a steady and uniform course of practices as will evince this temper of mind toward the one and the other. And this justice, mercy and humble walking with God, express well this holy temper of heart, in which real and genuine religion essentially consists. Brethren, let us be assiduous in our endeavors to have the heart right with God, knowing of a certainty, that this is the great matter in religion.

Let us solemnly realise at every hour, "That God is a spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" John iv, 24.

3. Learn from this subject, that they who do not attend to the sacred word and the ordinances of divine institution, who live in the neglect of prayer and of reading the divine word, afford plenary evidence to every reader of the sacred scriptures, that they are estranged from a life of godliness, and do not approach God at all in the sense of my text. These are the very specific things in which God has required us to approach him. And the neglect of these things renders it quite manifest we do not approach him in the sense of his word. Can any man of common sense, and tolerable understanding, ever bring himself to believe, with the bible in his hand, that a man who lives prayerless, is a true christian?

4. Learn how much we have all failed of approaching God steadily in the sense of my text? How contented have we too often been with a form of godliness without the power; how often have we hurried over the great and important duties we owed our God with very little of the heart in them. Ought not the best of us to blush before God on account of the careless frame and temper of mind of which we have been the subjects when professing to approach in duties of the most signal solemnity. Let us repent therefore and do our first works, lest the Almighty grow weary of us and our suit, and reject it and us together. Let us realise how absolutely indispensable it is, that we give

the Lord our hearts, and how absolutely impossible it is, that without these we should please him. May the Lord add his blessing. AMEN.

SERMON XXIX.



THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER ARDENTLY DESIR-
ING COMMUNION WITH GOD.



Psalm, XLIII, 2.

*“ My soul thirsteth for God, the living God,
when shall I come and appear before God ? ”*

THE psalmist expresses in this psalm with great pathos and energy of language, the pain and anxiety he felt, when bereaved of spiritual consolation, when banished from the house of his God, and ungenerously insulted by his enemies; but amidst all his distress, expresses his entire confidence in God, that he would yet help him and bring him forth out of all his troubles.

This psalm was most probably composed by its royal author, when driven from Jerusalem and beyond Jordan, by Absalom's rebellion; and thus deprived of the benefit and comfort of public ordinances, under his complicated and numerous afflictions. And to the temple service at Jerusalem, no doubt he has particular reference, when he exclaims in the language of my text, “ When shall I come and appear before God ? ” It is highly probable he was under some sore bodily affliction, and there is no doubt he felt deep

spiritual distress ; yet all these things did not destroy his confidence in God. His hope all this time was in the Lord and his prayer to the God of his life ; the Lord alone was all his salvation and all his desire ; verse 1 ; “ My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God ? ” As if he had said as the hunted hart closely pursued by the howling canine pack, covered with sweat and dust, panteth for the cooling water brook, where he may lave his panting side, and slake his raging thirst ; so, with equal desire panteth my soul after thee, O God ! “ My soul thirsteth for God, the living God, ” &c. As the poor, sun burnt, way worn traveller, traversing the sandy deserts of Arabia, for painful hours or days together, thirsts for the cooling stream ; so, with equal strength of desire does my soul thirst for the living God ; verse 3 ; “ My tears have been my meat night and day, while they continually say unto me where is thy God ? ” Through my distress of mind and my painful feelings I have almost forgotten my daily food, but my tears appear to be my daily repast ; v. 4 ; “ When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me ; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. ” This pious man delighted greatly in the sanctuary service of his God. He greatly rejoiced in going with the tribes of Israel to the temple service in Jerusalem. Witness his own language elsewhere ; Psalm lxxxiv, 18 ; “ For a day in thy courts is

better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." In the 5th verse he chides his soul for being so much depressed and so low spirited, as if it implied a deficiency of faith; as I presume it did; "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 for the help of his countenance." This is the language of faith, and here it gets the ascendancy over unbelief. In verse 6, he addresses his God with a promise, that though he was deprived in divine providence, and in the course of human events, of waiting upon him in the temple service, yet he would still be mindful of his God in his retirements and be engaged in his service in that way which he had in his power; "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermanites, from the hill Mizar." These were the places of his retreat, I presume, during his banishment from the city of Jerusalem, west of the Jordan and some distance from the holy city. In verse 7, he represents his trouble as exceedingly great, and compares himself in his tumults and sorrows to a ship in all the violence of an impetuous storm; "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts! all thy waves, and thy billows are gone over me." In verses 9 and 10, he expresses his confidence in God, and his determination to trust in him. The reproaches of his enemies appear to have been the very jet of his distress and sorrow; Verse 10; "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach

me while they say unto me continually where is thy God? Thus did they insult his feelings and ungenerously reproach him by asking him from day to day, where is thy God? If you exercise so much confidence in him as you pretend, and he loves you as you would have us believe, why does he fail to relieve you in your distress? Have you not reason from your sore and long continued trials to fear, nay to conclude, that God has no regard for you at all? These ungenerous observations pierced him to the very heart; in verse 11, he interrogates his own soul on being so much cast down, and encourages his faith by exercising a humble confidence that he should yet praise him who was the health of his countenance and his God.

“My soul thirsteth for God, the living God, when shall I come and appear before God.” I design to show,

I. The exercises of mind which are implied in thirsting for the living God.

II. When the believer may be said to appear before God; and also something of his frame, feelings, and exercises when thus favored. And then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. I am to point out the pious and devout exercises implied in thirsting for the living God.

1. Thirsting for the living God implies, and greatly consists, in a strong and ardent desire of communion with and enjoyment of him. It is of the very nature and essence of genuine and unfeigned piety, most earnestly to desire communion

and fellowship with God. If we thirst for pardon only, if a mere pardon of sin, so that we may not come into condemnation is the only object of desire, then it cannot be called thirsting for the living God; it is no more than a thirst for self-preservation. But if communion and fellowship with God are the great objects of our desire, then I humbly presume it may be said to be thirsting for the living God. Very well am I aware, that to speak of communion and fellowship with God is sufficient to brand us with enthusiasm, fanaticism, and many odious epithets. But we humbly hope we are willing to meet all the scandal and shame for the sake of our divine master which a sneering and ungodly world is disposed to attach to his sacred cause. If we will speak prettily to these people about the exercise of moral rectitude and strict justice between man and man, press very nicely the love of man to his fellow man, and also enjoin a little with great decency the exercise of some compassion toward our suffering fellow men, these people will be quite indulgent, they will take it very well. Nay, farther, they will vouchsafe us a little applause. But if we talk freely about communion and fellowship with God, the influences of the divine spirit, and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we are forthwith viewed as enthusiasts and fanatics. Now, sirs, why should these things be? Come let us reason together a little as men of sense ought to do. If we err here, we doubtless have the honor of erring with several sacred writers; but more especially St. Paul and St. John. To

convince all whom it may concern that we have the honor of being with the first of those sacred writers, consult II 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;" also; I Cor. i, 9; "God is faithful, by whom ye were called to the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, is not here fellowship with Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost as plainly spoken of as language can represent any thing? To convince all that St. John taught in perfect consonance with his brother Paul, consult his first epistle; 1 chap. 3 verse; "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also should have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ."

And now, sirs, permit me to ask what there is in this doctrine of divine operation on the human heart, and of communion and fellowship with God, that contradicts the dictates of the strictest philosophy and the most sound and illuminated reason? A sacred writer puts the following interrogatories; "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Psalm xciv, 9. And, sirs, may not I, in the same tone of interrogation, put the following question? He that formed the mind of man with all its soaring and capacious powers, shall not he communicate with that mind at pleasure? Now, sirs, I presume these several interrogatories, if they are to be fairly answered, must all have precisely the same answer; and that must be positive.

2. Thirsting for the living God implies a strong and ardent desire after more holiness, greater conformity to God's law, and greater submission to God's will. For in these I humbly presume the holiness of moral agents, being accountable, consists. Now, if we thus most earnestly desire growth in grace and progress in the divine life, we undoubtedly thirst for the living God. Because thirsting for Godliness is thirsting for God. This always implies an earnest desire of mortifying sin and gaining the mastery over it. That thus the saints of God in days of yore were exercised, there is the most plenary evidence; Psalm xix, 12, 13; "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; Rom. vii, 24; "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

3. I think thirsting for the living God implies, and in no small degree consists, in a strong and ardent desire that religion may spread and be advanced in the world, not only that our own souls may abound in holiness, but that others too may partake of the same divine and inestimable blessings. I can have no idea of a sincere and genuine christian who has no desire for the promotion of holiness in others. Those who thirst after the living God rejoice and exult in the spread of holiness and piety, and lament and bewail the prevalence of sin and transgression; Jeremiah viii, 20—22; "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black;

astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the hurt of the daughter of my people healed?" Jeremiah ix, 1; "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." This is thirsting for the living God. Compare Habakkuk iii, 2; "O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy." This is thirsting for the living God; Rom. ix, 3; "For I could wish that I were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." This is a thirsting for God, the living God, and expressed in very strong and energetical language. How do you ask, my serious enquiring friend, are we to understand the sacred writer? Here I must frankly acknowledge I cannot extend my ideas of the writer's meaning to so extraordinary a length as some divines do, who inform us the apostle was willing to be eternally lost, if this would secure the eternal happiness of the Jews, inasmuch as the salvation of a nation would be an object of so much more importance than that of an individual. And that Paul's regard for the divine glory was so great that he would be willing to be excluded forever from heaven and happiness if this would promote to so great an extent the divine glory. To this opinion I cannot accede nor say it is my opinion without lying before God. This I am unwilling to do. I have not the most distant idea

that St. Paul ever meant any thing like this. I shall,

I. Give my reasons for not admitting this to be the meaning of the sacred writer, and

II. State what I presume was his meaning.

1. I think such an idea is repugnant to all the feelings of the human heart, and that such a demand would be utterly unreasonable; and that the holy scriptures, or God in them, makes no unreasonable requisitions.

2. I think God has nowhere in the sacred records required the reasonable creature man to be willing to go to hell on any account whatever, while he is in the present state of probation, and divine mercy within his offer. When the guilty sinner has wilfully violated the laws of God, and leaped the mounds of right, and trodden the fence of virtue down, till God has cut him off in most righteous judgment, and consigned him to the shades of eternal woe, his duty is to be still, and cry to all eternity, "Just and true are thy ways thou king of saints;" Rev. xv, 3, last clause. But where has God required us to be willing to go to hell, while in the present state, a state of probation. And while he is exhorting us in every page of his word to escape hell and make sure of heaven; "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure;" II Pet. i, 10. This I would suppose is not the passage that calls us to this willingness to go to hell; "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in but shall not be

able ;” Luke xiii, 24. This is not the portion which requires willingness to go to hell ; “ But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ;” Mat. vi, 33. This certainly does not require it ; “ Say unto them as I live saith the Lord God I have no delight in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live ; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel ;” Ezekiel xxxiii, 11. This passage certainly does not require it. And I believe I shall search in vain for it. I have read the bible in some way for about fifty-one years. About forty of them I have read it with all the attention of which my mind is capable, and I never yet have found the first passage that requires me, either directly or indirectly, to be willing to go to hell. Nor can the obtuse faculties of my mind conceive how the deity could require me, in my state of probation, to be willing to go to hell, without requiring me to be willing to be a sinner, an enemy to himself in heart. I think the following is fair logical reasoning on the subject: God sends no body to hell but sinners ; Ezekiel xviii, 20 ; “ The soul that sinneth it shall die.” If, then, God requires me to be willing to go to hell, God requires me to be willing to be a sinner. This horrid, this tremendous consequence will follow, notwithstanding all the attempts of the most acute and active minded men to turn it off. I now show my own opinion of the passage under consideration : “ For I could wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren,” &c.

Notwithstanding I am not very apt to find much fault with the translation of the sacred records which we have, as I think much of this looks low, pedantic, and ostentatious; yet I must beg leave to translate this passage a little differently, and appeal to the learned in the original language of the new testament, that the word, the translation of which I wish to alter, will bear that alteration. I only wish to alter the translation of the preposition *apo*, which is here rendered *from*, which is certainly a very correct rendering of the word. I would translate this word "*after the example of*;" then the passage reads thus; "For I could wish that myself were accursed, after the example of Christ, for my brethren," &c. You know it is written "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree;" Gal. iii, 13. Now, Christ has been made a curse for us, having thus hung on a cross. Thus he has redeemed a ruined and sinful world by his crucifixion; Gal. iii, 13; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Then what the apostle says is simply this, that as Christ has been crucified and made a curse by hanging on the tree and thus redeemed a lost and guilty world, so he would be willing to be made a curse and be crucified after his example if this crucifixion would avail to the salvation of a lost and ruined nation of men, the Jews. This, then, is what the apostle says, and this is what he means, according to my humble views, and I think is a sufficient expression of his zeal and ardent desire for the salvation of his people. With regard to my translation

of the preposition, I introduce as sufficient justification II Tim. i, 3; "I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience." The preposition rendered *from* here is the same preposition as in the passage under consideration. Here we must translate it, *after the example of*, to make the apostle speak common sense. What does the phrase "from my forefathers" mean; does it mean he served his maker in a way different from his forefathers? or does it mean that he served him from their days in the world? or what does it mean. Now, if what the apostle says is, that he served his God, after the example of his forefathers, it is easily understood by every child.

4. Thirsting for the living God implies, and greatly consists in a strong and ardent desire for the promotion of the divine glory, and that the most high God may be signally honoured. Whoever thirsts for the living God is certainly desirous of this; I Tim. i, 17; "Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honour and glory forever. Amen;" Psalm xxix, 2; "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;" Luke xvii, 18; "There are not found who returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." That is, I presume, there were not who thirsted after the living God, save this stranger;" Psalm cxv, 1; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name be the glory."

II. I am to show when the believer may be said to appear before God in the sense of my text, and

also some of his frames, feelings and exercises when thus favoured.

1. The believer may be said to appear before God when he waits on him in his house of prayer, or in any other ordinance of divine institution. And as we have already suggested, there is no doubt but the psalmist had particular reference to the temple service at Jerusalem, when he exclaimed as in my text; "When shall I come and appear before God?" See also, Isaiah i, 12; "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts." The believer may be said to come and appear before God at least externally, when he addresses him in prayer in his closet, or his family, or waits on him at a sacramental table. These are all ordinances of divine institution, which the most high God has commanded; and when we wait upon him in them, we may be said, in a certain sense, to appear before God. But, sirs, a bare bodily appearance once before God in these things, when the heart is not in the matter, will avail but little; nor does it, by any means, come up to the full meaning of the psalmist when he exclaims, "When shall I come and appear before God?"

The christian believer may be said, in a very important and interesting sense, to appear before God, when in those duties I have mentioned, or any other duties of divine appointment, he has his heart enlarged and earnestly engaged, and really enjoys his God; waiting upon him in spirit and truth. This is to all intents and purposes to appear

before God. It is to appear before him in the most profitable, important and interesting manner in which he can appear before him while here on earth. This is the appearance before him for which every good man exclaims so ardently with the psalmist in my text; "When shall I come and appear before God?" This is the appearance before him which Moses the man of God wished to make when he exclaimed, Exodus xxxiii, 18; "I beseech thee show me thy glory;" This is the appearance before him which holy Job wished to make when he exclaimed, Job xxiii, 3, 4; "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat, I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with argument." And again in chap. xxix, 2, 3; "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined on my head and when by his light I walked thro' darkness." This is the appearance before him which the psalmist wished to make when he exclaimed as in psalm lxxv, 4; "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." This is the appearance before him which the spouse wished to make when she exclaimed, Canticles viii, 1; "O that thou wert as my brother, who sucked the breasts of my mother when I would find thee without I would kiss thee, yea I should not be despised." This is the appearance every sincere christian wishes to make when he exclaims in sincerity, "when shall I come and appear before God?"

But here I am also to point out something of the frames, feelings and exercises of the believer when he thus comes and appears before God ; when in the ordinances of divine institution he has his heart enlarged, is earnestly engaged, and really enjoys God. When the man of genuine piety thus comes and appears before God, he feels deeply sensible of the great love of God, and warmly loves him in return ; Psalm xxxix, 3 ; “My heart was hot within me, while I was musing, the fire burned ;” Luke xxiv 32 ; “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and opened to us the scriptures ?” These are the words of two of our Lord’s disciples to whom he joined himself incognito as they were on their way to a Jewish village called Emmaus, after his resurrection from the dead, when he had vanished out of their sight. And are we to suppose, sirs, these are the only persons whose hearts ever burned within them, when the blessed Jesus joined himself with them by the way ? I humbly trust not, sirs. I hope there are thousands of others who can say with the disciples, did not our hearts burn within us by the way, while he opened to us the scriptures ?

2. I presume when the christian believer appears thus before God, he feels a heart hatred of sin and holy meltings of heart, and sincere mournings at the recollection of it ; Job xlii, 5, 6 ; “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” The manifest and neverfailing consequence of divine illumination is humility of soul. And by how much the more the human mind is illuminated by the Holy Ghost, by so

much the more is the favoured recipient of this illumination humbled before God on account of his sins. And whenever our pretended illuminations leave the soul who professes them, proud, haughty and disdainful, the genuineness of such illuminations is thereby rendered extremely suspicious.

3. Another exercise of the believer who thus appears before God, is telling him all his sorrows and complaints and most earnestly imploring his blessings and safe keeping in future life. He has much to tell his God, much to implore and many arguments to use; Job xxiii, 3, 4; "O that I knew where I might find him, I would come even to his seat, I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with argument."

4. The christian who thus appears before God, is fixed without wandering, and lively without tiring; Psalm cxii, 3; "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

5. The believer who thus appears before God, sees and feels the folly of seeking the world as a portion, and is made to wonder exceedingly at the conduct of the thoughtless multitude who are spending all their ardor on earthly pursuits. His renewed mind being now too much filled with the great God and the things of his kingdom to be satisfied with any earthly portion whatever, stands exceedingly amazed at their conduct who seek no higher portion.

III. In the highest and most important sense of which the phraseology of my text admits, the believer may be said to appear before God when he passes the Jordan of death, and lays the body by.

Whatever appearances he makes before God in this life, are often much tarnished with defilement, and extremely imperfect. But there he shall feel none of these things; neither shall he go out any more, but be in the immediate and soul-cheering presence of God and the lamb forever; John xiv, 3; "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also;" "And Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" Luke xxiii, 43.

And what shall be the exercises of the christian believer when he shall thus appear before God in the heavenly world? Of these we can give but a very inadequate description; "for eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard what God hath prepared for them who love him." Yet to take a humble view of the believer's exercises and condition as set forth in the sacred pages, is not beyond our sphere.

1. A principal exercise of the believer will be praise and adoration forever; Rev. v. 11, 12; "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, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Now, sirs, I presume the calculation is a fair one, that this passage gives a correct representation of heavenly exercise, and of course, of those redeemed from amongst men as well as the rest;

Rev. xix, 1—7 ; “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God ; for true and righteous are his judgments ; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying amen, alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, alleluia ; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us rejoice and give honor to him ; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” This is the state of prayer and faith, that of fruition and enjoyment. This is the state of warfare, that of victory.

2. The state of the believer, when he appears before God, will be very different from what it is now. In this world, in his nearest approaches to God, his most favored hours, there is much imperfection ; in that celestial state whither the believer goes, none at all. Here he is liable to fatigue, there to none. Here he is often the subject of much affliction, suffering and distress ; in the heavenly world no such thing obtains ; Isaiah xxxiii, 24 ; “And the inhabitants shall not say I am sick ; the people who dwell there shall be forgiven their

iniquities." Here the believer is surrounded with moral turpitude and transgression, and often takes up his parable and laments the evils which all his benevolence cannot heal. Here drunkenness, debauchery, sabbath breaking and injustice, with malevolence and riot, vex his soul from day to day; Jeremiah viii, 20; "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt, I am black, astonishment hath taken hold on me." Sinners are not admitted there, but banished down to hell. Here the believer is liable to the attacks of a tempting devil, not so there. Here when the believer has appeared before God in his house and in christian ordinances, he must leave them anon, and enter into, and mingle with, the world again; but there his appearance before God shall be eternal.

1. Learn from this subject how few, how lamentably few, they are who are thirsting for the living God. How few of mankind are anxiously desiring communion with, and enjoyment of, their God. How many of those who even make some pretences to religion, have nothing more in view than simply to escape misery, while they have no real taste for intercourse and fellowship with God. The true christian loves God for the excellence of his character, and desires communion with him because the Lord is holy and that communion sweet.

2. Learn that those persons who are conscious they do thirst after the living God, have the most satisfactory evidence of the reality of their religion.

3. Learn that true christians, who are really thirsting after the living God have made the wisest,

as well as the safest choice. True religion is the best support to the human mind under all the troubles and pressures of life that has ever been experienced, and leads to final and eternal happiness. To which may the Lord of his infinite mercy eventually conduct us all for the Lord Jesus's sake. AMEN.

Q2.

SERMON XXX.



THE LABORING AND HEAVY LADEN SINNER INVITED TO CHRIST FOR REST.



Matthew, XI, 28.

“Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

SUFFERING is the consequence of sinning, and ever since the fall of man, misery and wretchedness, in a greater or less degree, has been the common lot of humanity. All men experience some degree of suffering and sorrow in this life, because all have sinned, and without the divine mercy all are exposed to eternal suffering in the world to come. There is one way, and one only, to escape the wrath and curse of God due to sin, and that is by embracing the Lord Jesus Christ as offered in the gospel. In this way sinners may escape the wrath and curse of God due to sin, and in no other way. Thus they may be delivered from everlasting misery in the world to come, and be put in possession of everlasting happiness; and not only so, but thus they may find the best antidote against all the sufferings of the present state; for it is a solemn and incontrovertible fact, that true religion and a union to the blessed

Saviour, afford a better support to the human mind under every kind of suffering, than any thing else that has ever been tried. And this observation has been made good in the experience of a million pious souls, and is no more than is expressly promised by Christ himself in the words of my text.

