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SERMONS,

BY

GEORGE W. BETHUNE,

Minister of the Third Reformed Dutch Church, Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA:

MENTZ & ROVOUDT, 53 NORTH THIRD STREET.

John C. Clark, Printer, 60 Dock Street.

1846.

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TO

STEPHEN PRUST, ESQ.

(Of Bristol, England,)

THE FRIEND OF MY FATHER,

THE FRIEND OF MY FATHER'S WIDOW,

AND

THE FRIEND OF MY FATHER'S CHILDREN;

IN

VENERATION FOR HIS PIOUS WORTH,

UNWEARIED PHILANTHROPY

AND

SUCCESSFUL ZEAL,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE

GRATEFULLY

DEDICATED.

The author, having been often asked to print single sermons, which as pamphlets have had a short-lived usefulness, now yields to the wishes of some friends, and puts forth a volume containing a few discourses, in the hope that, by the blessing of God, they may do good. The prospect of their being widely read, when there are so many better books, is small; yet the attempt to serve the cause of our beloved Master is pleasant, and, if He smile upon it, will be successful, not in the proportion of our talent, but of his grace. The selection has been made out of the discourses preached by the author from his own pulpit, with some regard to variety, but, principally, to the practical character of their subjects. He hopes, that nothing will be found in them displeasing to any evangelical Christian; but he is sure, that he has frankly given his own views of truth. As they were written for oral delivery, with the aid of living gesture and emphasis, he has had, while reading the proofs, not a little fear lest his meaning might sometimes be more obscure than if he had chosen a more didactic style. He now trusts what he has preached with an earnest heart and voice, to the kindness of his reader's attention, and the applying power of that Holy Spirit, without whose aid preacher and author must alike fail. Some will read his printed pages with the same affectionate interest which has been, under God, his greatest encouragement to preach; but whether, beyond the number of those few dear friends, he can gain the favourable regard of any others, remains to be seen. He asks God that he may, for the glory of his Lord, the salvation of his fellow-men, and his own reward in being made an instrument of the Saviour's will.

Philadelphia, January, 1846.

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SERMON I.

A DIVINE NATURE.

A DIVINE NATURE.

2 Peter i. 4. Partakers of the divine nature.

The text occurs in the salutation with which the apostle Peter opens his epistle to those, who had "obtained like precious faith with him through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, pa-

tience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The doctrine taught is, that believers are enabled to escape the corruption of the world, and to adorn their lives with holy Christian graces, by being made

"Partakers of the divine nature."

Let us, therefore, inquire the signification of a phrase so striking and important.

A more correct rendering of the original would be, "Partakers of *a* divine nature;" for the definite article is an interpolation, our translators probably supposing that the apostle meant "Partakers of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power," which, though included, is not all of what we are to understand by the words. The Christian can in no sense be a partaker of the divine essence, but is made by the Holy Ghost partaker of a divine nature, or of a nature resembling the divine so far as a creature may resemble his infinite Creator.

This use of the term "divine," is not peculiar to the Scripture, but is common in the Greek and

Latin philosophical writings. Their strongest arguments for the practice of high virtue were derived from a belief, that the soul was not material and corruptible, but spiritual and immortal, like God. Hence they applied to it the epithet divine, or god-like, as we read in this fine passage of Cicero:— "For he that hath known himself will perceive that he has something within him, divine as it were, an image dedicated to the Deity. Thus he will think and act worthily of so great a gift, and by the study of eternal things shadowed forth in the works of nature, will he learn that the good man, and the good man only, is destined to be happy; and, contrasting the things which are perishing with those which are eternal, he will look upon himself as an inhabitant of the universe, and despise and count as nothing, those matters which are accounted valuable by ordinary men."* What was dim, though sublime conjecture to those best of the ancients, is holy certainty to the student of the Scriptures; and heavy should be the reproach of Christians, if they draw no sanctifying strength from a revealed truth, the shadow of which gave to a heathen aspirations so lofty.

The sense of the apostle in the text may be gathered under two heads:

* De Legibus, Lib. I. § 23, 24.

FIRST: CHRISTIANS ARE PARTAKERS OF A DIVINE NATURE, BECAUSE THEY ARE CONSTITUTED IN A LIKENESS TO GOD.

SECONDLY: CHRISTIANS ARE PARTAKERS OF A DIVINE NATURE, BECAUSE THEY ARE ADMITTED TO A BLESSEDNESS RESEMBLING THAT OF GOD.

FIRST: CHRISTIANS ARE PARTAKERS OF A DIVINE NATURE, BECAUSE THEY ARE CONSTITUTED IN A LIKENESS TO GOD.