Jesus Christ had just before spoken of his own extensive power, dominion and administration, as in the 27th verse; "All things are delivered unto me of my father; and no man knoweth the son but the father; neither knoweth any man the father, save the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him." Here the blessed saviour expressly asserts that the whole mediatorial kingdom, government and administration were delivered unto him by the father, that he had the direction of it all, and that no being knew the son but the father, and that none knew the father but himself the son, and he to whomsoever he condescended to reveal him. Having thus asserted his own power and fulness, he gives poor, suffering, sinful men a most encouraging invitation to come to him and obtain rest; "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," as if he had said, O ye sinful, ungodly and unhappy men, you have ruined yourselves by your transgressions of my father's laws; you have drawn down an awful load of divine vengeance on your own weak and defenceless heads, for who can oppose the Lord and prosper? It is in consequence of sin, that such a weight of woe lies on sinners. You now feel something of the bitterness of sin,

but all you now feel is only as a drop to the ocean, only a mere prelude to that eternal pain which awaits you in the world to come, unless you prevent it by timely repentance. Seeing your deplorable and helpless situation I have commiserated your case, and having left my native heaven on your account, have come down to redeem you. For this purpose I am furnished with every necessary qualification, and to this office I am deputed by my Almighty Father. I have come on the errand of saving sinners and healing their bleeding woes, and now I freely propose to fulfil my high commission on you; I see you are its proper objects; I see you are labouring under burdens and sorrows of various kinds; I see that rest and happiness are the great objects of your pursuits and desires; but alas! I see also that you never will obtain those sacred things in any high degree, in your present course. I tell you then I am ready to impart to you that rest and happiness you so much need. Only there is one condition necessary, that you will come to me for it, or in other words, be willing to receive it; "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I. I design to show who the labouring and heavy laden are whom Christ invites in my text to come to him for rest.

II. What that rest is which he proposes to bestow upon them.

III. That this rest is the best antidote against all the troubles and calamities of life that mankind have ever experienced.

IV. What it is to come to Christ for this rest. And then conclude by pressing sinners to come.

I. I am to show who those labouring and heavy laden are who are invited to come to Christ for rest.

I humbly presume, sirs, they are all mankind that are in distress and trouble of any kind and are anxiously desiring deliverance from that trouble, whether it be spiritual or temporal. I presume we are not warranted to say they are those only who are in deep spiritual trouble and are anxiously panting for deliverance from the yoke and bondage of sin, that are invited. These beyond controversy are intended and invited, but not exclusively of others. Mankind while in this world are liable to many troubles and burdens of a temporal kind. Yea, they are often very sorely burdened with them. These I think are also invited. Job informs us "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward;" Job v, 7. And I presume we all find this truth verified in our own experience. Who is there in this assembly who has not had his full share? Sometimes the young and inexperienced think otherwise, with regard to the wealthy and the great; they are wont to conclude that those who are rolling at ease in their carriages from place to place, and command wealth at will, must be happy. Well, sirs, they may be about as happy as others, and I humbly presume they are not more so. When the philosopher draws the curtain aside which hides their feelings and exercises from vulgar observation, he sees these people corroded with pains, cares and solitudes,

in common with others. Still the poor man tugging at the labouring oar "from dawn to dewy eve," will ask what can these rich people, living at their ease and feasting at the table of luxury, have to make them unhappy? A thousand things, my non-discerning friend, may contribute, not many of which I shall take time to remark on at the present. A conscience wounded by a sense of sin, may furnish indescribable smart; "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear;" Prov. xviii, 14. Perhaps this very husband and wife who ride in this finest carriage you ever saw, and whom half a hundred poor trembling creatures half starved and half naked, call **MASTER** and **MISTRESS**, are on bad terms with, and cordially hate each other, and are living in a little hell upon earth; emblem too plain of the hotter flames to which they go. But I will forbear these remarks; they are not pleasant; but of their lamentable truth there is no doubt. The fact is this, no plenitude of worldly possessions can so felicitate the human mind as to place it beyond the reach of those troubles, burdens and inquietudes, which are the common lot of poor, suffering man. For what is all the world to a man if he cannot enjoy it? Some have a burden of poverty and want. Suffering through lack of the common necessities of life, they are labouring and heavy laden. I presume these, as well as others, are invited by the blessed Saviour to come to him and obtain rest. Some are labouring and heavy laden under a burden of sickness and pain. And though we are not warranted to say that

even a believing application to Jesus Christ would cure the disease under which they labor, it would certainly afford them the best consolation under their sufferings and distress. Some are laboring under a burden of disappointment and chagrin; they have trusted their fellow men, and their confidence has been shamefully abused; they find that the great bulk of mankind are unfeeling, unfaithful, and utterly unworthy of confidence. This is distressing and unpleasant, and withal, in obtaining the knowledge which they now possess on this subject, they find it has been obtained at too great an expense. Now, the blessed redeemer, seeing these things, and being deputed on the errand of mercy to man, invites them to come to him for rest, and promises they shall obtain it. I am induced to think his invitation has reference to such as these, from the many cures he performed on the bodies of men in the days of his incarnation. We find he had great compassion on the bodies of men, and in many instances cured their diseases and afforded them relief; but as amongst all the burdens and troubles of mankind, there are none more intolerable than a wounded conscience and a deep felt sense of sin; so there are certainly none more particularly intended than those in the invitation of the divine saviour in the words of my text. When the sinner is deeply sensible of the commission of sin and its ill desert, his distress is usually very pungent, and his feelings extremely bad. To such the saviour gives most graciously the welcome invitation of my text; "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

II. I am to show what that rest is which Christ promises to give.

1. With regard to temporal troubles, I suppose it does not mean relieving them from the thing which may be the matter of their trouble. If poverty and want be the matter of their distress, it does not mean that Christ will forthwith make them rich and take away all their temporal wants. If they are sick and pained it does not mean that they shall be sick and pained no more. Neither does it mean that if disappointment and chagrin is the matter of their troubles, that they never shall be disappointed any more. But with regard even to these kinds of laborings, it means he will so display to them spiritual objects, as that they shall be the best support under all the troubles they feel, and raise the sufferers superior to them all, and by fixing their attention to heavenly and divine objects, and inspiring them with the heavenly and sublime hopes of future and eternal felicity, enable them to bear their burdens here with fortitude and patience.

2. With regard to the burden of sin, or a sense of guilt, he will give them rest in a little different sense. With respect to the dominion of sin he will deliver them from it; "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace;" Rom. vi, 14. Sin shall not have the mastery over them as heretofore, and as it has still over the unregenerate and ungodly. And as a great part of the burden here is a dreadful fear of the everlasting wrath of God; from this he will deliver them, by granting a sweet sense of pardoned sin; "Comfort ye, comfort ye my

people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." And in the end he will bring them to complete and everlasting felicity.

III. I am to show that this rest is the best antidote against the troubles and sorrows of life that mankind have ever experienced. Surely, sirs, there is nothing mankind have ever tried so well calculated as true religion to unsting all the calamities of life. How does that sweet prospect which religion gives us of eternal happiness beyond the grave, support and succour the drooping soul under the most distressing ills of life? Do troubles press, does deep call unto deep at the noise of the water-spouts of God, and the rising waves and billows of sorrow pass over the soul? O how consoling, under these severe calamities, to look forward by the eye of faith to that bright world of rest where he shall never experience pain and anxiety again; but where he shall be forever with the Lord. Is the man pressed by poverty and want, what consolation must it afford him to realise the gracious promises of God, that he shall shortly be at his father's board, where he shall never experience want any more. Is he in pain or loaded with sickness, must it not afford him the best relief, and enable him to drink the bitter cup his heavenly father puts in his hand, to reflect, that in a few days or weeks more, he will take up his abode in that salubrious clime, where "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick;"

Isaiah xxxiii, 24. Is he in a state of bereavement ; are his dearest connexions torn from his embrace by the relentless hand of death ; did they possess religion ; then the sacred records assure him, they shall meet again never to part any more while eternity lasts, or saints in glory live ; **I Thes. iv, 13, 14 ;** “**But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope ; for if we believe Jesus died and rose again, even so also those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.**”

IV. I am to show what it is to come to Christ for this rest.

1. Coming to Christ for this rest implies a belief, in the saviour’s promises, that he is faithful and true, and that he will perform them all and actually bestow upon us the rest he promises if we apply to him for it in the earnestness and sincerity of our souls ; “**For he that would come to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him ;**” **Heb. xi, 6.**

2. Coming to Christ for rest consists in surrendering ourselves cordially into his hands to be saved by him on the terms of the Gospel. This is the very act itself of coming to Christ. This is taking him as our saviour and resting on him for salvation as offered in the gospel. This cordial surrender to Christ implies in it several things ; a sense of our burdens. If we do not feel ourselves laboring and heavy laden, and that we actually need Christ, for what rational purpose could we come to the blessed redeemer ? “**The whole**

have no need of a physician, but they that are sick ;” Mark ii, 17. It implies plainly, a sense of helplessness in ourselves. For if we be not helpless there is no sense nor propriety in applying to another for assistance. It implies a cordial willingness to part with sin for the Lord Jesus’ sake. This is quite essential ; without it, he never will give us rest. We are not to calculate on the blessed Jesus saving us in our sins ; he did not come to discharge any such office. It was announced by the angel, who advised Joseph of the Virgin’s miraculous conception, “ That he should call his name Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins ;” Mat. i, 21.

I am now to conclude by pressing sinners to come to Christ for this rest. I press you by the necessity of the case. Without him you will never obtain rest ; the world you know cannot make you happy ; it has nothing in its power which can fully meet the boundless desires of your immortal souls ; it never has made any of the human race happy ; it never will. You know how often this lying shrew has cheated you ; she has made you many promises she never performed nor never will. Of this your soul is the living witness. When we possess what the world can give us, we are not satisfied still. Its enjoyments pall upon the sense, we are still as listless as ever, and much about as far from real satisfaction. By the certainty of obtaining this rest if you come, I press you. The blessed saviour has promised this rest if you come ; his word is out, “ he is faithful who hath promised,” Heb. x, 23. He will not

deceive you, for “ He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?” Numbers xxiii, 19. By the sweetness and value of this rest when we obtain it, I press you. How sweet, how precious this rest! What comfort to feel that our sins are pardoned! What divine refreshment to know in whom we have believed! and that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him! O Brethren and sisters, be ye persuaded to come to Christ that you may obtain this sacred rest and all that it imparts. There is no rest so divinely sweet as that which Jesus gives; no shade so cooling and so sweet as that which he reflects; no waters, no streams of consolation so comforting as those that flow near the foot of the celestial throne! “ And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;” Isaiah xxxii, 2. This man, this glorious man, this hiding place, this covert, this rock, this river, is the believer’s covenanted Jesus, he who has that divine rest to give of which we speak. By the dreadful prospect of dying without this sacred rest, and the divine consolation it is capable of affording in that gloomy hour if we obtain it. Ah hear the groans of that poor, despairing sinner! what wretchedness do they seem to utter? He appears on the very rack of torture the most direful! Forced, reluctantly forced, by death in all his horrors to the awful tribunal of an angry God! How

indescribably dreadful his feelings! None can thoroughly know them but he who is unhappy enough to be the subject of them. O what would he not give for one of those golden opportunities of securing his eternal well-being, which he has so wantonly thrown away? How haggard his visage! What looks of despair and a condition the most hopeless! He sighs, he groans, he dies! On the other hand, how serene, how tranquil, the humble child of grace! His will bowed to the will of his God, his faith lively, and his hope of eternal life bright and ardent. He bids the world and friends farewell in triumph; he dies in the Lord Jesus and is blessed, he rests from his labors and his works follow him with a rich reward. Such is the end of the pious and godly. O what a difference! By all this I press you to come to Christ for this rest. By the groans and tears, the sweat and blood of an expiring saviour, I press you to come to the blessed Jesus for this rest.

“It cost him death to save your lives,
 To buy your souls it cost his own,
 And all the unknown joys he gives,
 Were bought with agonies unknown.

Our everlasting love is due,
 To him that ransom'd sinners lost;
 And pitied rebels, when he knew

The vast expense his love would cost.”...WATTS.

By the madness and folly as well as the dire consequences of neglecting this rest. What madness and folly marks this dreadfully foolish conduct! By neglecting this rest, we are risking, nay, more, we are rendering sure and certain our own destruction; we are drawing down the divine

vengeance on our own devoted heads. Was there ever equal folly ; equal madness ? Our danger is most imminent. We expose our immortal souls to everlasting woe. Can we act this dreadful part and be blameless ? Be persuaded to be earnestly engaged to obtain an interest in this rest which will eventually be a heavenly one ; "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God ;" Heb. iv, 9. May the good Lord grant us all an interest therein for the redeemer's sake. **AMEN.**

SERMON XXXI.



LOVE TO GOD AND ONE ANOTHER, A PROOF
THAT THOSE POSSESSED OF IT ARE BORN OF
GOD.



I John, IV, 7.

*Beloved let us love one another, for love is of
God, and every one that loveth is born of God
and knoweth God."*

THE sacred scriptures uniformly represent true and genuine religion, as consisting essentially in love to God, and love to man. Our text informs that "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Consequently, then, he possesses true religion; for this same writer informs us elsewhere, chapter iii, verse 9, that "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God."

Jesus Christ, that infallible expounder of God's holy law, tells us that the sum of that law is to love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, strength and mind, and our neighbors as ourselves; Mat. xxii, 37—40; "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is

the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, namely ; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self." The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans tells them that love is the fulfilling of the law ; Rom. xiii, 10 ; "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Consequently, then, love is true religion, for whatever fulfils God's law must be religion.

When God made man he made him upright, that is, supremely loving God his maker ; Eccles. vii, 29 ; "Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions" From this state of holy rectitude mankind have fallen. They have lost the holy image of God and have become possessed of the foul image of Belzebub ; they now possess hearts by nature opposed to God and holiness ; Rom. viii, 7 ; "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be."

Now, sirs, the great design of the gracious scheme of redemption and of God in sending his son into the world, is to restore the fallen creature man to the favor of his God again, which he had forfeited and lost, and to that pristine state of love in which he was originally created ; John x, 10 ; "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." This life consists essentially in love to God and man. For "Every one who loveth is born of God and knoweth God." That is, he has true religion. But "He

that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love ;” verse 8.

This, my brethren, is one of the most important subjects that ever occupied the mind of man. And as we are just about to celebrate a love-feast, an ordinance to which none have any rightful claim but those who affectionately love God, and one, which so eminently displays the love of God to man, I thought it proper to turn your attention to the subject of love, just before you approach this sacred feast.

There are certainly counterfeits, many gross counterfeits of this love, and it is certainly a subject respecting which, thousands of the human family have been greatly in the dark.

That you may the better determine whether or not you have the love of God in your hearts, even that love which decides that those who are possessed of it are born of God and know God, I shall proceed to point out the definite object of such love, together with the motives of the mind in loving such object, and then conclude by a short application of the subject.

As my plan is simple, and I propose attending to the one single thing only, you will, I hope, be able to go along with me with ease and clearness, and be assisted to determine with precision that most interesting of all questions, “Do I love the Lord or no?” “Am I his or am I not?” “Every one who loveth, is born of God and knoweth God,” says my text. The definite object of this love, together with the motives of the mind in loving this object, I am now to point out.

The object, then, my brethren of this holy love, is the great kingdom of holiness. This kingdom consists of God himself at the head, together with all his intelligent creatures capable of happiness, and ourselves amongst the rest, as a part of the great whole. This, sirs, is a most glorious kingdom, and every way worthy the most ardent affections of the human heart. And though we cannot completely comprehend it, yet so far forth as the holy mind is capable of taking a view of it, it appears glorious, and a most fit and proper object of christian affection and holy love. And by this view the believer is convinced, that could he see this kingdom as it is, and love it with that intensity of desire it justly requires, this would be perfect blessedness.

It is this kingdom of holiness united in moral character, which is held up as the great object of christian affection and holy love in the revelation with which we are favored by the Lord, and just conformably to this view of the matter is the great commandment of God; Mark xii, 29—31 inclusive; “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

Through the weakness of the human intellect, if we would view this glorious kingdom of holiness in the best manner of which we are capable, so as to discover, to the highest advantage, this great

object of holy affection, we must analyse it, not being capable of taking it in at one view.

We have said that Almighty God and his intelligent creatures, capable of happiness, compose this kingdom of holiness, and are the object of christian affection ; but then we are to recollect, that not only God himself will be loved by the true believer, but also his law and gospel, and whatever he makes use of to make himself known, will be in part the object of this love also, and a union of heart to these several objects in christian affection, is an undoubted proof that we belong to the fold of God ; “For every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.”

With regard to the several parts of this great kingdom of holiness which is the object of christian affection ;

1. God himself is one, and a very principal one. The humble christian consulting the word and works of God to find what the deity is, ascends to God himself in holy love and is quite charmed with his character and perfections. And thus that adorable being who is possessed of infinite perfection is loved by him in the most ardent manner.

There is no doubt, sirs, but that every rational creature out of hell, who views the works of the almighty creator, and realises in any degree, his own entire dependence upon him, may feel something of obligation to this creator and supporter of all things, and some kind of grateful affection to him, as a being of infinite kindness, and whose gracious favours he has experienced from day to day ; yet he may have no love to God for the

excellence of his holy character, and for what he is in himself; and consequently he is therefore essentially deficient, and is not the person who loves in the sense of my text, and whose affection has the glorious kingdom of God as such for its object. Now, in this kind of affection, and where there is no higher principle in exercise, there is no real holiness; the most unregenerate sinner is quite capable of it; and to love exercised from no higher principles than these, there is no reward; Mat. v, 46; "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

But, sirs, the good man who loves God in the sense of my text, loves him from much more noble and generous principles. He loves him for what he is. And my text saith of him, that "he is born of God and knoweth God." He loves him supremely because he is a God of infinite perfection and excellence. This man, illuminated as he is, to see the supreme moral excellence of the deity, loves him supremely for his own glory, and, I presume, would do so, possessing his present holy temper if there was neither heaven nor hell. Now, sirs, if what is called a Hopkinsian divine, means, by his disinterested benevolence, loving holiness for its own sake, and God for his own glory, independent of the consideration of God's personal kindness to him, then he is strictly correct in his sentiments, whether he chooses the best words to represent his ideas or not. But if this be his meaning, what is the use of making an outcry about it? This is what every pious man under heaven feels,

call him by what name you please. Will the public permit me to speak for a moment on this interesting subject from my own experience without a charge of ostentation? Granted, by all I hope, by my baptist brethren especially. Then, sirs, I go on to say in truth, and I hope in the fear of God, and with a humble, modest appeal to that awful, that tremendous and heart-searching being for the truth of what I say; after having been the subject of the most dreadful conviction and consequent alarm that perhaps any human creature could feel and live, and this I think for the space of a year, and perhaps something upward, it pleased the great and adorable God, in the infinite stoops of his unsearchable mercy and good will, as I hope, whilst I, with a heart all anxiety, and the holy, holy bible in my hand, meditated on divine things, and tried to call on God for mercy; to reveal Christ in me the hope of glory, and to open up the scheme of salvation to my soul, and to display the glories of the divine character to my mind in a way of which before this favored, this never to be forgotten moment, I had no more adequate conception than I now have how the inhabitants of Saturn live! This glorious revelation of Christ in my heart took place, as I hope, while I meditated on God and his precious word and wonderful works, under the shadow of a pleasant sugar tree in my widowed mother's field, where I trust I may say I not only sat under the shadow of the sugar tree, but also of the apple tree Jesus, too, with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. O my God, may I not appeal to thee, how passing

sweet! Thou knowest all things; does not the recollection of thy ineffable goodness, thus manifested to a poor, burdened, distressed, and almost broken hearted youth, now warm this heart a little again under all the frosts and snows of fifty-seven winters? Do you ask my friends what were the principal ingredients in the happiness of which I speak on this auspicious occasion? Of these I have to this hour some distinct recollection, and according to that recollection, I think a prominent one was, that the Lord is God; that he is doing all things well; that he is infinitely holy; that he never will approve of, or countenance sin; that he has invented a scheme of salvation for poor sinners in which he can be just and the justifier of all who believe. And I think I distinctly recollect of feeling that all intelligent creatures, that all moral agents ought supremely to love God, whatever should become of them; and that it is the indispensable duty of devils damned, and souls of men lost in eternal ruin, to love God for his glory; and that they deserve eternal torment because they do not. And this with me at this hour is one of the strongest arguments for defending the scripture doctrine of eternal torment. Do any ask if amidst these pleasing raptures I felt willing to go to hell? I answer candidly and with truth, never, never, never. And should I say I did I should lie in the presence of God. But I know I felt then, and strongly desire to feel now, that I ought to love God supremely for the glory of his character, whatever may eventually be my lot. This, which a Hopkinsian calls loving God

disinterestedly, and which I call, in language a little more scriptural, loving God for his own glory, is by many branded *ignominiously*, as they intend it, as Hopkinsianism. Now it is certainly improper to apply this to me as Hopkinsianism. For the public are informed this was the scriptural doctrine of my heart, in my eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth years, on which I hope my soul grew and throve spiritually; and I did not know there existed such a man on earth as Samuel Hopkins until after my thirtieth year; therefore, I scarcely learned from him. But if people choose to give me a nick-name undeservedly, I must just submit to it as to other undeserved injuries. I wish for no other name but that of a moderate Calvinistic presbyterian according to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Doctor Hopkins believed very fully the doctrine of loving God supremely for his glory, and his neighbour as himself, according to his worth. So he did also, that Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, was a divine person, equal with the eternal father in dignity, power and glory. And I do not know that either of the doctrines is a fraction the worse for his belief of them. And they are both true if the bible be true.

I do not offer my experience as a proof of the scripture doctrine of loving God, both primarily and supremely for his own glory, being the indispensable duty of man and essential to the salvation of his soul. I am quite aware that the world are not under any obligations to receive my experience as an individual for substantial proof of

what the scripture teaches. Neither am I capable of insulting the public so far as to offer it as such. But I do think every fair and candid reasoner will at once admit that it is fully, fairly, and logically in proof of that for the establishment of which I offer it, and that is, that I did not learn this doctrine from Samuel Hopkins, seeing it was the doctrine of both my head and my heart in my nineteenth and twentieth years, and in every hour from that period to this, and I never knew that such a man as Doctor Hopkins existed till after my thirtieth year. With regard to the scripture doctrine that God is to be loved for his glory primarily, I submit the following passages to the consideration of those who allow themselves to reflect before they censure; Psalm viii, 1; "O Lord our Lord; how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glories above the heavens;" Psalm lxxxix, 6, 7; "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" Psalm cxlviii, 13; "Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and the heaven." Now, if we love God only because we have taken up the notion that he loves us, and not for his own excellent character, what reward have we? "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" Mat. v, 46.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial character, as God-man mediator, is another important part of the kingdom of holiness, and as such, a great object of christian affection.

Now, sirs, considering the God-man mediator, in the character of a deliverer from hell and ruin, which character he does certainly sustain, he may be in some measure dear to all who believe in the christian revelation as true, and a state of punishment awaiting the ungodly. For even an unrenewed sinner may feel a selfish attachment to Christ as a deliverer from pain, who feels no love for him as being possessed of infinite holiness, or as a deliverer from sin. For the worst and most selfish sinner on earth may feel a desire to be delivered from pain.

Seeing then the most selfish sinner on earth, as well as the most humble saint, may feel some attachment or love of some kind to Jesus Christ, we shall discriminate a little here between the principles of the sinner and him who loveth, being born of God and knowing God. The unconverted sinner enquires into the undertaking, death, and sufferings of Jesus Christ, purely as a deliverer from pain, and the saviour appears dear to him but it is merely as a deliverer from hell. Whilst he feels even an enmity of heart against the holiness of the saviour's character, and an attachment to those very evils from which he came to deliver. Still wedded to his idols, he will not let them go for Jesus' sake. He continues to add drunkenness to thirst, and to indulge in all the fleshly desires of the mind. Now, he that loveth, in the sense of scripture in general, and of my text in particular, and is born of God and knoweth God, though he feels, as indeed he ought to do, a high degree of gratitude to the saviour

as a deliverer, yet he loves him on other and much higher principles. The real good man, he that is born of God and knoweth God, loves him because he is the express image of his eternal father, and possessed of infinite rectitude and perfection. He reads his word, and hears his holy character, and loves, admires, and sweetly adores; and when he addresses himself to God in prayer, he forgets himself, as it were, until he has said "Father, glorify thy son." He reads, he hears, and he esteems it amongst the most precious blessings bestowed upon him by an indulgent God, to have leave to lie at the feet of this precious saviour and incessantly adore. Christ is preciousness itself to this humble believer; I Pet. ii, 7; "Unto you therefore who believe he is precious." Do you enquire what it is which renders Christ so precious to the true believer? One thing is because he honors God. The true believer being savingly illuminated by the Holy Ghost, sees God's honor as a great and interesting object, which he wishes most heartily to see promoted. And inasmuch as Jesus Christ by his sufferings and death promotes this honor to the highest degree, he is therefore most precious to the believer. His fulfilling God's broken law, renders him precious to the man of true piety. The good man loves the law of God. He sees it to be holy, just and good, and as such his delight is in that; Psalm cxix, 70; "But I delight in thy law;" his revealing God and his eternal counsels; Mat. xi, 28; "All things are delivered to me of my father; and no man knoweth the son but the father;

neither knoweth any man the father save the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him." Christ as the great medium of revelation is dear to the people of God. The displays and manifestations of the divine perfections which he gives render him dear. Christ delivering such multitudes of the human family from everlasting misery and bringing them to everlasting glory, and himself amongst the rest, renders him precious to the believing soul. And when we say that a pious man loves God primarily for his own glory, we do not mean to say that he loves him for nothing else. The pious man loves God dearly for his great communicated goodness to the children of men at large and to himself in particular; and in saying this the scriptures bear us out plainly and fairly; Psalm cxvi, 16; "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bands;" Psalm cxvi, 1; "I love the Lord because he hath heard the voice of my supplication;" Luke, x, 20; "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Then here is ample scripture authority for loving God for his communicated goodness. And base would be the ungrateful wretch who would receive the divine favors from day to day, and feel no gratitude to the divine benefactor. But where the soul does not love the divine character and God for his glory, there is no proof of true religion. And there certainly exists an essential difference betwixt loving God from the pure and holy motives which the excellence of his

character presents, and loving him only for favors received, and I think every professor of religion ought carefully to examine his own heart with respect to this matter.

3. The Holy Ghost, the third person of the adorable trinity, discharging the sacred office of sanctifying his people, is another part of this kingdom of holiness, and a proper object of christian affection. His operations are sweet and delightful to the believer. The unrenewed sinner too may feel some kind of regard for the holy spirit, on the principles of mere selfishness. He hears, it is the office of this holy agent to effect some kind of a change on the heart of a sinner which is necessary to qualify him for heaven; and as he believes he cannot escape hell without this office being performed on him, he therefore may feel some regard for, and desire his operations from the principles of selfishness, without one spark of real love to him, for his holiness. He that loveth and is born of God, and knoweth God, loves in this case from other and higher motives. He loves this holy spirit, because under the influence of his operations he has communion with God, and fellowship with the father and with his son Jesus Christ. He loves the Holy Ghost and his sacred influence because thereby he is conformed to God and made holy; he desires his operations to be more constant, more ardent and delightful; Psalm li, 10—12; "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew in me a right spirit. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me; restore unto me the

joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit."

4. The law of the Lord is another part of the kingdom of holiness and an object of christian love; Psalm i, 2; "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;" Psalm xxxvii, 31; "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide;" Psalm cxix, 72; "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." The unregenerate sinner may have some regard to the law of God, as a covenant of works, by which he expects to obtain salvation, while he has no regard for it as a holy law. But the good man loves it because it is holy, and because his own holiness consists in conformity to this law; while he looks for salvation and acceptance with his God, not by his obedience to this law, but through the atoning merit of Jesus Christ.

5. The peculiar doctrines of grace are another part of the kingdom of holiness, and the object of Christian affection; such are the sovereignty of God; the atonement of Jesus Christ; justification by faith in the righteousness of the blessed redeemer; self denial and parting with sin for Jesus' sake. Now, some doctrines of the gospel the unregenerate sinner thinks very well of, such as God's great love to a ruined world; Christ delivering sinners from the wrath to come; but when it comes to parting with all sin for Jesus' sake, the unregenerate man steps, and gives the gospel up. This is the parting place between miserable sinners and the gospel of grace. They

cannot be reconciled to parting with sin for Jesus' sake. They love their idols and after them they will go till their hearts are changed. Self denial is a doctrine of the gospel which the poor ungodly sinner never complies with ; he may go some length toward it, may part with some things in a partial manner which are dear to him, or bear some degrees of mortification ; but to deny himself in the true scripture sense, which is in fact to give himself up entirely into the hand of God, to be disposed of according to his sovereign pleasure, and to bear every thing which God may lay upon him, and to part with every thing which God may require, is a length to which the ungodly sinner never goes. Now the true christian loves all the doctrines of holiness and the gospel, and gives himself up into the hand of God, and wishes no alteration made in the doctrines of divine grace and the practices the gospel requires for his accommodation. Such is the man of God, the real saint in his views, feelings and desires. O how different from the exercises, feelings and views of the unregenerate sinner !

6. Another important part of the kingdom of holiness, and an object of high christian affection, is our fellow men. The divine law not only requires us to love the Lord with all the heart, soul, strength and mind, but also to love our neighbors as ourselves. Is it asked what description of men are to be the objects of our holy love ? I answer, every description of men. Our holy love is not to be confined to any class, colour or nation. We are required to love all men, and of all nations,

seeing every man is our brother. We are not required to love all men alike, and thus blend virtue and vice, and level all distinctions ; God's holy law requires no such thing. We are to love our fellow christians, who in a judgment of charity are the people of God, not only with a love of benevolence, in common with others, but also with a love of complacency, as being the people of God and as bearing his moral image. And to do so is made an evidence of true religion by the apostle John ; I John iii, 14 ; "By this we know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." We are to love sinners, yea, even our very enemies, with a love of benevolence ; Mat. v, 44 ; "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Now, bad men may love both saints and sinners, but it is never with a holy love. They delight in, and are warmly attached to, some men who are called saints, but it is on account of some other quality than their holiness ; then this is no holy delight. They love men who have no religion. Perhaps they are attached to them for their very wickedness ; then this love is not a holy love ; or they may love them for personal favors received ; though their attachment is an exercise of gratitude which is a thing well enough in itself, still it is no holiness. Now, the true christian loves God's people because they bear God's image. As he possesses a holy temper, he loves God for his holiness, consequently from the same holy principle he will love holiness

wherever he sees it, but seeing something of it in the saints, he loves them on the same ground. He loves men who have no religion in obedience to the commandment of God who requires it, and because every man is his brother. And also because men, thus loving one another, conduces to peace, harmony and happiness. And loving our fellow men on these principles is holy exercise.

This subject may be advantageously improved by way of self examination. We ought often to bring our religious opinions, feelings and exercises to the severe correction of truth and see whether they will stand the test or not. And be assured it is no good sign of a christian professor to see him shun the light of self examination; John iii, 20, 21; "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Then brethren let us take a review of this most important and interesting subject, so discriminating in its nature, and in the glaring light of the same, let us carefully examine our own hearts and exercises that we may not be mistaken in a matter of so much importance to our very best interests. How do we stand affected toward the great and adorable God of all? Are we conscious we love him? Can we appeal to him with Simon Peter of old, saying, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" John xxi, 17. Again can we say it is for the glory and holiness of the divine character we love him? If so, all is well and we

are not far from the kingdom of God. But if all our love to God be bottomed on some special kindnesses done to us while we have no love to him for the excellence of his nature, be assured it does not prove that we love him at all in such way as will be acceptable; "For if ye love them that love you what reward have ye; do not even the publicans the same;" Mat. v, 46.

How do we stand affected to the blessed Jesus in his mediatorial character? Do we love him as the great atoning saviour. So far well. What is the reason? Is it barely because he has atoned for our sin, or is it because he has restored the honors of the broken law, honored his God, and our God, and fully revealed the eternal father of all? If the latter, our christian hope is well founded; if the former only, I tremble while I am constrained to view it as bottomed only on the sand,

How do we stand affected to the Holy Ghost? Do we love his operations? Do we earnestly solicit the same because thereby we are more and more conformed to God, and made holy in all manner of life and conversation?

How do we stand affected to the divine law? Can we say, indeed, "That our souls have kept the testimonies of our God and that we love them exceedingly?" Psalm cxix, 167. Do we love the law of God because it is a holy law and requires a holy service?

How do we stand affected, dear brethren, to the gospel of God and the doctrines of free and sovereign grace? The sovereignty of God; justification by faith in the imputation of Christ's

righteousness ; sanctification by the operation of God's holy spirit ; are these doctrines our delight ? Is our confidence here ? This looks like the exercise of grace.

How do we stand affected to our fellow men ? Do we love those who afford us evidence they are the children of God with a love of complacency ; and all men with a love of benevolence ? Ah, says one, I love religious men mighty well if they belong to the presbyterian church. Says another, I love them dearly if they have been immersed and worship in the baptist church only. Now, my friends, what sacred writer has made it a criterion of true religion to love presbyterians, or methodists, or baptists as such ? But the apostle John has made it an evidence of true religion to love the brethren ; but I do not find that it was as presbyterians, methodists or baptists.

2. Let us exercise that christian affection on the present occasion whose great object is the kingdom of holiness. We are just about to proclaim, in the most solemn manner of which we are capable, our love to this kingdom of holiness. We are about to take a solemn oath of allegiance over the symbols of the saviour's body and blood, let us be sincere and fervent in our love to this kingdom in all its various parts, and never mock our God.

3. Let us learn from this subject, that those who have no such love to the glorious kingdom of holiness, ought not to sit down at this consecrated table. This is a feast for friends, not for enemies. Neither do I think it belongs to very doubtful characters. The apostolical direction is that "a

man shall examine himself, and so eat of that bread and drink of that cup ;” I Cor. xi, 28.

4. Let all who have not such a love know that whatever be their profession or their endeavors, they have no true religion and are liable to everlasting ruin. For without love to God no religious duty can ever be acceptable ; or to speak more correctly, no religious duty is ever performed. Let us all know that love to God is the great thing. And may the Lord grant this holy affection to all for Jesus' sake....AMEN.

SERMON XXXII.



THE AWAKENED SINNER CRYING MIGHTILY TO
GOD FOR MERCY.



Luke, VIII, 24.

“ And they came to him, and awoke him, saying Master, Master, we perish! Then he arose and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water, and they ceased, and there was a calm.”

THESE are the words of the sacred historian St. Luke, respecting our Lord's disciples and their divine master in a certain case wherein the disciples were in fear and great jeopardy and were relieved by their master in a kind and miraculous manner. The history is simply this: Jesus Christ on a certain occasion went into a ship with his disciples and set sail to cross the Lake of Gennesaret; and as they sailed, he, being fatigued with a multiplicity of business through the day lay down and fell asleep; for the blessed Jesus was liable to all the sinless weaknesses and infirmities of our nature, in common with other men. And so it came to pass in the divine providence, that while he slept, there came a storm of wind on the lake, and the ship being filled with water, her

crew were in great jeopardy ; and in the language of my text his disciples came to him and awoke him in great haste and perturbation, saying Master, Master, we perish, “ And he arose and rebuked the winds and the raging of the waters, and they ceased, and there was a calm.” Though these words only relate a simple matter of fact respecting the high raised fears of our Lord’s disciples in a storm, and the gracious manner in which the blessed Jesus ministered to their relief ; yet, I think, accommodating them to spiritual subjects, they contain a very just and striking representation of the soul’s fears and tumults when awakened to a just and proper sense of sin ; and used in this view, present to our minds very lucidly, the following propositions ;

I. That the sinner, when illuminated by the spirit of God to see his guilt and danger, discovers that he is extremely exposed.

II. That seeing himself thus exposed, he is wont to cry mightily to God for mercy and relief.

III. That when he cries earnestly to God for relief in the honesty and simplicity of his heart, the Lord hears him in peace and loving kindness, and rebukes the fears and tumults of his mind, and they cease.

IV. Thus having the fears and tumults of his mind allayed, he becomes the subject of a sweet serenity and peace.

I design to illustrate a little each of these propositions in the order in which I have mentioned them, and then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. The soul when enlightened by the spirit of God to see his guilt and danger, discovers that he is extremely exposed. How thoughtless and careless soever sinners may be while unimpressed with divine things, it is a solemn fact, that when the spirit of God arrests them, and impresses on their minds a deep-hearted felt sense of their spiritual state, they see themselves exposed to extreme danger, and are most awfully alarmed on account of transgression. Witness St. Paul's experience; Rom. vii, 9; "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." The sinner, in this enlightened situation, sees himself exposed justly to the wrath and vengeance of an angry God, and that it would be strictly just in Almighty God to send him to hell; that having violated God's just and righteous laws, he is exposed to his everlasting displeasure; that it is mere undeserved mercy alone which prevents him from falling into hell; for if he were dealt with according to his desert, he would be sunk forthwith to everlasting ruin. He knows not how soon God's patience may grow weary of him, and abandon him to his doom. That all created power can do him no real service. He is sensible he has provoked God in a most dreadful manner, to give him up to everlasting ruin and abandon him to his fate. That Belzebub is waiting for his ruin and ready to indulge a malignant joy in his eternal destruction. That he cannot recover himself from that everlasting destruction to which he stands so justly exposed. That if God, in his mere and undeserved mercy, does not

extend him salvation, his soul is forever undone, because he has sunk himself, by his sin and folly, into a pit from which he cannot extricate himself. In this awful situation he begins to cast about him for mercy, which brings me to my

II. Proposition, that the sinner seeing himself thus exposed, begins to cry mightily to God for relief.

The disciples of our blessed Lord, seeing themselves ready to be overwhelmed in the waves of the sea, cried to their divine master, "Save us! we perish!" So cries the poor convinced sinner who sees himself exposed justly to divine indignation; Psalm cxvi, 1—4; "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." He feels he is eternally undone without the divine aid. He believes God can help; he often fears he will not, because he has sinned so much and so long. He reads that many other sinners have cast themselves on the divine clemency and found salvation. He feels that the creatures and the world cannot afford him happiness, and therefore he cries to the Lord. He reads that God's tender mercies are over all the works of his almighty hands, and therefore he is encouraged to cry to him for relief. He will not despair. He reads, "that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever

believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life ;” John iii, 16. He reads that “all the laboring and heavy laden are invited to Christ for rest ;” Mat. xi, 28. He is therefore encouraged to cast himself upon him and cry for mercy. He reads the divine promise ; “That whosoever comes unto him shall in no wise be cast out ;” John vi, 37. And therefore he is encouraged to come.

When mankind see themselves in imminent danger and from which they know no human arm can deliver, they are wont to cry mightily to the Lord for deliverance. I do not say they always pray the prayer of faith. Oftentimes through divine aid they do, but they are wont to cry for relief.

III. When the poor, sin distressed soul thus cries to God in the earnestness and simplicity of his heart, the Lord hears him and answers him in loving kindness and peace, rebukes his tumults and fears, and they cease. To this point the sacred scriptures are full and plain ; to this point the favored experience of a million happy souls, bears a loud and decided testimony ; Psalm xxxiv, 6 ; “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles ;” Psalm l, 14, 15 ; “Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high ; and call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me ; II Samuel xxii, 7 ; “In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God, and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears ;” Psalm xxii, 4, 5 ; “Our fathers trusted in thee ; they trusted

and thou didst deliver them ; they cried unto thee and were delivered ; they trusted in thee and were not confounded ;" Psalm cxlv, 18 ; " The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, unto all them that call upon him in truth." These passages certainly go clearly to show that all who call upon God out of a pure and sincere heart, are heard and answered in loving kindness and peace.

And how many of the children of God are there who have been in the utmost distress, and ready indeed to sink under the billows of despair ; and who in their extremity have cried unto the Lord and obtained the most ample relief and deliverance ? Did not the Lord, with the most sovereign majesty, rebuke the winds of temptation and the billows of distress, and did they not cease ? What says your favored experience my christian friend ? This the almighty Lord does, by his good spirit accompanying his word, and affording them a clear discovery of the scheme of salvation in Christ, and a sweet sense of pardoned sin. Whenever the good Lord opens up the blessed scheme of salvation through Christ, and sweetly applies the precious promises of the gospel, the raging of the soul's spiritual fears, despairing thoughts, and painful anxieties ceases. And this is the way in which the good Lord does it, by his blessed spirit in his holy operations accompanying the reading as the preaching of the divine word. And, sirs, is there any thing unreasonable or enthusiastical in supposing the divine spirit in his sanctifying and saving operations should

accompany the preaching of the divine word? Nay, does not the very commission which our blessed Lord gave his disciples plainly imply that the influences of the Holy Ghost should accompany the administration of the divine word. The words of that sacred commission are the following; "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway even to the end of the world."

IV. The soul having his fears and tumults thus allayed, becomes the subject of a secret serenity and peace. O how sweet the sense of pardoned sin! How passing sweet the voice of gospel consolation! After a dark, tempestuous night of wind and rain, and storm and thunder, how cheerfully does the sun arise on the bewildered traveller when the thunders are hushed, the clouds dispersed, and the storms have ceased to blow. Just so it is with the poor tempest tossed soul, who has been hard pressed at the foot of Mt. Sinai, with the thunders of the divine law, the winds of violent temptations, and the deep waters of spiritual distress; when the sun of righteousness arises on him with healing under his wings and dispels the gloomy clouds of darkness that so long enveloped his weary soul. A glorious calm succeeds; a calm effected by the mighty God of grace. This new believer's mind is now tranquil and serene. He sees the sword of justice lately furbished for his blood, now passing him by innoxious. This

affords him peace and joy ineffable. He sees God's holy law now magnified and made honorable by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ and this fills his new born soul with a holy delight. God's law is dear to him now, as it is a transcript of the perfections of that God whom he so ardently loves. He sees the eternal father pleased with the blessed son's obedience and accepting believing sinners for his sake. This tranquillises him; he sees he has escaped the pains of hell, the groans of despair, and the society of devils forever. This tranquillises him. He now realises that heaven, the society of angels, and the enjoyment of the ever blessed God forever, shall be his happy portion. This furnishes calmness and serenity. He sees and realises now, that religion is quite another and a different thing than he took it to be in his unenlightened days. He then thought it calculated to destroy the pleasures of life and make men wretched and unhappy. But he now sees it is the very thing to promote his high and true felicity. This furnishes him joy and peace. Now, instead of finding fault with the reign and government of the great Jehovah, he rejoices cheerfully in that reign; and the reflection that almighty God is doing all things well is divinely pleasing.

I presume, sirs, it is no reasonable objection to the doctrine here stated, that this calm is not entirely uninterrupted whilst believers navigate the troubled ocean of the present life. As it is in the natural world, so is it in the spiritual. The disciples of our Lord now enjoyed a perfect calm at

the all powerful command of their divine master; "He arose and rebuked the winds, and the raging of the waters, and they ceased, and there was a calm." But had those disciples navigated the sea of Gallilee much longer, no doubt they would have met with other storms and tempests. So will it fare with the believer while in this world. He may, through the grace of his divine master, enjoy a calm for the present; but this is no sure presage that he shall not hereafter experience the tempest. It appears a part of the divine plan that God's people themselves shall have their trials and tribulations while in the present turbid state; John xvi, 33; "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Nor will this be without its beneficial effect in the course of the divine administration. It will render heaven doubly welcome and doubly sweet to the spiritual mariner. True it is, I have never had any experience of seafaring life, and of course know experimentally nothing of its hazards and dangers; yet I would reasonably suppose, that welcome as the haven of safety is to the weather-beaten sailor at all times, it is doubly so after a dozen hair-breadth escapes. And presently the spiritual voyager will make good the port of eternal rest, where storms will never come, nor winds fierce and furious blow; but where his hitherto tempest-driven bark shall be safe in port forever. And O how sweet will heavenly rest be to the spiritual mariner who has had so many narrow escapes for his

spiritual life. Now, having made the long desired haven of eternal rest through divine grace, he smiles at the storm, and triumphantly defies all its impotent rage. Now he enjoys his Jesus and his God and the peace speaking accents of his own blood besprinkled conscience forever. Nothing now shall interrupt his holy peace and enjoyments to all eternity. O with what delight and ineffable satisfaction shall he now look back on the thousand snares and dangers which once betided him, and which through divine grace he so narrowly escaped; and O, how shall heaven's high arches ring with the animated songs of praise which he shall eternally address to that divine pilot who brought him safely through?