The most remarkable fact of creation was the making of man in the image of God; and the most remarkable blessing wrought for the sinner by the grace of Christ, is the renewal in his soul of its lost resemblance to the Father of his spirit. The second is a more glorious repetition of the first. The same almighty Word which called man into existence, renews him unto holiness; as the apostle says, "Ye are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." The same almighty Spirit, which breathed into man the breath of life, makes the divine word efficient, as our Lord teaches us when he says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The same term "creation," which implies divine energy, is applied to both acts. "So God

created man in his own image," is the language of the historian. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," is the language of the apostle.

This resemblance of newly created man, whether in his first being, or his regeneration, to his God cannot lie in his outward form, and must be spiritual. The holy angels, who are pure, intelligent spirits, are called Sons of God, and, therefore, must bear a likeness to their Father. A sympathy between them and man in holy being, is fully established by the declarations of Scripture, that they shall both be gathered together in one by Christ, the Head of the church and the Lord of hosts (Eph. i. 10); that they both will inhabit one spiritual heaven, and that the children of the resurrection are as the angels of God, being, like them, children of God (Luke xx. 36).

The resemblance is moral. "The new man," says the apostle in Colossians, "is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him;" and, in Ephesians, he exhorts us to "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." In these three qualities, knowledge, righteousness and holiness, the renewed soul is like God.

Knowledge is an attribute of intelligent being, and

a Christian soul resembles its Creator according to the degree and truth of its knowledge. The Creator is omniscient, and the source of all knowledge. Man can learn only from His teaching, and, therefore, the likeness he has to God, consists, not in his having original omniscience, but in a hearty reception of the truth which God has revealed. When the mind, like a pure, calm lake, reflects back the light which is shed from heaven, the image of God is upon it commensurate with its capacity, for the tiniest drop of dew images forth the true, though not full radiance of the sun. A clear, confiding trust in the wisdom of God, has, so far as needed by the Christian, all the advantage of omniscience; for, as God cannot err, that soul which relies upon his truth cannot.

Righteousness, as distinguished from holiness, concerns the relations which an intelligent being sustains to others. The righteousness of God is the perfection of his dealings with the creatures he has made dependent upon him. Righteousness in man is the just discharge of those duties which he owes to God, and, for the sake of God, to his fellow creatures. These relative duties imply affections, by which only they can be felt. Thus God is declared to be "love," and "love is the fulfilling of the law," our Lord having comprised all our duty to God in

loving Him with all our hearts, and our duty to our neighbour in loving him as ourselves. God is infinitely righteous, not only in the boundless capacity of his love, but in the boundless extent of his rule and providence. The resemblance of the soul in righteousness to Him, consists in the fulfilment of all those duties which God has prescribed to us. Perfect in this obedience, man is perfectly righteous in his sphere, for, following the guidance of God, he will omit nothing which is right, and do nothing which is wrong.

Holiness has respect to God only. In the creature, it is conformity to the Divine character, or an entire consecration to his will. The holiness of God is his infinitely perfect consistency with himself, or the entire harmony which subsists between all the divine attributes and all the divine acts.

We cannot stay to defend this definition, but any doubt of its justness will, on due thought, pass away. The usual definitions of the divine holiness are wrong, as supposing a comparison of God with some standard other than himself, an inconsistency not to be tolerated. For, if we call the holiness of God his rectitude, by what rule do we ascertain that rectitude? Certainly not the judgment of man, or his notion concerning the fitness of things. Or, if we call it, as others have done, His

consecration to the highest good of the universe, how shall we know what the highest good of the universe is, unless by the teachings of God? We gain nothing by such circumlocution. But, when we compare the Divine Being with Himself, and know that in all the infinite multitude of his thoughts and variety of his acts, every thought is so true and every act so wise, that there is not one inconsistent with another, or inharmonious with the rest, then only do we make an approach toward understanding the holiness of God.

Man, therefore, cannot be like God, infinitely holy, because he is finite; but, so far as he is conformed to the divine will and example, he is holy as God is holy, for there is then the same agreement between him and God, that there is between God and Himself.

Thus we see that the divine likeness, by which the believer is made "a partaker of the divine nature," consists of a mind filled with true knowledge, affections rightly bestowed and duly exercised, and of an entire conformity to the divine character, so far as the finite can resemble the infinite. Their knowledge is the same, for that cannot be truth in man, which would be error in God; their righteousness is the same, for that cannot be right in man, which would be wrong in God; and

their holiness is the same, for God cannot approve in man what would be inconsistent with Himself.