1. Learn from this subject that they who do not call earnestly on God for mercy and salvation are not in earnest to obtain salvation. Prayerless souls are not in earnest about mercy and salvation. Heaven and all its glories weigh but lightly in their account. Men may boast of setting as high an estimate as they please on God's service and the salvation proposed in the gospel; but if they never have the matter so much at heart as to call earnestly on God, this all passes for nothing in the divine account. When the winds raged and the sea was tempestuous while the blessed Jesus slept in the ship, his disciples came to him and awoke him, saying "Master, master, we perish." Thus I presume, it is with all sinners awakened to a due sense of their guilt and danger, in a spiritual view. And the result is, they cry earnestly to God for mercy. And those who do not thus cry

to him it is fairly to be presumed are not much concerned about this sacred object.

2. Learn the encouragement convinced souls have to pray and cry to the Lord. He is ready to hear, to pardon and to bless. When the disciples awoke their divine master, saying "Master, master, we perish," what part did this divine saviour act? Did he turn a deaf ear to the importunacy of their cry? Did he unfeelingly abandon them to their fears? Did he as a careless and unconcerned spectator suffer them to sustain a wreck or go down to the bottom of the deep? O no, disconsolate sinner, hear it to your ineffable consolation! yea, hear it with rapture, "He immediately arose and rebuked the winds and the raging of the waters, and they ceased, and there was a calm." And permit me to ask, sin-sick sinner, is not the blessed Jesus as compassionate to hear and as strong to save this day as he was when he navigated the sea of Gallilee? "His heart," in the language of the poet, "is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love." But on this subject of the saviour's compassion hear more than a poet; hear a sacred writer, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory;" Mat. xii, 20.

3. Learn that true religion is exceedingly desirable and ought to be cordially embraced by all. It is capable of affording that tranquillity of mind which is not to be found in any thing else. What else, permit me to ask, is capable of satisfying the boundless desires of the immortal soul? Nothing

with which we are acquainted. How great a desideratum then is this holy, this dignified thing? Let us all embrace it, and cry mightily to this divine, this compassionate saviour. May the good Lord add his blessing to his word, for Jesus' sake. AMEN.

SERMON XXXIII.



JERUSALEM PREFERRED BY THE PIOUS MAN
ABOVE HIS CHIEF JOY.



PREACHED IN THE CITY OF NASHVILLE, BE-
FORE THE SYNOD, TENNESSEE, IN OCT 1816.

Psalm, CXXXVII, 5, 6.

“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 of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

THESE words, my friends; express very strongly the attachment of the captive Jews at Babylon to the worship of the true God, and their great sorrow and distress in being deprived of the temple service at Jerusalem. They were now in the land of their captivity, carried far from their native country and had not the opportunity of waiting on their God as they had done aforetime. The great congregation could no longer assemble, as they had done formerly, in the sanctuary of God, and mingle their prayers and their praises more frequent, than the smoke of slaughtered hecatombs. By the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion. Indulging that melancholy tincture of mind which we are all so apt to feel, when deprived in

the providence of God, of our choicest blessings; they hung their harps on the willows, and attempted not the songs of Zion. They felt too deep a gloom of mind now, to indulge to that instrument which had so often gladdened their hearts in the service of God. Those who led them into captivity, and now had them at will, required of them a song, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. Their hearts were too heavy to comply with this request. Their melancholy ran too high, when they recollected the temple service at Jerusalem and the Zion of their God, to chant its songs in their present situation. They appeared to view it as a kind of violation of their regard for Zion to sing its sacred songs in that strange and foreign land; "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 of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy;" "How, say they, shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" "If I forget thee," &c.

Here those pious Jews appear to swear in the most solemn manner, a voluntary allegiance to the cause of their God.

Determined never to forget Zion and Jerusalem, but to prefer in their affections, the service of their God and the welfare of his church to every other consideration; "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning," &c.

These words plainly suggest to our minds the following truth or proposition; that the good man, the true christian feels most anxious for the welfare of God's Zion and the flourishing state of

religion. What I design in treating this proposition on the present occasion is the following ;

I. I shall attempt to confirm the truth of it by showing from the conduct of the saints in all ages, that they prefer the flourishing of God's cause to every temporal or worldly consideration whatever, or in the language of my text, that they prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy.

II. What it is which so much recommends the cause of God and religion to the good man, that he prefers them above his chief joy. And then some inferences and an application will close the discourse.

We resume the order and attempt to show from the conduct and exercises of the saints in all ages, that they have been exceedingly attached to the cause of God, and have preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy. Witness the attachment of king David to the cause of God and his temple service ; Psalm lxxxiv throughout ; "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ? My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." He appears to envy the very sparrows their happy portion ; verse 3 ; "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God." He goes on from this to verse 9 inclusive, to speak of the blessedness of those who dwell in the house of God, particularly on the account of the abundant opportunity afforded them of still praising the Lord. In verse 10, he expresses with great earnestness his

exceeding attachment to the temple service at Jerusalem; "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness;" Verse 11; "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly;" Verse 12; "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in thee." Witness also the words of my text; "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 of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy." Witness the case of the Hebrew youths when threatened with the burning fiery furnace, unless they denied their God and worshipped the king. So greatly did they prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy, that they suffered themselves to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, rather than dishonor their God. Witness St. Paul's zeal for the flourishing of God's cause in the salvation of the Jews; Rom. ix, 3; "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Did not this pious man, then, prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy? Witness the conduct of our Lord's disciples in forsaking all, and going forth to preach the everlasting gospel in the face of persecution, fire and sword as also most of the first preachers of christianity. Witness the conduct of the saints in every age and country, in forming religious societies, their exertions, their liberal contributions. To them under a gracious God, we

owe our public religious institutions in every part of the country. Not content with being religious themselves, they wish to see the cause of God flourish. Witness the benevolent exertions which exist both in Europe and America at this hour. Witness the numerous missionary societies which exist both in Europe and America for the glorious purpose of spreading the gospel of divine grace amongst those benighted nations, who have hitherto sat in the region of darkness, and shadow of death. Which shall we admire most as the brightest evidence of good men's anxiety for the flourishing of God's cause and the welfare of his Zion? The conduct of those who poured their silver and gold into the treasury of the Lord to such an immense amount, or those humble, generous and self denied men who willingly offered themselves to leave their country and friends and all the conveniencies of civilized life, to encounter the dangers of the mighty ocean, go to a country sixteen thousand miles from home, and there take up their abode amongst a people of rude and savage manners, entire strangers to civilization, purely for the sake of God and the salvation of men. Surely, sirs, if a proposition can be proved these things prove, that at least some men prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy.

II. I am to show what it is which endears the cause of God and religion so much to the good man, that he prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy; because it so much glorifies God. It is the flourishing of religion in the world that most glorifies God. When religion flourishes, souls are born to God and believers live soberly, righteously,

ly, and godly; for these are the very things in which the flourishing of religion consists, and when they take place God is glorified; but the glory of God lies nearer the believer's heart than any thing else in the world; therefore he prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy.

2. Because he knows that thereby many precious souls will be saved. It is when God's cause flourishes that souls are converted and built up. Now the good man wishes every body to be saved; his philanthropy is great; he has a heart of benevolence which embraces in love and affection all the human race; therefore he prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy.

3. The good man wishes the prosperity of Zion, because his own happiness depends very much thereon. When the cause of God is in a languishing and declining state the man of true piety feels unhappy, and with the captive Jews is ready to hang his harp on the willows, but when the cause of God flourishes it is to him like life from the dead.

4. The good man wishes to see the cause of God flourish, and his Jerusalem built up, because of its beneficial effects in human society here, as well as fitting men for that better world to come. True religion is not only beneficial in preparing men for that better world, but is also of eminent benefit here; it makes men wise and good; it makes good husbands, and good wives, good parents, and good children, kind and indulgent masters, and honest and faithful servants. Now, as every pious man is truly benevolent, and wishes

not only the eternal welfare, but also the temporal happiness of his fellow men ; he wishes God's cause to flourish, and as he knows there can be but little religion in an ordinary way, without a church and the benefits of public worship, therefore he prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy.

1. Learn from this subject how careful all those ought to be to live as becomes the gospel, who have made a public profession of religion. The credit of religion and the flourishing of God's holy cause depend very much on their conduct. When those who profess religion walk carelessly, they greatly dishonor God; because the thoughtless world are in the habit of judging of religion by the conduct of its professors, rather than by its own intrinsic merit. It is conceded this is not fair; but so it is; thus they will judge. Let christian professors then "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil;" Ephes. v, 15, 16.

2. Learn from this subject that all who are real christians will walk circumspectly and tenderly; they prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy; they are wont to be guarded in their lives and conduct, and to let their light shine round them, that others seeing their good works may be induced to glorify God.

3. Learn that those, who do not prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy have no true religion; because this is the exercise of true religion; and every sincere christian can say "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning," &c. And O my brethren, how many does

this observation, if correct, leave in a state of sin? Surely the prayerless do not prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy. Men who do not worship God certainly cannot with any degree of propriety be said to prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy! Prayer to almighty God is a duty so naturally resulting from the relation we sustain to God as his dependent and needy creatures, that we cannot see how any pious man should live without it. Prayer is as it were the very breath of the new born soul; by which he aspires to God. Surely the neglectors of public worship do not prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy. Could there be the least propriety in a man lying indolently at home on the hallowed sabbath of the Lord, within convenient distance of a house of public worship, and crying out "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 of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Would not this strike every body of the smallest reflection as inconsistent and improper? O ye neglectors of the public worship of God, ye do not prefer Jerusalem to your chief joy. Surely those who do nothing for the encouragement of society do not. If a man will be at no pains, no expense, in any respect, to support the public worship of God, can he be said to prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy? Are not houses to be built for the commodious worship of the Almighty? Can this be done without expense? The man who is not willing to bear his proportion of this expense cannot be said, with a particle of

common sense to prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy. Are not ministers of the sanctuary to be supported? Can this be done without expense? Ought not all to be willing to bear their just proportion of this expense? Perfectly am I aware of the foolish and unreasonable popular clamor, raised by the miserly and tight-fisted against supporting the clergy. And they pass with me for just what they are worth. But, sirs, are the outcries of a set of miserly, mistaken men, who love their money better than their souls, or the dictates of the sacred word, to rule here? If the latter, let us hear with reverence its dictates; I Cor. ix, 3, and downward; "Mine answer to them who do examine me is this: Have we not power to eat and drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I, only, and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take eare for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing

if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple; and they that wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Compare Gal. vi, 6; "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him who teacheth in all good things." Here, sirs, are the principles of the new testament on this subject. Every man of common sense can very easily judge whether the levity and sneer with which this subject is often treated, be well founded or not. Let scorers beware how they treat any thing so plainly taught in the sacred records, and by divine authority. Do any ask what is the mode? I answer, this is a matter plainly committed to human prudence, and which the sacred writers have not pointed out. One thing is plain enough; the contributions are to be entirely voluntary, whether they be attached to a subscription paper or otherwise made. Surely the profane and ungodly, the thoughtless and inconsiderate do not sneer at this. Let me urge you to true repentance and a speedy flight to the ark of safety.

4. Learn from this subject how much good men ought to encourage the circulation of the bible, and the spread of religion. Have they not the divine promise, that in that event they shall be

blessed with an increase of goods ;" Prov. iii, 9, 10 ; " Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase ; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine." Cannot this promise be easily fulfilled on the part of the deity ? Can he not cause your flocks and herds to increase ? Can he not restrain the winds and the flames at pleasure, and save your dwellings ? Are not all things you possess in his hand ; and is it not a matter perfectly easy with the Lord to cause them to increase or diminish at pleasure ? Are not exertions made and a moiety of your substance laid out to circulate the bible, designed to promote the greatest good, the melioration of society in this life, and their eternal happiness in that to come ? Do not reading the holy scriptures, and the public worship of almighty God greatly favor moral goodness and prevent vice and the most guilty practices ? We appeal to public executions. Whence do the victims of public vengeance come ? Are they not generally from those parts of the world where the bible and public worship are least known and most neglected ? And if this be the fact, does it not amount to a manifest demonstration of the great utility of public worship and the bible ?

Are not many parents so wickedly careless that they will not purchase a bible for their poor benighted children, yet they will suffer one to be put into their hands when not done at their expense. Are not the children of such parents objects of compassion ? Will not the benevolent

feel for them? Are there not many parts of the country perishing for lack of knowledge where many souls might be brought to the knowledge of the truth by missionary exertions? But missionaries cannot be sent to those benighted regions without the contributions of the liberal and benevolent. O then, how loud the call, my christian friends, to honor the Lord with your substance and the first fruits of your increase? Who that has a spark of true love to God and precious souls will not feel and alertly obey this sacred call? Let men of infidel and unbelieving minds sneer at the exercise of your liberality. Let them raise their outcries against it, if they choose to be thus exercised, but let the compassionate and benevolent, press on in the discharge of their duty. So shall they eventually meet the blessing of their God, and be instrumental in doing good to souls.

SERMON XXXIV.



THE WORD TAKEN AWAY OUT OF HEARERS'
HEARTS BY THE ENEMY OF SOULS.



Luke, VIII, 12.

“Those by the way side, are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”

HOW muchsoever the doctrine of the existence of a soul and wicked spirit called the devil may be exploded by the self-opinionated and fashionable circle, it is a solemn fact that there is no truth more plainly taught in the sacred records than that such a spirit exists. This truth is interwoven with the whole writings of the old and new testaments, and stands or falls with the sacred writings.

In the account given us by Moses of the creation of the world and of man, this wicked and apostate spirit is early introduced, as acting in direct opposition to Almighty God, by seducing our first parents in the form of a serpent, and ruining them and their unborn posterity. And throughout the whole of the old testament writings, he is represented as acting in the most direct and pointed opposition to the most high God. In the evangelical history he makes quite a conspicuous figure

in the temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness; Mat. iv, 1—10, as well as a variety of other passages. And he is quite plainly spoken of in the language of my text, as taking away the word out of the hearts of those who hear; “Those by the way side are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved.” These are the words of Jesus Christ himself, and are part of an explanation which he gave his disciples of a certain parable which he had spoken in the audience of the multitude. See the parable from the 4th to the 8th verse; “And when much people were gathered together and were come to him out of every city he spake a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed some fell by the way-side and it was trodden down and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choaked it. And other fell on good ground and sprang up and bare fruit an hundred fold.” When the multitude were withdrawn the disciples wished to know of their divine master what the parable might mean. For it appears to have been a mystery to them as well as others, till the blessed saviour explained it.

He accordingly informed them; “The seed was the divine word preached, those by the wayside were they that hear,” &c.

The doctrine plainly taught us by our blessed saviour in these words is this, that whenever the divine word is preached, the devil is present for

the express purpose of counteracting its divine influence on the human heart, lest men should believe and be saved.

In treating this subject I design to show,

I. What we are to understand by the heart here spoken of.

II. The native tendency which the word of God dispensed faithfully and luminously, has to impress the hearts of them that hear, unless counteracted.

III. What methods this foul and wicked spirit uses to take away the word out of hearers' hearts and destroy its influence there.

IV. What it is to believe the word, and the influence such belief will have on the salvation of the soul, and then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. I am to show what we are to understand by the heart here spoken of. By the heart in the sacred writings is sometimes meant the conscience, as appears from Job xxvii, 6; "My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live;" Here, I presume, the heart means conscience, as it is the conscience which usually reproaches mankind. See, also, I Samuel xxiv, 5; "And it came to pass afterward that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt;" I John iii, 20; "For if our heart condemn us God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things."

It sometimes, though so far as I recollect at present, very rarely means, the understanding, as in Jeremiah xxiv, 7; "And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord." But most

generally in the sacred writings, the heart means the moral power of the human mind, the will and the affections; Ezekiel xi, 19; And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh." This, I presume, does not in fair construction, mean either the conscience or the understanding; but the will and affections, or in other words, that power of the mind of which moral good and moral evil are predicable; Ezekiel xxxvi, 26; "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh;" Mat. vi, 21; "For where your treasure is there will your heart be also;" Mat. xii, 34; "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" Acts xi, 23; "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

Now, I conceive, the word HEART, in my text, may, with much propriety, be understood in all these senses, the conscience; the understanding and the will; seeing the divine word preached, has a tendency to influence each of these, and seeing the devil attempts to destroy its influence with respect to each of these.

II. I am to show the natural tendency which the word preached has to impress the hearts of those who hear, to affect them to advantage.

The word preached, if luminously and clearly dispensed, as it always ought to be, certainly has a direct tendency to illuminate the understanding

in the knowledge of God and divine truth, and never fails to effect this in some good degree, unless the devil takes it away by turning off the attention, or some other of his numerous devices. This word is intended and exactly calculated to inform the mind respecting God and divine truth. It informs him of the origin of all created things, and particularly of the strange and wonderful creature man, respecting whom he feels most concerned to know, the state in which God created him; his lapse in consequence of the temptation presented by the wicked fiend satan, through the serpent; the promise of the Messiah to restore poor sinners from the ruin of the fall; God's dealings with his ancient people; the impatience and utter helplessness, as well as guilt of the creature man; John vi, 44; "No man can come to me, except the father, who hath sent me, draw him;" John xv, 5; "For without me ye can do nothing;" God's infinite benevolence to human kind in sending a saviour to lay down his life for their sins; John iii, 16; "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; the necessity and efficacy of the blessed saviour's atonement; John iii, 14, 15; "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" Mark xvi, 16; "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" the necessity and efficacy of the holy

spirit to operate on the human heart ; John xvi, 7—11 ; “ Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter will not come, but if I depart I will send him ; and when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment ; of sin because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to my father and ye see me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged ;” a heaven of happiness where Christ’s friends shall be with him forever ; John, xiv, 1—3 “ Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you. Behold I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also ;” a hell of misery and anguish, where the wicked shall be punished forever ; Psalm ix, 17 ; “ The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God ;” Psalm xi, 6 ; “ Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup ”

Now, the great design of a preached gospel, is to illustrate, confirm, and enlarge upon such subjects as these, and consequently to enlighten the understanding, unless the devil counteracts the word, and in the language of my text takes it away out of the heart : compare Psalm xix, 7, 8 ; “ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure,

making wise the simple, the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

Again, the tendency of the divine word whenever faithfully dispensed, is to move the affections and determine the will, to seeking God and obeying his commandments. Are not the terrors of the Lord, a judgment bar, and a future solemn reckoning, proper subjects whence to persuade men? II Cor. v, 10, 11; "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also, are made manifest in your consciences." Are not heaven and hell proper motives to act upon the moral power of the human mind, and to determine our choice in the pursuit of virtue, and shunning vice? Whilst the awful majesty of the great God, his divine terrors, his indignation against sinners, and his flaming vengeance, are solemnly held up to view, how is it possible the wicked and ungodly could avoid shuddering at the dire prospect before them, and attempting to escape from the wrath to come, were it not that the devil taketh away the word out of their hearts, finds some means or other to turn off their attention, and restore their security, when they begin to be sensibly affected by these things.

Again, when the tender mercies of a God are unfolded, his loving kindness to sinners exhibited,

and the compassions of a dying saviour suitably displayed; his voluntary undertaking for man; his free love; his agonies and blood; his tortures and his cross; the insults of the mob, the ruffian's spear, the preternatural darkness, and the vengeance of his father; must not these tender things move our sympathy, and affect our hearts unfeeling as they are, unless the devil takes away the word?

When the exceeding sinfulness of sin is represented, that cursed thing which procured the sufferings and death of an innocent and immaculate redeemer, must it not impress the mind with a dreadful sense of its obliquity, unless the devil finds means to take away the power of the word? Thus, then, we see the preaching of the word is directly calculated to move the affections and the heart.

Again, the preaching of the word has a direct tendency to influence the conscience of sinners to do its office. If the word be faithfully dispensed, the exceeding broadness of the divine law is held up to the sinner's view, it is reaching the thoughts and intents of the heart; Psalm cxix, 96; "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." The sinner's guilt is to be charged home upon him in the preaching of this sacred word; it is to be pointed out to him, wherein he has violated God's righteous law. The most pointed appeals are to be made to his conscience. I do not like that preaching which deals altogether in generals. So did not Christ preach. As a sufficient sample of

his manner, see the 23rd chapter of Matthew, from beginning to end ; here we find woe upon woe, like reiterated claps of thunder falling from this great teacher's lips ; the most pointed method of address adopted, and the sinner's sins set before him, without the semblance of disguise, and he warned faithfully of their dire consequences.

Ought christian ministers or ought they not to use the same freedom of speech, when there is the same call to it, and the same aggravated guilt to demand and justify it ? When this is done must not the sinner's conscience smite him, must not the divine word penetrate his heart and have its effect there, if not counteracted and taken away by the enemy of souls ?

III. I am now to show what methods the devil adopts to take away the word out of hearer's hearts and destroy its influence there. Here let me observe, before I go farther, he does not do it by violence and absolutely against the sinners will. This is not his method of operation. And farther, permit me to observe, he does not manifest himself to the hearer, out of whose heart he is about to take the word, nor announce his intended operation. But on the other hand, keeps himself behind the curtain as much as possible lest the soul should take the alarm and be on his guard. He does it altogether by his artful wiles and devices.

1. One method he employs to take the word out of the sinner's heart is, presenting doubts to his mind respecting the christian revelation, and the divine reality of religion. And thus has he taken away the word out of many hearts. Sometimes

he suggests to the hearer such thoughts and doubts as the following. The great, the wise and the learned, such as one would naturally suppose are in a situation to know most about these things from their superior learning and information, do not profess to believe the gospel at all, nor to act under the influence of its principles, and may not I, with equal propriety, call these things into question too; "Thus has he taken away the word out of many hearts, and thus had he very nearly succeeded with the psalmist;" Psalm lxxi, 1.

2. Another method employed by this arch enemy of souls is, an abuse of the christian doctrines; for example, the impotence of sinners. He persuades them, when the word has penetrated their hearts a little, and they have become uneasy about the situation of their souls, that they need not be at any pains to serve God, "for the sinner can do nothing;" John xv, 5; for this adversary of God and man can quote scripture when it answers his end, as readily as any of us. Now, the scripture quoted is true and contains the saviour's doctrine on the subject of moral impotence. But this arch enemy presents an entirely wrong view of it to the mind, and thus takes away the word out of his heart. The passage quoted does not mean natural inability, which, if it existed, would furnish the sinner a good excuse; but moral inability, which consists in the sinner's opposition of heart to his duty, and is the very essence of his blame, instead of furnishing any excuse.

3. Very often, when he finds the word taking place in the heart and the sinner becoming the

subject of some conviction and alarm, he contrives some mean to divert his attention from it for the present. Peradventure, something that is taking place in the assembly or about it, engages his attention, and diverts it from the concerns of his soul, lest he should believe and be saved.

4. Another way in which he often takes away the word out of people's hearts is this. He persuades them it is time enough to be religious yet. In this case he suggests nothing to the disadvantage of religion, but rather the contrary; but he presses this idea very closely that it is time enough yet. This is a device he is very apt to employ, and alas, often too successfully with young people.

5. To some, when the word begins to penetrate their hearts, he presents religion in extremely gloomy colors, persuading them it will make them melancholy, that it is a morose sour thing, destructive of the gaieties and pleasures of life, and that mankind ought to enjoy themselves. Thus he takes away the word out of their hearts.

6. Some, on whose hearts the word had taken considerable hold, and who have gone home serious and thoughtful, and with resolutions of amendment, he invites to a ball or dance, persuading them there is no harm in a little civil mirth. Thus has he prevailed with them to make the experiment, and the end of this experiment often has been, that their impressions were lost, the word taken away out of their hearts, and their precious souls eternally undone.

7. Others on whose hearts the word had taken some serious impression, he has found means to

engage in controversy and debates about the tenets and doctrines of religion, and firing them with a clamorous, noisy, false zeal, has kept them thus engaged until the serious impressions made on their minds were lost. And in their embittered contentions about doctrines, rites and forms, the spirit and reality have been utterly neglected.

8. He often takes away the word out of the hearts of others by engaging them too eagerly in the pursuit of the world. Here he suggests the great necessity of attending to the world and its concerns, and presses it by a quotation of scripture; "He that provideth not for his own, and especially those of his own house, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" I Tim. v, 8. Thus does he engage them so eagerly in the world that the spirit of religion is neglected, and the word taken away out of their hearts.

IV. I am to show what it is to believe, and the influence such faith has on the salvation of the soul. Our text says, "lest they should believe and be saved." This belief is saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not mere speculation. A speculative faith must be supposed to exist before we will receive the divine word into our hearts. For, "He that would come to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" Heb. xi, 6. That belief which is accompanied with salvation, as suggested in my text, is true, saving faith. This consists essentially in a cordial reception of Jesus Christ, and a hearty reliance on him for salvation. See the answer of the Westminster divines to the question

“What is faith in Jesus Christ? Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel;” see also much higher authority, John’s gospel, i, 12; “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

The influence faith has on salvation, is by uniting the soul indissolubly to Jesus Christ, and thereby interesting us in his atonement and righteousness, whereby we become really justified and entitled to eternal salvation. Our text is not the only passage in the new testament, in which salvation is represented as connected inseparably with faith. This is the uniform tenor of the whole new testament writings; see Mark xvi, 16; “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;” John iii, 14—18; “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten son of God.” Now, sirs, I presume the reason of these representations is not because faith has any more merit or efficacy in itself

to justify and save a soul than love, repentance, or any other grace ; but because it lays hold of, and receives that, which is the real meritorious cause of a believer's justification, the atoning righteousness of Jesus Christ. This it is alone, and exclusively, that justifies and saves the soul ; Rom. iii, 24, 25 ; " Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; Ephes. i, 7 ; " In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace ;" Col. i, 14 ; " In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ;" I Peter i, 18 ; " Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb slain, without blemish, and without spot." To show that this is equally the doctrine of the old as well as the new testament, see 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 ;" Isaiah xlii, 21. " The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, he shall magnify the law and make it honourable."

Learn from this subject,

1. What an invaluable blessing the divine word is to guilty men, and of consequence, how thankfully it ought to be received, and how wisely improved. Does this sacred word inform us of those things, which of all others in the world, we are most concerned to know? Does it reveal God and his holy will to man? Does it point out with precision the road to heaven and glory? Does it set before us the most exalted motives to piety and moral goodness? Then let us bind this invaluable treasure to our hearts, and conform conscientiously to its sacred requisitions.

“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”...WATTS.

2. Learn the wisdom as well as the goodness of God in giving to mankind a preached gospel. It is calculated to display the divine glory and reach sinners’ hearts.

3. Learn the great necessity there is for hearers to watch against the wiles of the devil. How artful, how cunning, and subtle an enemy is he who is opposed to our happiness and salvation! Let us be strictly on our guard that this great adversary may not work our overthrow; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

4. Learn from this subject the extreme danger of that scheme in theology, which sets aside the free grace plan, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the atonement he has made for sin. This is the grand pillar of the free grace

scheme, and the only ground of safety for lost and guilty sinners. The gospel knows no other; "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached let him be accursed." May the Lord bless his precious gospel to our souls, and make it a lamp to our feet, and a light to our way, for the redeemer's sake. AMEN.

SERMON XXXV.



THE INDEPENDENT SOVEREIGNTY AND THE
UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE
OF GOD.



Romans, XI, 36.

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. To whom be glory forever. Amen.”

ST. PAUL, my friends, asserts very strongly in this epistle, the sovereignty of divine grace, and of the adorable God its author, and the right of the Almighty and independent God to dispose of mankind according to his sovereign and unlimited pleasure. This doctrine of the divine sovereignty is very fully stated in the 9th chapter of this epistle from the 10th to the 23d verse inclusive; “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then, is there unrighteousness with God?”

God forbid. 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 showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaah, for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power on thee, and that my name should be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth. You will say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." He has also stated quite perspicuously, in this chapter of which our text is a part, especially from verse 32 to the end; "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

The apostle here, in order to impress more deeply on the mind of those who might be disposed to call into question the divine sovereignty, enquires who had given any thing to the Lord, so as to lay him under any kind of obligation, or who had counseled him in any of his plans, or what was in existence to stir up a doubt respecting his complete independency and sovereignty? And in this connection addresses them in the language of my text; "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory forever. Amen." In these few strong, well chosen and significant words, the apostle states three several distinct propositions, and which contain completely the doctrine of the divine sovereignty; the following,

I. That God created all things that be, himself only excepted.

II. That God sustains and supports all things.

III. That God's great and leading object in all he has done, and is still doing is his own glory. For of him are all things; he made them. Through him are all things, he sustains and upholds them; and to him are all things, he created them for himself, or in other words, for his own glory. In the farther discussion of this subject I shall endeavor a little to elucidate and confirm each of these propositions, and that in the order in which they lie in my text, and then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. Our first proposition is that the absolute and sovereign Lord God is the sole and independent creator of all things that be.

Here permit me to observe that what I mean by creation is, making something out of nothing or without materials. And when I speak of God creating all things, I mean that God either made the thing just in the mode and form in which we see it exist; or that he made the matter out of which some second agent has made it to exist in its present form. For example, God made me as I am; but he did not make the table on which I write in its present form; he made the materials of which it is made, a large well grown walnut tree; but the sawyer and the cabinet-maker transformed a part of this walnut tree into a convenient table. Thus, second causes may have transformed a great many things; but God made the materials of them all.

2. We observe that the holy scriptures uniformly ascribe the creation of all things to God; Gen. i, 1; "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" 7th verse of the same chapter; "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so;" verse 16; "And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also;" verse 21; "And God created great whales, and every living creature which moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind; and God saw that it was good;" verse 25; "And God made the beast after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind; and God saw that

it was good ;” verse 27 ; “ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them ;” Isaiah xlv, 7 ; “ I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things ;” Col. i, 16 ; “ For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him.” Thus we see the scriptures plainly and abundantly ascribe all things in their creation to God.

3. We observe that right reason and true and strict philosophy ascribe the creation of all things to God no less than the sacred scriptures do. All things must be created by God or not created at all, since no being can create itself. To suppose any thing can create itself involves the grossest absurdity ; because it supposes the thing in question to be, and not to be at the same time. An absurdity so gross that it shocks all that is rational in man. Neither does one created being create others, and thus assist the Deity in the great work of creation. This has ever been found beyond their power. No instance of it has occurred within the knowledge of man. Men, by certain chymical processes, can alter and change the mode of existence with regard to many things very much. But to create, to make something out of nothing is far beyond their power and belongs exclusively to God.

Seeing then no being can create itself, nor any one created being create another, it follows of

course that God must have made all things that exist, or they must have been eternal. But to suppose the globe we inhabit, and the race of men upon it to be eternal, is also absurd, and cannot be admitted by a fair reasoner; because this supposes them to exist necessarily and independently; and consequently, that they are God; for no being exists thus but God. Moreover, there is evidence so plain and so glaring, that the world cannot be eternal, that it possesses all the force of demonstration. Every body of common observation knows, that every shower of rain washes something from the hills and mountains; therefore, had the world been eternal it must long since have been a plain. Thus we find the world cannot be eternal and justly reject the idea, and return to the good old doctrine of the bible, that the great God is the creator of all things whether visible or invisible, "For of him are all things."

II. God is the upholder of all things by the word of his almighty power, and his providence extends to all, for in the language of my text, "Through him are all things."

By God upholding all things I mean that he not only created them and brought them into being at first; but that he is immediately concerned in keeping them in existence still; and that it is necessary that the same almighty power be exerted to continue them in existence, which gave them that existence at first. And, sirs, that the great God is thus immediately concerned in taking care of the creatures he has made, is abundantly manifest from sacred record; and that not only

from my text, but also from a variety of other passages; witness Job xxxviii, 41; "Who provideth for the raven his food? When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat;" Psalm clxv, 16; "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;" Col. i, 17; "And by him all things consist;" Heb. i, 3; "Upholding all things by the word of his power;" Mat. x, 29, 30; "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

2. It appears that God exercises a universal and particular providence from the necessity of the case, and from matter of fact. Men and beasts and other things are upheld in existence, for exist they do. Now, who can uphold them except the Lord? They cannot uphold themselves. Witness the vain attempts of men to live when God says they shall die, or to enjoy health when God says they shall be sick. All medical aid in those cases fails. The great masters of the healing art themselves must bow to the stroke of death when God gives commandment. Rush, even Rush himself, is dead. Is it asked then, what is the use of calling in medical aid? I answer, not to enable men to live when God says they shall die. But to enable them to live the time he allows them, and the means are to be used in this case as well as others. Even the very laws of nature themselves are nothing else than the ceaseless operations of an invisible agent. And the hand of Deity and his counsels are concerned in all the affairs of men.

“ There’s not a sparrow or a worm
 But’s found in his decrees,
 He raises Monarchs to the throne,
 And sinks them as he please.”...WATTS.

Should any think the poet is burdening the Deity with too much business, let them please to consult the following passages; Mat. x, 29, 30; “ Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered;” Acts, ii, 23; “ Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;” Ephes. i, 11; “ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” My infidel friend, who stumbles or sneers at the doctrine of the divine purposes, must recollect that I am a christian in theory at least, if no farther, and therefore profess to believe in God’s eternal purposes and determinations; and also profess to be willing that the Lord should be God; “ The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof;” Psalm xcvi, 1.

III. God’s primary object in all he has done is his own glory. And that he has created all things and continually upholds them for the advancement of the same; “ For to him are all things.” That God’s ultimate end in all his works of creation and providence, is his own glory, is a doctrine quite obvious from his word, and not contradicted by reason and philosophy. To show

that God's own glory is his ultimate object I refer you to the following passages of holy writ; Prov. xvi, 4; "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil;" John xii, 28; "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glory it again;" John xvii, 1; "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said Father glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee."

2. We conceive it to be reasonable for God to seek his own glory because it is the greatest object in the universe, and highly worthy of pursuit. And certainly it is fit and proper that God pursue the greatest and most worthy object. And to suppose the Deity to lay himself out in the pursuit of an inferior object, to the neglect of a superior one, is to suppose him acting very unlike a God and very unworthy of himself.

OBJECTION. But for a man to pursue his own praise and glory, argues a selfish, ungenerous and little mind; and we must not ascribe such exceptionable conduct to God; and this the scriptures seem manifestly to favour; Prov. xxv, 27; "It is not good to eat much honey; so for men to search their own glory is not glory." It is conceded that for a man to make his own glory the prime object of his pursuit, is exceedingly exceptionable, yea, it is of the very nature and essence of sin; and the plain reason is, because his glory is a mere cypher compared with the glory of God, or even with the general good of society. And the lesser good ought not to be pursued in

preference to the greater. But this does not hold with respect to God. For his glory is the greatest object, and therefore to pursue it is right, and not sinful selfishness. But whenever any human creature pursues his own individual interest as the great and supreme object, he is entirely wrong, and acting with sinful selfishness.

1. Learn from this subject the great reason sinners have to fear, who have this great and terrible God for their enemy. If they remain impenitent, how shall they escape? "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?" Job ix, 4. No imposition can be practised on this supreme and almighty judge for want of evidence. He is not like the judges on our earthly tribunals; he will not need to depend on the testimony of others, to come at the knowledge of crimes; he himself is the immediate witness of all our actions. God's holiness will induce him to punish us for sin, and we shall not escape; seeing sin is the great object of the divine detestation. His almighty power will enable him to execute all his pleasure on the wicked and ungodly, and they shall not escape, for "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" Psalm, ix, 17; and "though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished;" Prov. xi, 21; "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it;" Isaiah xxx, 33. Well, then, may the poor sinner

fear and tremble, who hath this almighty God for his enemy.

2. Learn the safety, protection and happiness of God's people, who have this mighty God of Jacob as their everlasting friend. Infinite wisdom chooses their lot, infinite power protects and defends them ; and infinite goodness and mercy wait continually upon them ; their cup abounds with blessings ; their safety is secure, for " who shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" I Pet. iii, 13. Not one, " For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the law of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ;" Rom. viii, 38, 39. Let the people of the Lord be faithful, and assiduous in the cause of their divine master, and " forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before ; let them press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The testimonies of a good conscience belong to the people of God only and exclusively ; " Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;" Psalm cxix, 165 ; " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid ;" John xiv, 27.

3. Learn that whatever machinations of earth and hell, may be formed against the church of God, they will all prove abortive, because the

church is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ; “ And upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ;” Mat. xvi, 18. In vain, then, will be all the attempts of earth and hell, seeing this glorious rock is no other than Christ Jesus himself, the rock of eternal ages ; “ He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet on a rock, and established my goings ;” Psalm xl, 2. When the church of God at sundry times and in different ages has been under the cloud of darkness, her enemies have triumphed, as though she had fallen to rise no more, but strong is the Lord God who supports her ; and anon, supported by this God of infinite power, she arose and put on her beautiful garments, and triumphed over all her enemies ; and so in the name, and under the banners of the Lord of hosts, will she still do, until all her enemies are put under her feet. Poor Thomas Paine was but a bad prophet. About thirty years ago that vain and impious man uttered a prediction in a dungeon in France, that in fifty years from the then present time, there would be no such thing as the christian religion on earth. He predicted that, in that short period it would die the death. Its props, as he contemptuously calls them were, and shortly would be taken away, and so soon as they were gone it could stand no longer. These props were gone in the United States, and in France, and would soon be gone every where else in the great and swelling tide of political revolutions, and then the sacred thing must fall

and languish, and die. As a friend to genuine christianity and the holy cause of God, I rejoice in these props being taken away, by which Mr. Paine means religious establishments. We wish no such props. The genuine and evangelical christian, equally with Mr. Paine, disapproves of these props. If our divine religion, supported as it is, by its sacred author, cannot stand on its own feet without such aids as *establishments*, let it fall. The government that undertakes to support this sacred thing by the aid of establishments shows itself to be utterly ignorant of the nature and merits of genuine christianity; establishments have always gone, and whenever resorted to, always will go to the great injury of this holy thing; it solicits not, neither does it need, any such officious, and inefficient aid; the blessed redeemer has long since informed us that his "kingdom is not of this world;" John xviii, 36. Any man of tolerable information, can easily say what the probability is, of the fulfilment of this prophecy; very shortly after this prediction the ship *Duff* was fitted out by the piety and benevolence of the London Missionary society for the South Sea Islands, and sent there for the sole and express purpose of evangelising the pagan inhabitants. Manifestly under the auspices of heaven's king, this consecrated vessel, in a run of sixteen thousand miles, was blessed with such success and prosperity as nautical men never saw before. Were Mr. Paine here I should take the liberty of asking him whether or not this was done by establishments and the strong hand of government, or

whether it was by virtue of a civil prop, that this heaven favored vessel rode the proud waves so prosperously to Otaheite, the place of her destination that not one of her crew ever said "I am sick," nor even was heard to complain of the scurvy, so common amongst sea faring people. And even that sneering infidel, who has only grinned and laughed where his more rational brethren Voltaire, Hume and Bolingbroke, have attempted to reason, would be constrained to answer, no. No money from the coffers of government was expended in procuring and fitting out the ship Duff. This hallowed floating tabernacle was procured and furnished by that consecrated gold and silver which the hand of christian charity poured so liberally into the treasury of the Lord. Since the immodest infidel uttered his prediction of the death of christianity in fifty years, there has been a spread of that divine religion, over a far greater extent of the globe than religion ever spread over before in the same short space of time, even the little space of twenty-five or thirty years. A few days ago I was politely favored by a gentleman of my acquaintance with the reading of a letter written him by his brother, from the island of Ceylon; which I find on examining a globe, to be just half round the world, from where I write; the author, one of those self denied men, who have gone half round the world and become our antipodes, that they might publish the gospel to those who have hitherto sat in the region of darkness, and shadow of death. O my divine religion! emanating from my God and maker, thou shalt

live and flourish and bless mankind by thy benign influence, when such poor, snarling, sneering, bickering things shall be dead and lost, and their memories forgotten; whilst their cavils and their sneers, and their writings, shall affect thee, and thy great interests about as much as “Barking animals affright the moon sublime, when riding on her midnight way.”

4. Learn from this subject God’s absolute and undoubted right, to do with all things according to his righteous pleasure. He made and upholds all things that be, by the word of his almighty power. And seeing they are his, he has an undoubted right to govern and dispose of them according to his righteous and sovereign pleasure. Nor is there the least ground for uneasiness, on the part of his intelligent creatures, seeing all his decisions will be regulated by infallible rectitude. The virtuous and holy, will be rewarded with everlasting happiness and glory; and the wicked and ungodly, will be punished according to the demerit of their ungodly deeds. The great judge of all the earth will do infallibly right.

5. Learn that to seek God’s glory, is the first and immediate duty of every moral agent. We learn from this subject, that this is the greatest object in the universe, and the primary object of God’s own pursuit; and we ought to be workers together with him.

6. Learn that absolute and unconditional submission to the divine will, is the indispensable duty of every reasonable creature. God has an undoubted right to dispose of events; seeing there is

none so wise, so just and good as he is, and therefore, every intelligent creature ought to be duly submissive. Duty is ours, events are God's. Let us press forward with zeal and diligence, in the discharge of the duties he requires, and leave events in his hand, who will dispose of them in the best manner. Let the great object of our solicitude be, to do what God requires; not to order what belongs to God to order.

7. Learn the indispensable necessity, and strict propriety, of sinners speedily making their peace with God. Here, there is safety and protection. Whoever is in covenant with God, shall escape the wrath to come; while such as are not thus in covenant with him, are exposed to his vengeance and indignation, and must eventually drink the cup of his wrath. Let as many then, as are yet in the gall of bitterness, and the bonds of iniquity, escape from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel, which, may the Lord of his infinite mercy enable them to do, for the Redeemer's sake. AMEN.

SERMON XXXVI.



THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF TRUE SAINTS
ATTEMPTED TO BE PROVED.



Ezekiel, XVIII, 26.

“When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die.”

IT appears from the preceding parts of this chapter, that the Jews found very great fault with the dispensations of divine providence, and accused the works of the Almighty as being unequal; saying, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge;” that their forefathers had sinned, and they were called to suffer for their transgressions; than which, no charge ever was more absolutely false and unfounded. The Lord, in the 3d verse and downward, swears by his own existence, they should no longer have occasion to use this proverb; “As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall no longer have occasion to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” verses 3 and 4. See the passage at large to the 19th

verse; which, with the following verses to my text, reads thus; "Yet say ye, why? Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins, which he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions which he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness, which he hath done, shall not be mentioned; in his trespass, that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die."

I presume, sirs, the righteous man here mentioned, does not mean the really pious and godly man, whose heart has been the subject of a divine change; nor does the righteousness here spoken of, mean that righteousness which results from a heart changed by grace. But the righteousness here spoken of, is no other than that kind of righteousness which may be performed by a man whose heart has never been changed, and from which the man may turn utterly and entirely away; and he is called in my text a righteous man, because he had conformed in his conduct to the requirements of the divine law. And this is using language according to common sense, and common acceptation. I know at this moment, as righteous and strictly just men in all their dealings, and commercial matters, as I know in the world, who are not professors of religion at all, and who have never experienced a saving change. These people, not having the grace of God in their hearts, may turn away from their just and righteous conduct, and become dishonest, unjust and rapacious. And these men are assured, that if they turn away from all their righteousness, and commit iniquity, and die under the influence of unholy principles, they shall be lost. And I humbly presume this is all the passage contemplates.

This text, on which I have been very respectfully requested by an anonymous note, to preach, will lead me to investigate the doctrine of the saints final perseverance. And that I should do so, was manifestly the design of the writer of the note.

And as I believe the application to be made by a person, who wishes satisfaction on the subject in her own mind, which has hitherto wavered, I the more cheerfully comply with the request. I believe it is well known that I have an aversion to theological controversy, and am not in the habit of leading my hearers into its thorny mazes. Nor shall I consider myself at all, as acting in the least degree contrary to my general principles, on the present occasion. I shall not say one solitary word for the sake of controversy, or with a view to triumphant victory. I solemnly forbid those unhallowed principles to obtrude themselves on my mind. I shall offer my views to the public with candor and tenderness towards those who may differ from me in their views of this subject, and with no design to give them offence or hurt their feelings. And all my aversion to useless and ill-tempered controversy, shall not prevent me from trying to satisfy a candid and humble enquirer about any of the doctrines of our divine and holy religion, concerning which I have any decided opinions. On the doctrine this subject plainly brings into view, my opinion is decided, and to myself, satisfactory. This opinion, and the grounds on which it rests, will now be plainly and humbly submitted to the public, in the following discourse, and that without any alienation of affection from those who may differ. The writer of the note making the request, observes, that in submitting my views of this subject, I would not only gratify the writer, but also a number of others.