How close then is the resemblance of a holy soul to his God? So close, that God walked on earth in all the duties of man, and God, the Holy Ghost, dwells in the soul of every believer, to strengthen him for his following of Christ.

SECONDLY: CHRISTIANS ARE MADE PARTAKERS OF A DIVINE NATURE, BECAUSE THEY ARE ADMITTED TO A BLESSEDNESS RESEMBLING THAT OF GOD.

God is infinitely blessed. He is blessed in his knowledge, blessed in his righteousness, and blessed in his holiness. So far then as the Christian is like God in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, will he be blessed like God. They will be united in blessedness, the one as the ever-blessed Creator and Sovereign, the other as the happy creature and subject. Their sources of happiness are the same, because their characters are the same. As the Psalmist says, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." When his resemblance to God was complete, his blessedness was complete also.

God is blessed in his knowledge. When we look upon the works of God, and consider their measureless extent and inexhaustible variety; the glories of the heavenly spheres and the beauty of the

field-flowers; the grandeur of the mountain and the shadows of the valley; the vastness of ocean and the gentle flow of the green-banked river; the thundering cataract and the gurgling brook; the curious yet ever distinct anatomy of all the tribes of earth, and sea and land, with their mysterious instincts and strange adaptations; the subtle elements in their manifold changes and combinations; and, above all, the heaving, conscious, desiring, thinking, feeling soul within the wonderful temple of the body, we adore and admire with delight the wisdom of Him, who made all, and rules all, and cares for all. But how far surpassing in beauty must all have been, when the sun of the first Sabbath shone upon a world without a thorn, a blight, a tear, or a crime! With what complacent satisfaction must the Creator have looked down upon the effects of his wisdom and power, as he saw that all was very good! If the soul of the poet glows with happiness intense as he wreathes his fervid thoughts in words of living music; if the painter is entranced as he gazes upon the canvas which gives back to him the grand conception he had formed, or the sculptor as he sees before him the image, which has been his sleeping and waking vision, perfect and pure; if the orator kindles with exultation as the chain of his persuasive argument is flung around his breathless audience, and

he gives from his own soul the fire which thrills through them all at one instant and in one thought; if, better still, the Christian philanthropist has a surpassing rapture, in beholding the achievement of some wide and long-nursed, long-laboured scheme of benevolence; what must have been the blessedness of the Infinite Spirit, contemplating all the works of power and beauty which his divine thought had planned, and his divine skill had wrought?

Yet how faint an idea does nature in her morning hour afford us, of the delight God has in his divine knowledge! What child of genius and truth is not conscious of a beauty within him, which neither pen, nor pencil, nor chisel, nor words, can body forth! How poor is every joy beside to that which he feels in his own high thoughts and pure imaginings? But oh! when we think of the Divine Mind, when "Wisdom was daily with him, rejoicing always before him; before ever the mountains were brought forth, and when, as yet, there were no depths;" how shall we approach a conception of its blessedness, filled with the types of glorious things, to which all that have ever yet been, are in number but as the small dust that cannot stir the balance; the radiant source of light, to which all the fires of heaven are a few dim sparks; the full comprehen-

sion of all the purposes whose beginning was in eternity, and which eternity alone can complete! If to us, who but feebly creep along the path of science, and with an uncertainty which allows demonstration to waver, and sight and touch to doubt their sense, the discovery of truth affords a pleasure so exquisite, what must be his pleasure who is himself Truth; who sees the end with the beginning, and, from his throne high above all heights, beholds the events of one day as of a thousand years, and of a thousand years as one day?

To be a partaker of this blessedness is the believer invited. "HIM to know aright is life eternal," and the believer acquaints himself with God. Now he knows God only through the dim vail of his works and word; in eternity he will know Him as he is known. Here he knows God only by his effects; then will he know Him as the cause. He will hold communion with the divine thoughts. He will enter into the divine mind. He will see God as He is. Now he partakes of the blessedness derived from the divine manifestations; then will he enjoy the blessedness of the "divine nature."

God is blessed in his righteousness. We may know something of the happy consciousness which attends upon right and kindly actions; the self-approval, better than all the acclamations of the

crowd, when we have done our duty, and the sweet blessing which mercy yields to the giver of good, even more than to the receiver. We may form some faint conception of the happiness which would pervade the spirit of some great king, who should retire from his throne to his pillow, with the assurance that not one of his many subjects could with truth complain of his injustice, neglect or partiality, but that security was about every dwelling, and comfort within every household. What must be the blessedness of God, when from the throne of a universe he can look upon all the worlds he has made, and within the soul of every creature, and know that he has forgotten none, and omitted to none the due of a dependent; that the eyes of none have waited upon him in vain, but that each has received his portion of daily care?