In treating this subject, I design

I. To prove as clearly as I can, by direct and positive texts of scripture, the final and infallible perseverance of all true saints.

II. I will state with clearness and precision, my views of various passages of sacred writ, which I have always understood to be the strong-hold of those, who deny this doctrine; and endeavor to show that they do not teach a final apostacy from a state of grace.

III. That the doctrine of the saint's final perseverance, is favorable to holy practice, and promotes the comfort of evangelical christians.

I. I am to prove the final perseverance, and eternal salvation, of all real saints. This, to be satisfactory to a candid enquirer, must be done from scripture alone. And here I confess freely, and with candor, that were there no other passage in holy writ that touched this subject but my text, I should admit the doctrine of final apostacy; but when I compare this, with a hundred other passages of holy writ, and compare the general teaching of the whole, I cannot admit this doctrine; and of course, must assign to the words of my text some other meaning. In order, then, to show with the greatest certainty possible, the final perseverance of the saints, and that no one soul ever once in covenant with God, will finally be lost, we commence with the teachings of the Saviour; John vi, 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Now, the Saviour here states plainly, that it is the will of God that every one

who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life, and then pledges himself to execute that will. Now, if God does will and choose the eternal salvation of the believer, and if the Saviour pledges himself to execute that will, then your humble speaker cannot see how the believing soul is to be lost. Reflect well on this matter, my friends. Verse 44, last clause, "and I will raise him up at the last day." Here the Saviour's solemn pledge is repeated. Reflect well on this. John x, 27—30, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." I presume, sirs, this passage needs no comment; nay, it scarce admits it. The express assertion is, that Christ's sheep know his voice and follow him, and that they shall never perish. What more do we want to lay this debate to rest?

We next present you with St. Paul's testimony on this interesting point. Rom. viii, 38, to the end. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." No affected or sickly commentary is offered here; the passage admits it not; the language is altogether as plain as it can be. I leave it as I found it, in its peerless simplicity.

Let us hear St. Peter next; 1 Peter, i, 3—5; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again, unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." No commentary attempted.

II. I am to state my views of a few passages of sacred writ, adduced by those who oppose this doctrine of the saints final perseverance, and which I have always understood to be their strong-hold. Here I shall simply state what satisfies my own mind on the subject, and pass on without any farther observations.

1. I believe the words of my text is a subject on which the opposers of the saints final and infallible perseverance, found their views as much as any other. On this portion of scripture I have delivered my sentiments in my introduction, and which I presume are correct. The next scripture adduced against this doctrine is, Heb. vi, 4—6, "For it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." For the better understanding this long contested passage, be it recollected, the apostle wrote in an age of miracles, and to the Hebrews too, amongst whom the holy spirit was first poured out in his

miraculous operations ; that the persons spoken of, had been enlightened, and had obtained that measure of knowledge necessary to church membership. They had tasted the heavenly gift, and had been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, in his miraculous operations, such as speaking with tongues, discoursing on divine subjects with supernatural fluency. So that their own experience was, or should have been, to them, a proof of the truth of the gospel. And thus it is, we presume, they were enlightened and made partakers of the Holy Ghost. That there existed such miraculous gifts in that age is plain enough from the writings of the apostles ; 1 Cor. xiv, 1—5, “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men but God : for no man understandeth him ; howbeit, in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, edifieth himself, but he that prophesieth, edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied ; for greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying ;” Verse 22 ; “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not : but prophesying serveth not, for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” Now all this might exist without any sanctifying influence ; “They had moreover tasted of the good word of God.”

And their convictions, impressions, and transient affections, convinced them that it was a good word. And, sirs, all this is no more than may be, and often is felt by many people, not yet in a state of regeneracy. Witness the stony ground hearers; Mat. xiii, 20—22; “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he cometh unfruitful.” They had tasted the powers of the world to come; and so they might, under their temporary realizing apprehension of a future state and of happiness or misery. All these things take place, except miraculous powers, in people who still remain unregenerate. They have knowledge, fear, convictions, joys, and seasons of apparent earnestness; yet their hearts are not really changed and humbled.

Another text on which much stress is laid is, that which speaks of Judas Iscariot. It is alleged this man fell from grace. But permit me to ask, sirs, where there is one solitary particle of evidence, that Judas ever was a pious man? I presume there is none at all. Did not the mild and gentle Saviour call him a devil long before he betrayed him, and while he was a member of his family? John, vi, 70; “Jesus answered, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” Is not testimony

borne of him that he was a thief, and that, too, at a time when he had made a display of something more like piety than usual ; John, xii, 4—6, “Then said one of his disciples, Simon’s son who should betray him, why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor ? This he said, not that he cared for the poor ; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” Now, let the candid judge, whether a man, who was both a thief and devil, were likely to be a good christian. It is conceded that appearances exist in society very much like falling from grace. But the apostle John accounts for all these, without admitting the doctrine of final apostacy ; I John, ii, 19 ; “They went out from us, but they were not of us : for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us ; but they went out, that it might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.” These people had for a time attached themselves to the christian church ; they professed religion, and for a time looked as christian-like as others ; but presently apostatized. Now, how was it that they fell away ? And did they fall from grace, or for want of grace ? The latter, manifestly. And so with a thousand others, they fall for want of grace ; not from grace.

III. The doctrine of the saints final perseverance is favorable to holy living, and comfortable to the saints.

We teach perseverance. What is this perseverance ? Going right on our way I answer ; and neither stopping nor turning aside to the right

hand, nor the left. Is this calculated to make a man sit down, or become stationary or retrograde?

Does not the doctrine we often hear preached on this subject go to exhibit the christian as following Christ for little else than the loaves? Does not the real christian serve God more from love than fear? Ought not all to do the same? But if the true believer discovers such an excellence in the divine character, that he is charmed therewith, and if he follows Christ from love, is there any danger, that assuring him, that whom the saviour loves he loves unto the end; John xiii, 1; will make him love his saviour less or cause him to relax his endeavors to please God? I presume, sirs, every true believer discovers such a divine charm in the service of God, and in true religion, as is more operative on his mind than all the fear in the world. And is not that a most comfortable doctrine to the christian, which presents to his mind future happiness as certain and infallible?

APPLICATION.

Whatever difference of sentiment may exist amongst us, with respect to the saints final perseverance, I presume we are all agreed in this point, that they ought to persevere. Here we have no contest; Calvinists and Arminians are agreed here. Let us provoke one another to love and good works. Let us indulge no alienation of affection on account of some difference of sentiment on this subject. Let us encourage each other to the strictest diligence in running all the

length of the celestial road. Let love be without dissimulation. Let us abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good; Rom. xii, 9. Let us indulge in no bitterness of temper toward each other; but ever bear in mind that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

SERMON XXXVII.



YOUNG MEN CAREFULLY WARNED AGAINST
THE DANGER OF BAD COMPANY, AND EAR-
NESTLY DISSUADED FROM SUCH COMPANY.



PREACHED AT MURFREESBORO' TENN. IN JUNE
1819, IN PRESENCE OF ABOUT FIVE THOU-
SAND HEARERS, WHILE A YOUNG MAN SAT
UNDER THE GALLOWES, AWAITING AN IGNO-
MINIOUS EXECUTION, ACCORDING TO A SEN-
TENCE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT, PRONOUNC-
ED ON HIM BY THE HONORABLE JUDGE
ISAACS. THIS DISCOURSE WAS DELIVERED
ON THAT MELANCHOLY OCCASION, AT THE
PARTICULAR REQUEST OF COL. M. MC'CLAN-
AHAN, SHERIFF OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY.

Proverbs, IV, 14, 15.

*“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go
not in the way of evil men, avoid it, pass not
by it, turn from it, pass away.”*

IF there is any regard to be paid to the opinion
of king Solomon, the wisest of men, and guided
by the unerring spirit of God; then bad company
is a very bad thing, and extremely ensnaring to
the souls of men. And numerous are the sons of
men, who have received from this mischievous

and dangerous thing their utter overthrow, and that, too, with respect to both worlds. And as it is pernicious to all who expose themselves to it, so it is singularly ensnaring and ruinous to youth. The author of our text, that great judge of men and manners, when addressing his son on the benefits of wisdom and knowledge, mentions it as one of them, that they would preserve the person possessed of them, from evil company ; Prov. ii, 10—20 ; “ When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul ; discretion shall preserve thee ; understanding shall keep thee ; to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things ; who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness ; who rejoyce to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked ; whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths ; to deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words ; which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.”

This same sacred writer gives us a most dreadful description of evil female company, and the destruction and ruin which attend it, and very forcibly exhorts unwary youth to avoid them most cautiously ; chap. v, 1—14 ; “ My son attend unto my wisdom and bow thine ear to my

understanding ; that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil ; but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword ; her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell ; lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life ; her ways are moveable that thou canst not know them. Hear me now, therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth ; remove thy way far from her, and come not near the door of her house ; lest thou give thine honor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel ; lest strangers be filled with thy wealth and thy labours be in the house of a stranger ; and thou mourn at the last when thy flesh and thy body are consumed ; and say how have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear unto them that instructed me ! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.”

Another representation nearly similar we have in chap. vi, 20—29 ; “ My son keep thy father’s commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother ; bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light ; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life ; to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange

woman ; lust not after her beauty in thy heart, neither let her take thee with her eye lids ; for by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread ; and the adulteress will hunt for the innocent life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt ? Can a man go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt ? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife ; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent." And in the words of my text we are dissuaded from the company of bad men ; " Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

In treating this subject a little more at large I shall show ;

I. What we are to understand by the evil company against which we are warned in my text, and how far we are to avoid it, or in what sense.

II. I shall propose some dissuasives against evil company, then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. I am to show you what that evil company is against which we are and ought to be warned in my text, and in what sense, and how far we are to avoid it.

By these wicked men we may understand, in the general, all who have not the fear of God before their eyes, and are not conscientiously endeavoring to serve the most high. There are certainly various and very great degrees of wickedness, some going to much greater lengths of enormity and profligacy than others, but none can be called

good and profitable company to a believer or well meaning man, who are not endeavoring to act conscientiously in the fear of the Lord ; and as there are various degrees of wickedness, our care to shun the company of ungodly men should always be proportioned to the degree of their enormity and guilt. And no doubt there are some wicked men, whose company is much more undesirable than others, and whose example is much worse than some others.

I think we may rank at the head of those wicked and evil men into whose path we are not to enter, unbelievers in, and scoffers at, the holy religion of Jesus Christ. Many of those men of unbelief and opposition to the Saviour, may have certain qualities, notwithstanding their infidelity, which may be pleasing and agreeable. But how pleasing soever their qualities may be, or however fine their address, they are certainly unprofitable and dangerous companions. And by how much the more smooth and insinuating they are in their manners, by so much the more dangerous they are likely to prove as companions, because the young and unwary are the more likely to be taken in with them, and to conform to their sentiments as well as their manners. Beware of this description of wicked men, my young and unsuspecting friends. There is certainly much truth and force in the following laconic aphorism of doctor Young ; “ A foe to God was ne’er true friend to man.” And whatever pretences these men may make of regard to Almighty God, and to the great and valuable rules of strict and pure morality, yet are they not to

be trusted, if we may believe the apostle John. He has spent his opinion with entire frankness ; 1 John ii, 23; Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Are men who deny the Lord who bought them, to be trusted safely? Are they entitled to the confidence of society, equally with other men? Suppose you elect a man of such principles to the first office in your free and happy government, and administer the oath of office ; you swear him on the holy evangelists of Almighty God, that he will well and truly, and with good faith, administer the government. Is there any sense in what you have done? Will not an enlightened, well informed boy of ten years old, smile at it as a perfect farce, and that of the most empty description? He swears on the holy evangelists to do his duty, and then turns round and tells you, that the evangelists are a mere fable of the worst contrived, and most bungling kind. Now, in all fairness and good conscience, might you not just as well have sworn him on Æsop's fables, or last year's almanac. He will not feel his conscience bound any more by the one than the other.

The profane in their language, compose another large and shameful class of ungodly men, who ought to be shunned by all who wish to retain their character, their conscience, and their peace. Nobody in his senses can presume to say, that profane swearers are not ill company, and that those who associate with such men, are in no danger of contracting this ungodly, shameful habit. Young people who associate with such men, are in utmost danger of contracting this useless, this wicked and

most unreasonable habit. But do you ask what evil will ensue in consequence of swearing? Nobody is put in jail or hanged for swearing. If the officers of justice do their duty, swearers are fined, and their money taken for this wicked practice. But, sirs, should those whose duty requires them to enforce their country's laws, neglect their duty through backwardness to punish a vice, of which themselves are as guilty as any body else; still infinitely the greatest evil incurred by profanity, awaits them; and this they certainly shall not escape. This evil is eternal punishment in a future world; "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain;" Exodus xx, 7. Would any parent in this assembly feel willing that his son should grow up, and come forward into life, in the habits of the vilest profanity? If not, ought he to suffer him, with his knowledge and consent, to associate free, and without restraint, with the vilest men? Or ought he by his own act and deed, to place his son in a situation, where he must know he will necessarily have to associate with the most vile and wicked men? These questions are designed for the reflection of parents; and more especially, professing parents.

The angry, the quarrelsome and enraged, who are always disturbing the peace of society, are another class of wicked men, who ought to be shunned by all who wish to maintain their peace and their purity. Angry and quarrelsome men are bad companions for any body; but more especially for unwary youth, whose principles are not yet well established. See the scripture direction on this

subject ; “ Make no friendship with an angry man ; and with a furious man thou shalt not go : lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul ;” Prov. xxii, 24, 25 ; “ An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression ;” Prov. xxix, 22.

The drunkards, the tiplers, the grog drinkers, compose another large class against whom I would solicitously warn all who as yet retain their innocence and virtue. By these men, I do not mean the greatest drunkards only, such as fall and wallow in the mire of the streets ; but likewise all such as are strong, and prone to mingle strong drink ; all such as go on drinking matches, when they have no other business. If it be too much to assert that no strong drink ought to be used, it is certainly not going too far to say that men ought never to leave their business and go after it, and spend a considerable portion of their time in lying about drinking houses ; while their children are crying, piteously crying for bread, and none to give them ; and their wives’ hearts almost broken by the conduct of husbands who fail any longer to nourish and cherish them, as they voluntarily and deliberately promised to do at the altar of God. All company of the above description, then, is bad company, and ought to be shunned by all who wish to maintain their characters and good standing in society.

The immoëst, the licentious and debauched, compose another large class of wicked men, who ought to be most carefully shunned, and especially by all modest young men, who wish to maintain their peace and their honor. To hear a set of these

polluted, abandoned debauchees, vieing with each other in detailing the exploits of their impiety and vileness, is almost enough to put to the blush the hardest devil in tophet. O my dear youths, flee from such company, if you feel the least disposition to keep your garments clean, and unspotted from the flesh; "Enter not into the vile polluted path of these wicked and ungodly men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away."

Gamblers, sirs, your men of play, compose another large class of the wicked, who ought to be conscientiously shunned by all who would support any well founded claims to moral honesty. What is this but a safer description of stealing or robbery? The thief wishes his neighbors property, without any value given for it; the gambler does the same. The thief actually takes his neighbors property, without rendering any value for it; the gambler does the same. And the chief difference I am able to discover betwixt the actual thief and the gambler, consists chiefly in ropes, stripes, branding-irons, pillories and penitentiaries, and not in moral principle at all. And I must seriously think it is a matter of much regret, that the laws of the state do not attach the same pains and penalties to the two crimes, seeing they are so easily shown to be the same in point of principle; "Enter not then into the path of the wicked," &c. Gamblers, then, are wicked and evil men, whose path ought to be shunned.

Under this head, we are to show also, how far we are to shun such company as has been suggested. I presume we are so far to avoid it, as

never to be in it unnecessarily. Neither ought we ever to make it the company of our choice. We are not required so to avoid it, as never to be in it at all, on any occasion whatever; "For then must we needs go out of the world;" I Cor. v, 10. Our necessary and lawful business we may, and ought to transact, with all men. We are not so to shun it, as never to be in it for the purpose of administering reproof. So did not Jesus Christ avoid it. We find he associated with publicans and sinners. But for what purpose was the blessed Jesus at any time in such company? Not indeed that he delighted in it; not to copy a bad example; not to give his countenance, and the weight of his character to wrong doing; but that he might counsel and advise those wicked men, and do them good. We may herein very safely, and in perfect consistency with our duty, copy the example of our divine Saviour. We may with propriety be in their company for the same exalted purposes. We may copy with entire safety, the bright example of our blessed Lord.

II. I am to propose to your consideration some dissuasives against evil company. These I think may all be comprised with great propriety, under the two following things;

1. The evils to which you will thereby be exposed; and

2. The rational enjoyments and pleasures which you will thereby forego. The evils to which you will thereby be exposed, will be such as the following:

1. It will have a great tendency to blunt all the

serious fervor of your minds, if you have ever been the subject of any such thing. Is any thing more directly calculated to deaden the fervors of devotion than irreligious company, and this, when the pious man exposes himself much to the company of those, who have no taste for serious religion, even suppose they are not the very worst of characters? Not more certainly is a fire-brand quenched by being thrown into the snow or rain, than the fervor of a man of piety suffers by frequenting the company of those, who have no relish at all for serious godliness.

2. Another evil resulting from the company of wicked men is, that you will be exposed to a multitude of temptations. Yea, you will stand on the very ground of danger. Mankind are extremely imitative, and very apt to resemble the company they frequent; and if so, then how likely shall we be, by keeping bad company, to fall into bad practices too? "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and not be burnt, can a man go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" Prov. vi, 27, 28. Often-times when young people expose their virtue and their principles in such company, very little are they aware of the danger to which they are exposing themselves, or what the end of these things will be. There are many persons in the world, who once would have shuddered at the idea of the guilty practices in which they are now indulging, almost without remorse. They did not go into these base and exceptionable practices, all at one step. No, sirs, they went into them by grades almost imperceptible to themselves. One step in sinful

indulgence made way for another, till the conscience became seared and callous; and the poor miserable backslider at length sinned without control. I have often thought that a course of vice might well be compared to a man running down hill. With regard to the man running down hill, every step increases the velocity of the following; and thus the man runs with increasing pace till he arrives at the bottom. Just so every step taken in the way of vice, increases the violence of the succeeding; till the heart becomes hardened, and the conscience seared; till at length he passes the Rubicon, and his eternal destruction becomes sealed. Sinner, beware how you indulge in vice; christian professor, be thou doubly aware.

3. You will hereby be thrown very much out of the way of repentance and reformation. It has a tendency to harden your hearts in sin, to sear your consciences as with a hot iron, and of consequence, to put you out of the way of repentance and reformation. In proportion as evil company is frequented, good company must be neglected; and oftentimes even the stated hours of God's most holy worship are neglected. Now, how much the one or the other of these might have been blessed to the man's repentance and reformation, the wisest cannot tell, but it is all lost, however, by evil company. The good company that the sinner has neglected, might have been blessed in several ways to his repentance and reformation. The sober, rational conversation of good company might have been greatly blessed to his edification, and have been the mean of his conversion. The

pious, guarded and edifying example, might have been highly beneficial.

4. Great temporal inconvenience often results from going in the way of evil men. This is too glaring to be denied. Such as the following are often attached to it. Great expenses, which are often the ruin of families. Witness the many families who are reduced to a state of starvation, or very nearly so, within our own personal acquaintance. Clubs of bad company are not generally supported without great expence, besides the consumption of time. The consequences are often serious and deplorable. The debts contracted, the time lost from business, must soon have a lamentably serious consequence on the concerns of a man of very moderate property; his family must, and in fact generally do, suffer. Very often the man in a mere mediocrity of circumstances, or perhaps far below that; even the poor man, in these expensive bad clubs, must bear an equal share of the expence with the rich man, which must soon reduce his affairs to the most desperate condition, while the rich man may bear it. Besides all this, in these clubs of bad men, quarrels originate, which eventually lead to expensive law suits, which reduce many to extreme indigence. Permit me to ask where most of those low and scandalous quarrels which come into our courts of justice, originate? Do they originate with the industrious, honest man in his corn or cotton field? O no sir, the well cultivated farm is not only the source of plenty, and an honorable independence, but it is also the abode of peace and quietness. These quarrels are generally among

your tavern haunters, and those clubs of bad men, that are so often hanging about drinking houses. The confidence of the wise, the virtuous and the good, is generally forfeited by frequenting bad company, and character is lost. Health is repeatedly impaired by frequenting bad company, and very often a premature death brought on.

5. Eternal misery in hell, with sinful companions, is often the consequence of being led astray by their society here. Without repentance, this must inevitably be the case; "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished;" Prov. xi, 21. Let sinners reflect seriously on this dreadful subject, that as they join in sinning here, so they shall be punished together hereafter, and there shall be no relief.

II. Take into view the rational pleasures and enjoyments you will forego, by frequenting bad company.

1. You will forego a great deal of pleasure which might be enjoyed in sober reflection on God's glory, nature, attributes and government. The Psalmist says, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." This peace, we presume, is not enjoyed much by those who frequent the company of the ungodly. Thus, then, this sacred source of enjoyment, this tranquil and quiet pleasure, is utterly and forever lost. Another rational enjoyment lost by those who frequent the company of the wicked, is communion and spiritual fellowship with the righteous. That there does subsist a sweet communion and fellowship amongst the righteous, and with one another, is

plain from scripture ; I John, i, 3 ; “ That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also might have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” To this sacred fellowship they are strangers who frequent the company of the wicked and ungodly. The enjoyments of the wicked and irreligious, are all tarnished, “ and are but like the crackling of thorns under a pot ;” Eccles. vii, 6.

You will reap no advantages from the company of the wicked and ungodly, which will counter-balance the disadvantages which you sustain from associating with them. The wicked, generally speaking, are people in whom no confidence is to be reposed. They cannot be depended on. They are very often found to be unfaithful, unfeeling, hard hearted, cruel and unjust. The most they will do in general, is to afford you a dinner, a drink, and a noisy burst of laughter. But come into real distress, and they will seldom assist you much to get out ; they will very often pass you by as heedless as the priest and Levite did the man who fell amongst the thieves. Though, perhaps, they hugged you in their drink, in the day of your prosperity, and called you brother. Learn,

1. If so many evils and dangers attend wicked company, then how careful ought parents, and other guardians of young people to be, to keep their children and youth out of the way of evil and seducing men, and guard them against the snares and dangers that await them. How criminally negligent are some parents on this subject, who

are otherwise people of good character? Witness the case of Eli and his sons; I Samuel, iii, 11—14; “And the Lord said to Samuel, behold I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: When I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore, have I sworn to the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice, nor offering forever.” Some parents are so tender of their children’s feelings, that they will suffer them to go to almost any lengths of wickedness, rather than check or control them. This is all false tenderness, and beneath the dignity of a parent. And so long as children remain in their fathers houses, they ought to be subject to their authority. And that authority the parent ought to exercise.

2. How careful ought young people to be in the choice of a companion for life, who have that choice yet to make. Very serious are the consequences to a believer, of being connected for life to an unbeliever, and so thousands have found it, and keen has been the smart they have felt for their rashness and temerity in forming such a connection.

3. How much reason have you to be thankful, my friends, if God has shewn you the snares, and delivered you from the danger, of evil company? Has he brought you to prefer that which is good?

“ See, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools
but as wise;” Ephesians, v, 15.

SERMON XXXVIII.



SELF APPROBATION THE GREAT GROUND OF
RATIONAL AND SUBSTANTIAL ENJOYMENT.



Galatians, VI, 4.

“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”

ALL mankind are engaged in pursuit of happiness, and but a very small proportion of them find any high degree of this sacred thing. Nor is this much to be wondered at, when we consider that they do not seek it in the right place, nor in the right way. The multitude are seeking this sacred thing in the violation of God's commandments, which is certainly not the right way; and they are going abroad in pursuit of it; which is not the right place; for they ought to seek it at home. Whenever our happiness depends on things extraneous to ourselves, it is very precarious and uncertain. When its sources are in ourselves, then I presume it is more certain and satisfactory; and this appears to have been the opinion of the great apostle of the Gentiles in the words of my text; “But let every man prove his own work, and then

shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

The apostle in our preceding context exhorts those who were spiritual, to restore a brother overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness, and not to be too confident or self-sufficient; and also to bear one another's burdens, and fulfil the law of Christ. He sets before those Galatians, also, the glaring danger of self-conceit and vain glory; verse 3; "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." In the words of our text, he directs them to let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; as if he had said, some men rejoice in their party, some in the applauses and encomiums of their fellow men; but these are not quite sufficient to satisfy a wise and reflecting man. The right way is for every man to prove his own work; to see and be happily assured, that he is in the favor of God, and in the road to happiness and heaven, and then he shall have the noblest sources of enjoyment in himself, independent of public opinion.

I propose to show,

I. Who have a right to rejoicing in themselves.

II. Point out some of their sources of joy who have rejoicing in themselves.

III. Show why their ground of rejoicing is infinitely preferable to that of mere worldly men. And then conclude with some inferences and application.

I I am to show who have a right to rejoicing in themselves.

I presume, sirs, none have a right to rejoicing in themselves but true and genuine christians. When the apostle directs every man to prove his own work, I would suppose, he means no less than to prove, and render it entirely certain to the satisfaction of his own mind, that his works are wrought in God, that he is a true christian. My reason for so thinking is, that the scriptures elsewhere represent true believers as the only people that have a true and substantial right to rejoice; II Chron. vi, 11; "Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in thee; Psalm v, 11; "But let all those who put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them also who love thy name be joyful in thee;" Psalm lxxviii, 3; "But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice;" Psalm cv, 3; "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord;" Isaiah lxxv, 13; "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink but ye shall be thirsty; behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed;" Luke vi, 23; "Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy;" John xiv, 28; "If ye loved me ye would rejoice;" Phil. iii, 3; "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Now let us compare what God says to the wicked with regard to this matter; Joel i, 5; "Awake ye drunkards, and weep and howl all ye drinkers of wine;"

James v, 1—6; “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter; ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.”

Then, sirs, I presume only those, whose works are wrought in God, or, in other words, true christians, have a right to rejoicing in themselves; while wicked men have cause of weeping, lamentation and woe.

But a very important question here presents itself to view, and demands an answer. Who are these true christians, and what is their character? This serious question I answer in the language of God’s word; “If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new;” II Cor. v, 17. He is a new creature, he is born of God. The new creation or birth is a moral change, or a change from enmity to love. The scriptures bear direct testimony, that the carnal mind is in a state of hatred and opposition to God; Rom. viii, 7; “Because the carnal mind is

enmity against God, because it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." Now, this new creation spoken of, consists in eradicating this dreadful principle of enmity, and implanting the love of God in that heart, where this enmity formerly reigned. So that the same individual who formerly hated God and his government now loves them. This new created soul now delights in the law of God after the inward man; and finds his most exalted pleasure in the divine service. This law always produces frequent and affectionate thoughts of the beloved object; Psalm, cix, 17, 18; "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! if I should count them they are more in number than the sand, when I wake I am still with thee." This, I presume, is the nature of love in all cases; it leads the soul to reflect frequently and with much satisfaction on the beloved object. Witness the affectionate wife, when the business of her husband calls him long from home, how repeatedly, how affectionately, does she think of him? How often is the image of the man she loves, present to the view of her mind during his absence. This love leads the soul, who in reality possesses it, to delight in communion and intercourse with God; Solomon's song viii, 1—4; "O that thou wert as my brother, who sucked the breasts of my mother, when I would find thee without I should kiss thee, yea, I should not be despised; I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me; I would cause thee to

drink of my spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate; his left hand should be under my head and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please." In order to enjoy this precious communion, those who love God will be particular in waiting on Him in the sacred ordinances which his infinite wisdom has appointed. The pious man can make the language of the psalmist his own; "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand, I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness;" Psalm lxxxiv, 10. This love renders the soul restless and uneasy, if he is, at any time denied that sweet access to God which he has hitherto enjoyed; Job xxiii, 3, 4; "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, I would fill my mouth with arguments;" Job xxix, 2, 3; "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined on my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness." With regard to those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, those who are sincere christians, "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new;" old enmity has passed away; old selfishness; old unbelief; old impenitence; old prayerlessness; old inattention; old profanity; old neglect of the sabbath; old malevolence; old impurity; old intemperance; old injustice, and their contraries, have taken place and are regent in the heart.

2. To the question "Who are christians?" I answer, they who have the spirit of Christ, and are led thereby; Rom. viii, 14; "For as many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God;" compare the 9th verse of the same chapter; "But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." Those who are christians have the spirit of Christ in another sense; they have his meek and self-denied and lowly temper; they are humbly submissive to their heavenly Father's will; they are forbearing and forgiving to their fellow men; they are prayerful and devout.

II. I am to point out some of their sources of joy who have ground of rejoicing in themselves. One source of their joy is, that they feel a sweet sense of pardoned sin. Certainly to feel that our sins are pardoned, and that we never shall come into condemnation, is calculated to inspire the soul with substantial joy. When we realise that we have passed from death to life, under the sacred influence of the Holy Ghost, and that we shall never come into condemnation, how does this reflection tranquillise and spread through the soul a sacred joy and delight.

2. Another very great source of joy to those who know the Lord is, peace of conscience; this is the happy portion of the saints; Psalm cxix, 165; "Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;" John xiv, 27; "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." This is certainly a rational source of joy

in ourselves ; something for which we are not dependent on the smiles and flatteries of the world ; it is something which the world cannot bestow, and it is as certain it cannot take it away.

3. The pious man is not afraid to meet his own heart, and converse with himself. It is certainly a very great matter to the christian, to be furnished with delight and joy in conversing with his own soul, even at the dark hour of midnight, and in deepest solitude, while the guilty and defiled must seek refuge from themselves, in the noise and bustle of the crowd. That man is certainly an object of compassion, who cannot meet his own heart with ease and quiet, nor spend a night by himself in a dark room without fear and alarm.

4. Another source of joy and delight to the good man is, that he can face death without dread, and receive his pointed spear ; Psalm xxiii, 4 ; “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” O how divine a blessing to have death, that last enemy, unstung ; is he not the king of terrors to ten thousand times ten thousands of the guilty sons of men ? And is he not the terror of kings too.

5. Another source of the good man’s joy is, that all things shall work together for his good ; and all the dispensations of the divine providence being sanctified by grace to his soul, shall promote his eternal salvation ; Rom. viii, 28 ; “And we know that all things work together for good, to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose ;” and that he is advancing

nearer to his heavenly mansion every hour.

6. Another source of his joy and consolation is, that whatever troubles and dulness may betide him now, in this tabernacle of clay, he knows they will all soon be at an end, and heavenly and eternal joy succeed. This consoles him, yea more, this rejoices him, amidst all the gloomy troubles and pressures of life.

III. I am to show why the christian's ground of rejoicing, is infinitely preferable to that of the worldly man.

1. Because the believer's enjoyments being self-derived or within himself, are much more certain, and not subject to so much fluctuation and caprice, as those of the worldly man, whose enjoyments are all derived from things without himself. The worldly man is, as we may say, the mere plaything of fortune, and all his enjoyments extremely uncertain. Does the worldling rejoice in his wealth and riches? How soon may these make themselves wings of either water or flame, and fly from his embrace, as in a moment? How quickly have many been stripped of their substance, then wretchedness and despair, and even fell suicide itself, has succeeded. Not so with the humble christian; is he stripped of outward good things; yet, his principal sources of enjoyment remain untouched; "For he hath rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Does the worldly man rejoice in fame, in honor, and preferment, the very voice of the public, which cries, hosannah to-day may cry, crucify to-morrow, and then, having no source of enjoyment in himself, he sinks

under chagrin and disappointed ambition ; and where is his happiness now ? Fallen, gone ; but might not the public voice disappoint in like manner a man of piety ? Certainly. But the great difference lies here ; supported by conscious innocence and rectitude, he enjoys himself still, for his ground of rejoicing is in himself alone, and not in another. Here, then, his ground of rejoicing is incalculably superior. Suppose carnal pleasures and low sensual gratification is his source of enjoyment ; how quickly do such pleasures pall upon the sense ?

But suppose the best, that the worldling's riches, honors, &c. last coeval with life, yet how speedily are they gone ? What can they promise beyond the grave ! Ah ! see the gloomy end of the wicked and ungodly ; he dies without God, and without hope ; he has no consolation in the article of dissolution ; either he dies under the awful forebodings of eternal ruin, or the subject of a false peace, which will eternally destroy his soul. While the humble child of grace leaves the world with high and well founded expectations of eternal glory ; his hope, firm and bright, his faith strong, his confidence humble, but fixed ; his soul triumphs in his God, and he is welcomed by triumphant millions to the favored mansions of eternal rest, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of his God.

1. Learn from this subject how infinitely preferable a life of virtue is to a life of vice, and what a most extraordinary and fatal mistake wicked and worldly men make, who, preferring the latter

to the former, abandon themselves to vicious pursuits. O the end, the dreadful end, of their ungodly courses ; they lead down to the regions of horror and the doleful chambers of eternal death ! there the ghosts of darkness hail them ; and drag them down to a still deeper hell ; the vials of the divine wrath are poured out upon them without mixture, and even God, the ever merciful God himself, has forgotten to be gracious ; “ They ” in this probationary state “ set at nought all the counsels of God, and would none of his reproofs. Now he will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh ; when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon them ; then they shall call upon him, but he will not answer ; they shall seek him early but shall not find him ; for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would none of his counsel, they despised all his reproof ; therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” And is such the end of the wicked and ungodly ? Is this their portion, who affected to be the men of pleasure in this life ? “ My soul come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly my honor be not thou united ; ” Gen. xlix, 6 ; but even in the present life, does a course of vicious indulgence afford any ascendancy over a life of virtue, with respect to happiness ? Peradventure, a fair and honest appeal to matter of stubborn fact, will better decide this question to the satisfaction of all, than any reasonings of which we are capable.

See those two young men of the same time of life, of talents as nearly equal as are generally to be found, their education about the same, their prospects in every respect as nearly equal as we can suppose; these two are **A** and **B**; **A** sets out to be the man of pleasure and consequently the man of vice; he indulges in sensual gratification of every kind, women and wine not excepted; the frolic, the dance, the card table, the race, his places of usual resort; the company which we all know frequents those places, his companions. Perhaps for a short time he carries it with a high hand, while his patrimony, which at first was worth notice, lasts. But, in such courses as these, this cannot be supposed to be long; in the course of a few years his money fails, his credit sinks, his friends forsake him, and his debts are heavy; the sheriff arrests him, he has nothing to pay, he is cast into jail, and there he lies in ignominy and disgrace, till relieved from confinement by the act of insolvency. Now, we see him left pennyless, friendless, and entirely without credit on a world not much disposed to favor him. This, sirs, is no high painted, fanciful, imaginary thing, which has no existenee in society. A thousand such occur from day to day. Nor is this the worst that comes of vice. Let us now leave our friend **A**, to shift as well as he can, while we take some account of **B**; **B**, at an early period considers his latter end; he recollects that he is born to die, and that this world is not his permanent home, that he is only a sojourner here as his fathers were; he recollects also, that he is sent into the world for important

purposes, that he has a part to act in society, and that no man lives to himself. He sets out in life determined to discharge all its duties well; he marries a young lady of good character and good family, whose condition and habits of life are on a par with his own; he commences his family life in the fear of the Lord, and humbly looks for the divine blessing on all his lawful undertakings, and is carefully assiduous to avoid every other sort; he applies steadily to his business, and exercises strict industry, frugality and care, in his occupation, whether it be husbandry, merchandise, or mechanism; he increases in property; "For the hand of the diligent maketh rich;" Prov. x, 4; he increases in respectability and high standing with the circle of his acquaintance; perhaps the voice of his fellow citizens calls him to posts of profit and honor; he passes through the world with dignity and credit, and his last end is peace. Now, sirs, of these two, must not B be incalculably the happiest man? Do you say my friends, these pictures are drawn high and are the extremes of the two cases? Not many instances, up to these, occur in society, on either side. It is admitted they are drawn moderately high, but not beyond what occurs in real life from day to day, and therefore, not too high; they are not drawn in the extreme; to have done this would have required ropes and gibbets, condemnations and executions; for it is well known these are the things in which the course of vice has often terminated. Now, can any man living, possessing the ordinary powers of the human mind, be at any loss to

tell which of these two must be the happiest man. And if every virtuous and good man does not possess so high a degree of felicity as **B** is represented as possessing, yet, does he not possess a much higher degree of happiness than **A**? And if every vicious man does not reduce himself to so degraded a condition as **A**, yet does he not fall far short, generally speaking, of the happiness of **B**.

2. Learn how readily all ought to embrace that religion which is so well calculated to answer the necessity of our nature, and to promote human felicity. The christian religion is a matter of the utmost importance to mankind, and ought to be embraced by all forthwith, and without delay.

3. Let us improve this subject by way of self examination without delay; "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." May the good Lord of his infinite mercy give us all this rational ground of joy, for the Redeemer's sake.

AMEN.

SERMON XXXIX.



THE LAMB OF GOD TAKING AWAY THE SIN OF
THE WORLD.



John, I, 29.

*“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away
the sin of the world.”*

IT is the great design, both of the Jewish and christian scriptures, to unfold the glorious scheme of redeeming fallen man, through a divine Saviour. The extraordinary advent of this glorious Redeemer, is very clearly and circumstantially predicted in the old testament scriptures, and abundantly set forth in the new testament writings, as actually having taken place. The advent of Jesus Christ, to our guilty and ruined world, his life, his sufferings and death; his burial, resurrection and final ascent to glory, are things clearly spoken of in the several writings of the new testament. These, sirs, are things not barely touched upon cursorily, by an individual or two; but things insisted on largely by every new testament writer. In a word, to detail these things circumstantially, and to point out the proper improvement to be made of them, the several evangelical writers, under the sacred afflatus of the

Holy Ghost, employed their heaven-directed pens. Even John the Baptist, who has not left us any thing immediately from his own pen, has said considerable respecting Jesus Christ, which is detailed to us by others. He it was, who spoke the words of my text; “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” the amount of which is given us by John the Evangelist.

The connection of my text is this; the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John who he was. John told them plainly he was not that Christ, but was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Here Jesus Christ is exhibited to view as the Saviour of mankind, as taking away the sin of the world.

In treating this subject I shall give,

I. A brief view of what we are to behold in Christ with regard to his person, nature and offices, in order to shew you clearly who and what he is.

II. What is the sin of the world which he taketh away.

III. In what sense he takes away the sin of the world, and also how he effects this.

IV. What it cost him to take away the sin of the world.

V. What is necessary on our part, that our sins may be taken away by this Lamb of God.

I. We are to shew what we are to behold

in this Lamb of God, with respect to his person, natures, offices, &c. Here permit me to observe, as we have no medium of beholding this glorious object but the word of God, we have to take our views of him from what is there delivered.

1. We are to behold in him the divinity; "For in him dwells the fulness of the God-head bodily." We are to view him as the Father's great co-equal, and very God; as such let us contemplate him till our hearts adore and burn. Let us be duly influenced by this great and sublime mystery of our holy religion; "For without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Behold, then, this great and marvellous mystery; "God manifest in the flesh" until your hearts are all on flame for such benevolence! Whoever would judge the world, it behoves to be a God, that he may know the secrets of all hearts, and administer just and righteous judgment; but Jesus Christ, this Lamb of God, shall judge the world; therefore, this Jesus Christ, or Lamb of God, is a divine person, or in other words, a God, and possessed of the divine nature. That Jesus Christ is to judge the world, is the manifest doctrine of the Redeemer himself; John's Gospel, v, 22, 23; "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that hath sent him."

2. In this Lamb of God behold the essential and constituent parts of a man, a true body and a reasonable soul. Hence he is called emphatically "the Son of man. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" Mat. xx, 28. The whole tragical scene of Mount Calvary prove with overwhelming conviction, that he was man. As God he could not suffer. As man, the blessed Lamb of God was perfectly innocent; "He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners;" Heb. vii, 26. On account of his innocence, he is called the Lamb of God in my text, and elsewhere; Rev. v, 12; "Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain," &c.

In order to effect the salvation of men and take away the sin of the world, this Lamb of God took upon himself the offices of prophet, priest and king. A prophet to instruct us in the knowledge of God; Acts, iii, 22; "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things, that he shall say unto you." A priest, to atone for our guilt; Heb. ii, 17; Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." A king, to subdue our enemies; Mat. xxv, 34; "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father," &c.

II. We are to shew what the sin of the world is, which this Lamb of God taketh away. Now, when we wish to know what sin is, we are to

enquire at the mouth of the sacred writers, and they will inform us with infallible certainty. The apostle John informs us that sin is a transgression of the divine law; I John, iii, 4; "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law, for sin is a transgression of the law." Now, according to this apostolic and inspired definition of sin, any thing which transgresses, or violates the law, is sin. When the apostle says, sin is a transgression of the law, we presume he means by the law, any thing, and every thing which is enjoined upon us by our Maker, to be performed as a duty to God, to our neighbor or ourselves. This is contained at large in the book of God, and summed up in the ten commandments given by God to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. Now, the sum of the divine law as expounded by Jesus Christ is, to love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Not to love God, then, with all the heart and soul at every moment of our existence is sin, and just so far as a man fails of loving God and his neighbor, he is a sinner. But, sirs, so far are mankind from loving God as they ought, that while in a state of nature, they actually hate him, and that most cordially; Rom. viii, 7; "For the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." Now, sirs, here is sin, the very perfection of sin, and that very sin too, which the lamb of God came to take away. That this enmity of heart against God operates in the life and conduct of mankind in a thousand different ways, is plain and undeniable

to every man of observation and candor. Atheism, which is the denial of a God, is enmity. When a man denies the existence of that august and almighty being who made him, it is not because he is convinced from fair reasoning and rational evidence, that there is no God, but because his heart wishes it to be so ; and he the more easily believes that which he so cordially wishes. Who, sirs, that possesses rationality and intelligence, must not acknowledge the existence of an almighty, wise and intelligent agent in the creation of the universe ; when he marks the intelligence and design so plainly manifested throughout all the works of creation around him ; “ For 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, so that they are without excuse.” Deism is another exercise of this enmity of heart against God. It is said of the earl of Rochester, that on his death bed he laid his hand on the bible, and pronounced the following words, “ Here is the best book in the world, and all the objections that lie against it, originate from a bad heart.” This declaration of the earl, I think is, generally speaking, true. It is not argument that makes infidels. An alienation of heart from God, a secret and strong dislike to the great doctrines and precepts of the bible, make a hundred deists, where fair reason and argument make one. Profanity is no other than an ebullition of the enmity of heart, which the unregenerate sinner feels against God. What else could induce the sinner to

profanity? No good upon earth can proceed from it; not a solitary particle. It acquires him no credit; it puts nothing in his pocket; it recommends him to no human creature. Nobody thinks the more of a man for his profanity. It is not to be accounted for on the principle of habit. Even the profanest man, when brought into a court of justice, does not swear. To plead that he swears in a passion only, is no fair and reasonable excuse. Use him ill who may, his God is not guilty; then, can the mal-treatment he may possibly receive from any other, ever be a sufficient reason why his God should be insulted? Suppose A does really grossly insult you, is that a good reason why you should assault and beat B, who has given you no insult at all, but has always been your fast friend? Thus, sirs, it is plain there is no way of accounting for the language of profanity but by resolving it into the native enmity of the heart against God; of which enmity it is certainly an ebullition. Impurity, injustice, oppression, cruelty, defamation, are all but so many branches of this native enmity of heart against God, which is the very essence of moral evil.

III. We are to show in what sense the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, and how he effects its destruction.

Sin, we have already observed, the apostle defines to be a violation of the law. Now, every law consists of precept and penalty. The precept prescribes the duty of the subject; the penalty is the punishment he is to suffer in case of disobedience. Now, sirs, as all mankind have sinned, and that

sin consists essentially and radically in enmity of heart against God; and inasmuch as the penalty of the law the sinner has transgressed is eternal misery, then to take away sin in the sense of my text, implies its destruction in the soul by divine operation, or which is the same thing, eradicating the enmity of the heart, and delivering the soul from that eternal condemnation to which he is exposed on account of transgression. And in this two-fold sense, we presume the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. And that you may be convinced that this is agreeable to the general tenor of holy writ, consult the following passages; Ps. cx, 3; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power; "Ezekiel, xi, 19, 20; "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stoney heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." These passages go directly to show that the enmity of the heart is taken away; to show that God's people are delivered from a state of condemnation by the Lamb of God, and that their sin, in this sense also, is taken away, see the following passages; John, iii, 18; "He that believeth on him is not condemned; Rom. viii, 1; "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." These passages, as well as a variety of others easily adduced, are full to this point. Then it is plain that the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world both in its

reign and condemnation. It remains to show how this is done. This he effects by his spirit and his blood. By his holy spirit he renews the heart and takes away sin in its reigning power; John, iii, 5, 6; "Jesus answered and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit;" Gal. iv, 6; "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;" Eph. v, 9; "For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." It is certainly by the sacred influence of the divine spirit that mankind are regenerated; John, i, 13; "Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." And the sacred scriptures uniformly, and every where that they treat of the subject at all, represent that change, whereby men became christians, being effected on the human heart by the divine spirit.

Jesus Christ, by his blood and death; delivers sinners from eternal condemnation and misery; Mat. xxvi, 2; "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;" John, vi, 54; "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day;" Ephes. i, 7; "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" I John, i, 7, latter part; "And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" Rev. i, 5, latter part; "Unto him that

loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Jesus Christ, by his precious blood, has made ample atonement for transgression; by which I mean, he has removed by his sufferings and death, the obstacles which obstructed the sinner's acceptance with God, and opened the channels of mercy to man; so that Almighty God, for his righteousness sake, freely pardons and accepts the humble, penitent, and returning sinner; Ephes. v, 2; "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour."

IV. We are to show what it cost the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

It cost him a painful, shameful life, and a cruel, ignominious, and shameful death. How was the Redeemer treated with scorn? His name was cast out as evil. How was he reproached and vilified, as though he had been the vilest of human kind? When he performed those extraordinary operations, that no being but an Almighty God could perform, and which clearly evinced his divine mission, his enemies malignantly attributed his operations to a combination with the prince of the devils; Mat. ix, 34; "But the Pharisees said, he casteth out devils by the prince of the devils." Thus did these malignant and evil minded men, vilify and blaspheme the blessed and holy Redeemer; so that his life was attended with ignominy and scorn.

But, O how torturing, how ignominious, and painful was his death! He was numbered with the transgressors; he was crucified between two

thieves, as though he had been as vile and wicked as they. Thus was the death of this high and lofty one, covered with infamy and disgrace. The death of the cross was a species of execution inflicted on the slaves and the lowest order of malefactors only, and never on offenders of rank and condition. Consequently, then, it was very ignominious. His death was extremely painful. Nailed to the cross, his feet to an upright post, his hands to a transverse beam, and left to hang on these nails, till, through the extremity of pain, and the effusion of blood, he expired. And extreme as were the sufferings of the Saviour's body, they were still far surpassed by the sufferings of his soul. Then it cost him extreme pain, as well as shame and ignominy, to take away the sin of the world. In this great and meritorious transaction ^{endured} the contemptuous insults of devils ^{and} men; "And they that passed by, railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, ah! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross. Likewise, also, the chief priests mocking, said amongst themselves with the scribes, he saved others, himself he cannot save. Let Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him, reviled him." He endured the hidings of his Father's holy face, as fully appears from his outcry on the cross; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

V. We are to show what is necessary on our part, in order to our sin being taken away, or

in other words, whose sins the blessed Jesus takes away.

Faith, on our part, is essentially necessary; Mark xvi, 16; "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." This faith consisteth in a cordial reception of the blessed saviour for salvation as offered in the gospel; "But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;" John's Gospel i, 12. Faith, true, saving faith is an exercise of the heart agreeably to Rom. x, 10; "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Faith is an exercise of a living soul, not a dead one. The soul that exercises it is regenerated by the sacred influence of the ^{at} holy Ghost. Jesus Christ once called Lazarus out of his grave, when he had been dead four days. Now, when he called Lazarus, did the dead man rise and come, or did the mighty power of the saviour vivify Lazarus, and did he come alive to the saviour, and not dead? The latter unquestionably. Just so the saviour calls the sinner. The act of faith is coming to Christ. But I humbly presume before the soul thus comes, it is quite indispensable that he be made alive, as dead men do not move.

1. From this subject learn the awful guilt and danger of slighting the Lord Jesus Christ. Is he a divine person? Is he God equal with the Father, then what dreadful guilt does the rejection

of him involve ? and what danger too ? We cannot reject him and be safe ; we cannot do it and be innocent.

2. Learn that much more is necessary in regenerating a soul, than addressing mere light and motives to the understanding. Sin is enmity against God for his holiness, not a mere mistake respecting his character. Were the latter the fact, were there no more involved in the idea of sin than a few unfortunate mistakes about the character of Deity, then sensible, enlightened, and ingenious men, strong, logical reasoners, might soon convert them by hundreds. But, sirs, if the sinners, moral ailment consists, as it certainly does, in direct enmity of heart against God for the holiness of his nature, then more is required to regenerate him, than the strongest logical reason on earth, or all the mere moral suasion in the world ; it requires the mighty power of the mighty God, and nothing else will do. And so the scriptures, those true and infallible records, represent the matter ; John i, 13 ; “ Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ;” John iii, 5 ; “ Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God ;” I Epistle of John iv, 7, latter clause ; “ For every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

3. Learn from this subject, that none have their sins taken away in its condemning power who are not saved also from its polluting power by the good spirit of our God. There is no such thing in all the economy of christian salvation as

a sinner being saved from condemnation who is not saved from pollution. Jesus Christ never came from heaven to earth to be the minister of sin.

4. Learn the infinite kindness and condescension of the blessed Jesus. By his atoning blood, and meritorious death, he delivers from that awful condemnation to which all men stood justly exposed. None other could accomplish this but himself; he interposed in a desperate case.

5. Learn the necessity of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ immediately and without delay. Does he take away the sin of none but those who believe? Then a moments delay may be attended with consequences the most fatal and destructive. From which may the Lord preserve us all most graciously for the Redeemer's sake. AMEN.

SERMON XL.



SINNERS SOLEMNLY WARNED NOT TO HARDEN
THEIR HEARTS AGAINST THE GOSPEL CALL.



Hebrews, III, 15.

*“ To day if you will hear his voice, harden not
your hearts.”*

IT is evident, I presume, to every attentive and intelligent reader of the sacred scriptures, that they uniformly insist on the present as the proper time to attend to religion ; and not even one solitary instance can be produced, where God authorises the sinner to neglect religion at present, with a view of attending to it in future ; and as they insist on the present as the proper time every where else, so also, in my text ; “ To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ;” as if he had said, if ever you design to pay attention to religion at all, now is your time, and harden not your hearts by procrastinating a single hour.

The connection of our text, is as follows. The apostle in this chapter, as well as in a variety of other passages of this letter, insists on the superiority of Jesus Christ, the great founder of the christian religion, to Moses, the Jewish lawgiver.

This he does in order to confirm the christian Hebrews in the faith of the gospel, and establish them against the attacks of the unconverted Hebrews ; for the fact was this ; one great reason why the unconverted Hebrews were prejudiced against the gospel, and Jesus Christ, its holy author, was, that they superseded the Jewish system and its author, of which those Jews thought so very highly. The author of this letter, that he might remove these scruples, does not deny that the Jewish economy was superseded, but goes on to show that they would be no losers by embracing the christian system, whose founder was so much greater than the Jewish lawgiver, to whom they were so immoderately attached. The first argument he uses in this chapter to establish this point is, the consideration of Christ being the creator of Moses ; 3, 4 ; “ For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who builded the house, hath more honor than the house ; for every house is builded by some man, but he who built all things is God.” The next argument is the sonship of Christ ; whereas Moses was faithful as a servant ; verses 6, 7 ; “ And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things, which were to be spoken after, but Christ as a son over his own house.” The apostle then introduces a quotation from the psalms, showing they were not to harden their hearts by turning a deaf ear to the admonition of the saviour, as the Israelites did in the wilderness with respect to Moses ; verses 7—12 ; “ Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost

saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. To whom I sware in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The apostle then directs them to take heed lest they should be denied through the deceitfulness of sin;" verse 13; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Here the apostle plainly insists, that if we have any design of ever attending to religion, or hearing the warning voice of God, we ought to do it now, and no longer provoke him by hardening our hearts.

I. I shall show what that voice is, with which God calls sinners to attend to religion.

II. What it is to hear this voice.

III. How sinners are wont to harden their hearts against the calls of God.

IV. Expose the folly and danger of such conduct, and then conclude with some inferences and application.

I. I am to show what that voice is, with which God calls sinners to attend to religion.

1. He calls them in and by his sacred word; Prov. i, 20—23; "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the

gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, how long, how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you;" Prov. viii, 1—5; "Doth not wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her voice. She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men. O ye simple understand wisdom, and ye fools be of an understanding heart." This is certainly a very solemn call; Isa. lv, 1—7; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye unto the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear; and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David;" verse 6; "Seek ye the Lord while he is to be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;" Ezekiel, xxxiii, 11, latter part; "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die O house of Israel?" Mat. xi, 28; "Come unto me

all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" Luke, xiii, 3; "I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" John iii, 3; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" Rev. xxii, 17; "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." Thus does the great God plainly, solemnly, and repeatedly call sinners in his holy word.

2. God often calls sinners by his holy spirit; Rev. xxii, 17; "The spirit and the bride say come." The spirit calls by his strivings on the hearts of sinners.

3. He calls by conscience; John, viii, 9; "And they that heard it being convicted by their own consciences, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the least;" Rom. ii, 15; "Which show the work of the law written on their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." My friends, permit me to appeal to your consciences, if you do not often feel this to be the fact. Does not your conscience often accuse you of wrong doing, of living in the neglect of God and his worship as well as many other wrongs?

4. Sinners are often called by the providential dispensations of Almighty God. Sometimes they are bereft of their dearest comforts; their husbands, wives, children, parents. Is not this a loud call in the providence of God, to set their affections on a more durable portion, and one of which even the

relentless hand of death cannot despoil them? Does it not show them plainly the emptiness of all creature enjoyments, and the great necessity of a better portion? Sometimes they are called down to the very gates of death in their own persons, and then raised again. This is certainly a loud and solemn call to prepare for death and judgment, and as such the wise and attentive mind improves it. Sometimes we are called to wait on the last agonies of an expiring fellow mortal, and how solemnly does this remind us of our own dissolution? Sometimes we see some of our fellow men expiring under the most fearful apprehensions of the divine wrath, and without one single ray of cheerful hope in the mercy of God, and who would give the world, were it at their disposal, for a few hours longer respite. How solemnly does such a circumstance as this admonish survivors not to put off the solemn concerns of eternity till the hour of death. Sometimes on the other hand, we see some of our fellow men, triumphing in the very jaws of death, and their souls filled with the sweet prospects of eternal glory. O how desirable such a death! and how loud the call too to surviving friends, to make their peace with God, and receive the salvation of their immortal souls! If we possess the smallest degree of observation, we surely see the divine providence concerned in all our ways; taking special care of us and ours in all conditions; providing for the supply of our returning wants; warding off a thousand dangers, and doing us a thousand kindnesses. Do not these things contain a loud and intelligible voice? And will not the wise and attentive mind give it serious audience.

5. He calls us in the addresses we receive from time to time, through the instrumentality of others. Through the preachers of the gospel; our religious friends, perhaps husbands, perhaps wives, parents, children, friends, neighbors.

6. Sometimes we are called by the movings of the Holy Ghost on others when we see them turning to the Lord. Have these things never brought us to any serious consideration? What have been our exercises on these subjects, when we have seen some of our quondam companions go over to the side of truth and religion? He is no longer amongst the frolicing, swearing, thoughtless club, but associates now with the pious, the prayerful, the devout.

II. I am to show what it is to hear the voice of Christ.

This certainly implies more than the hearing of the ear, it involves the heart; it is more than reading the word of God which contains so many calls; it is more than hearing sermons, exhortations and advices with the ear; it is more than observing the providence of God; it is in one word, to be duly impressed with the calls, admonitions, &c. of providence, and of the divine word addressed to us; it is to open the heart and affections to the precious Saviour, and place them on him. Whenever the soul loves the eternal God supremely, and cordially parts with sin at his mandate, he hears the voice of God speaking to him, and calling him from the evil ways of sin; whenever from a deep felt sense of the God-dishonoring, and base nature of sin, he repents sincerely of it, and heartily loathes it, when from a deep sense of his helpless,

lost and ruined condition, he receives and rests upon Christ for salvation ; when, in a word, he is willing to forsake all for Christ and follow him, then he hears his voice in the true, proper and saving sense of the divine word.

III. I am to show how sinners are wont to harden their hearts against the calls of Jesus Christ.

Some are apt when the divine word reaches their hearts at divine service, to stay away from the house and ordinances of the Lord, till they find their uneasiness abated, and their former ease and tranquillity restored ; and this is a plan that generally succeeds extremely well in hardening the heart. Some, when they find the divine word rousing their consciences, and disturbing their ease and tranquillity, leave the house, and divert themselves with something without, and thus they voluntarily and of design, harden their hearts ; some, when their consciences smite them, and render them uneasy, betake themselves to their frolics, and dances, and light-hearted merry companions, and thus pretty easily pass off their qualms of uneasiness, and become possessed of their former ease and tranquillity again. And how artful, or how many soever the devices of satan may be, there is not one of them better calculated to answer the end of restoring the careless, sinful peace and quiet of the human mind, than these dancing frolics, balls, assemblies, &c. By these means, however harmless and decent they may appear, the heart becomes callous and hardened against the word of God, and the conscience seared as with a hot iron, and the precious soul eventually lost ; some betake

themselves to their boon companions and flowing bowls, and drown their serious impressions, and harden their hearts; some even labor away their serious impressions and harden their hearts, by the hand of industry, and engaging so ardently in their common occupations, as to leave no time for adjusting the things which belong to their peace; some harden their hearts by admitting prejudices and objections against the minister who may have been the means of awakening their minds to some sense of sin and danger; they think he is too pointed or ill natured, or has bad designs against them; or he is selfish and avaricious, and therefore they endeavor to wipe off any impression made by his instrumentality. Thus, in this trifling, and very often ungrounded manner, they harden their hearts, and sear their consciences. Many harden their hearts by procrastination; they acquire a false peace at the present, by making a kind of engagement with themselves to attend to religion at some future period; thus they deceive their souls, harden their hearts, and draw down the vengeance of God on themselves.

IV. I am to expose the folly and danger of such conduct.

It is most foolish for this reason; if ever the work of repentance and reformation are to be done at all, the present is the best time, and procrastination only makes it so much the more difficult. By how much the longer the great work of religion is put off, by so much the harder the work of reformation becomes; and certainly, if we calculate on the work of repentance and reformation at all, it must be a matter of extreme folly to render them

more difficult by our own act and deed. But this conduct is most dangerous, lest, if we harden our hearts now, they never should become soft and impressible again; "The Lord's spirit shall not always strive with man;" Gen. vi, 3. Do we harden our hearts at present, and put off religion until some future period? Let us recollect, that before that period arrives, we may be dead and forever lost; so dangerous a matter is it to procrastinate in matters of religion; "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

1. Learn from this subject the infinite kindness and condescension of Almighty God to poor sinners; does he call them by his word, by his providence, by his ministers? Does he give them line upon line, and precept upon precept? O what kindness, what condescension is here on the part of the adorable Jehovah! Let us record it on the tablet of grateful hearts, and devote ourselves without reserve, to the service of him who has made our welfare and best interests his tender care.

2. Learn that to hear the voice of God calling us in his word and providences, is a most holy and excellent exercise, and one well pleasing to the most high and holy God; being no less than opening the heart and affections to Jesus Christ. Have we ever heard his voice thus? Do our hearts cleave to God? Do we delight in his holy law? Do we humbly confide in the merits of the blessed Redeemer for salvation as offered in the gospel? Let us see to it then, that we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, since the days are evil.

3. Learn the dreadful and unfathomable depths

of human depravity. Do sinners harden their hearts, and that voluntarily, against the calls of divine mercy? O what depravity does this argue; how opposed to God must that heart be, that is capable of acting thus? What pointed and astonishing opposition to God does this argue? How deplorable must be the condition of sinners in this unhappy situation? Ah! poor sinners you are lost, ruined and undone, without a change; objects of divine compassion! subjects of the most corroding and insatiable passions; happiness can never be yours without a change; pray God with every breath to have mercy on your souls, or you are undone forever!

4. Learn that whenever the soul hears Christ's voice, the great God has been at work; no soul ever hears in a truly saving manner, only where the Almighty God, by his mighty power has opened the ear and inclined the heart; John vi, 44; "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him."

O my dear friends, ground the arms of your rebellion against your God; give up your false pleas, and devote yourselves to the service of God without reserve. Do any of my hearers answer, when I urge them a little on this subject, the work is with God much more than with us; we cannot change our own hearts; we must wait until the Lord does it. How must you wait, my dear friend? And where is the command for waiting thus? Is it contained in II Cor. vi, 2? "Behold! now is the accepted time, behold! now is the day of salvation." Is this command for waiting, contained in Acts, ii, 38? "Then Peter said unto them, repent and be

baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." Is this command for waiting, contained in Acts, xvi, 31—33? "And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes: and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Is it Mark, i, 15? "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel." Is it Ezek. xviii, 31, 32? "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, O house of Israel. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." According to the above quoted passages, and many others equally easily produced, there appears to be no waiting the divine operations otherwise than in the vigorous, earnest use of the means God has appointed. The present is pointed out to us as the decisive and all-important moment; the holy scriptures give us no encouragement to calculate on what may be done to-morrow; our duty is before us, if we perform it well, we shall be accepted in the blessed Redeemer, come the assistance from where it may which enables us to do so; if not, we shall certainly be condemned, be the obstacle what it would. Let us all, then, be up and doing while mercy calls, and make our calling and election sure before it is too late for the Redeemer's sake. AMEN.

A SHORT ADDRESS

ENTREATING CHRISTIANS NOT TO BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT TO BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF THEIR MINDS.



Romans, XII, 2.

“And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove, what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

THE general spirit of the world, and that of christianity, are very contrary to one another, and never can, and never will be, reconciled. Many attempts of this kind have been made by men of temporising minds; not willing to give up religion on the one hand, because on this is founded all their hope of future happiness; and not willing to let go the world and its amusements, pastimes and pleasures, on the other, because on these they depend for their present happiness; they have endeavored to hold both fast, but in no single instance have they ever succeeded, neither ever will they, while the words of the infallible Saviour remain true, and those of his inspired apostle; “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon;” Mat. vi, 24. “Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God;” James, iv, 4.

I am to demonstrate, that without a renewed heart, we never can have a true and proper knowledge of the good, acceptable and perfect will of

God. I do not mean by this, that an unrenewed man cannot understand the meaning of a certain proposition or form of words laid down in the sacred writings as well as in other writings; this he certainly may do. But the moral beauty and excellency of God's holy character and law, and of the christian religion, no man understands well but he who is transformed by the renewing of his mind. The moral excellence of the character and law of God, is a matter of taste, and thoroughly known and comprehended only by those who feel a renewed heart; and in this sense it is precisely, and in no other, I presume, that "the carnal man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, they being foolishness unto him; neither can he know, because they are spiritually discerned." Thus, for example, I never can convey a correct idea of honey to a man who has never tasted it, by any lecture I can give him, however elaborate; but let him apply one tea-spoonful of this luscious liquid to his palate, and he has the correct idea at once. And thus it is, that christians discover the moral excellence of God's character, which is just as much an object of spiritual taste, as honey is of natural taste; and, sirs, in this representation, we are on fair, broad, scripture ground; Ps. xxxiv, 8; "O taste and see, that the Lord is good." Now, the thing proposed to be seen and thoroughly known, is, that the Lord is good; and the plan is to taste.

1. Learn, that although we cannot always distinguish between true christians and mere pretenders, or mere men of the world, with such accuracy as Almighty God can; yet, where our acquaintance

is considerable with our fellow men, we may form opinions concerning them with no small degree of precision, and as far as is necessary for christian fellowship. The spirit of the world, and the spirit of christianity, are not so like one another as to prevent a discerning eye from discovering the difference.

2. Learn, that it is a great blessing to men of the world, who hate christianity inveterately, that there is such a thing in the world as the christian religion, and such people as christians. Were there none otherwise minded than the men of the world, how intolerable would be the state of society? The spirit of envy, pride and injustice, universally reigning, how could mankind enjoy even their civil liberties and common rights? As matters now exist, if some are unruly and disorderly, there are always some others found disposed to check and control the disorders that exist, and by these things keep society in some kind of order. The plain fact is, christianity has done more for meliorating the condition of human creatures, than any thing else, and every thing else, the world ever saw. To this sacred thing we owe all our hospitals, our Sunday schools and various charitable societies for bettering the condition of man.

3. Learn the great reason there is to fear, that many who profess the pure, holy, and self-denied religion of the gospel, have nothing of religion but the profession. Alas, how conformable are many to the world! How little of the pure, mild and genuine spirit of christianity, appears in the lives of many of our most loud and noisy professors of religion!

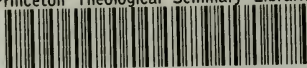
4. Learn the great and indispensable necessity that exists for a change of heart, in order to inherit the kingdom of God! If mankind are such as the subject represents them, they certainly must be changed before they can be admitted to heaven, or enjoy God; nothing impure or unholy can obtain admittance there; the heart must be changed, or the soul must be lost, Jesus Christ being judge; John, iii, 3; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

5. Let us take occasion from this subject to examine ourselves carefully, whether or not we ever have been transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we might prove what is the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God. And let us seriously recollect, that not every one that saith, "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God; but he that doeth the will of our Father who is in heaven;" Mat. vii, 21.

May the Lord of his infinite mercy enable us all so to feel, so to live, and so to act, that we may be accounted worthy at last to inherit the kingdom of eternal joy. AMEN.

THE END.

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