Justice must have its way upon the transgressor, and the Lord has said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" yet justice must be a delight to Him who delights in truth, and would save the soul of his creature from following the way of death. And then his love and mercy! What happiness so pure, so rich, as the gushing forth of affection towards those we love? What action so full in its own repayment, as a successful compassion for the

wretched, or the winning back of a desolate heart to hopes of peace? This was the refreshment of the Saviour's spirit in his sorrowful pilgrimage; for when he was weary and worn, he but stayed his steps to cause a lame man to leap as an hart, or the tongue of a dumb man to sing, to pour light upon a darkened eye, to bid a leper be clean, or to give back to some mourner her recent dead, and he was strong again as though he had drunk a cup of life. But what must be the joy of God in pouring forth from the infinite fountain of his heart streams of affection to every holy and happy child? or in sending consolation to bleeding and broken bosoms which none but He can bind up and heal?

How great his blessedness is in this exercise of love, we may learn from the vast extent of his living creation. Why were conscious beings made, if God had not desired to have objects whom he could love and bless with Himself? Above all, why did he give his only begotten Son to humiliation and the cross, and, after raising him up to his right hand, crown him with all power for the happiness of all who believe on his name? Why has he adorned heaven with such magnificence, and filled it with such ravishments of pleasure, that sinners once lost might dwell with him in joy forever?

Is it not because he has a joy in love and mercy far above every other blessedness?

Yet in this blessedness the believer may share. God surrounds the Christian's weakness by objects of affection, that his heart's tendrils twining around them may rise from the dust and aspire toward heaven. He has made every name of human love sacred, by applying it to Himself. He has appointed us almoners of his bounty, spiritual and temporal, to the poor, the erring, and the wretched. The trials we suffer from sympathy, prepare us for the happiness of that world where we shall never behold a tear or a pang. What must be the joy of God our Saviour when the work of redemption is complete, every ransomed soul brought home, every mortal weakness repaired, every shadow of fear or sorrow chased away, and every wish of his ransomed church gratified forever? Into that joy He bids those enter, who for his sake and in his name have done good to those who had need. "Enter the joy of thy Lord," he says to the faithful servant; the very joy the Master has, his servant shares.

God is blessed in his holiness. In the eternal mind, there is no jarring doubt, no distracting uncertainty, no fearful hesitation. All is pure, and lucid, and serene. What infinite composure, unruffled calmness, and boundless self-satisfaction,

pervade the spirit of the holy and ever-blessed God! Sublime above storm, and shadow, and change, the "peace of God passeth all understanding."

To the bosom of God the believer will be taken. The throne of the Almighty secures the happiness of him, who lives after the divine holiness. Passion, doubt, fear, sin, agitate him no more. He is like God, perfect in himself, through the power of God, a partaker of a divine nature; and the peace of God, the very peace of God himself, which passeth all understanding, shall keep his heart and mind forever. This God shadowed forth when he sanctified the Sabbath of his own rest for the peace of holy man in communion with Himself, and the rest of his regenerated people shall be complete in the eternal rest which remaineth for them; for, says the apostle, "He, that hath entered into rest, hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." They are at peace with God in the eternal Sabbath.

Such is some faint explanation of the apostle's meaning, when he speaks of Christians becoming, through faith in Jesus, "Partakers of the divine nature." How noble a dignity does he propose to

our ambition! What exalted felicity to our hopes! What perfect satisfaction to our desires! Go then, unbeliever, to the foot of the cross, and ask that He, who purchased by his atonement power to make us sons of God, would enstamp anew the image of God upon your fallen soul. Go, Christian, close to the throne of grace; there gain strength to follow Jesus, the example and accomplisher of your faith. Fulfil ye his joy, that his joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

SERMON II.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR.

Luke vii. 22. To the Poor the Gospel is preached.

John the Baptist had on several occasions testified most clearly that Jesus was the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; but now, shut up in prison, he is tempted by doubt, or wishes to confirm the faith of his disciples, and sends two of them to our Lord with the question, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" The answer of Jesus is given in the words from which we have taken our text: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised." These physical miracles were an exact fulfilment of ancient prophecy respecting the Christ, and a divine testimony to the mission of Jesus, "for no man could have done the works he did, except God had been with him." But the moral proof, necessary to secure for the Teacher of Galilee the con-

fidence of our hearts would have been wanting, had not the moral miracle been added, "To the poor the Gospel is preached." This alone declared it to be a system far above the contrivance of men, and worthy of the Universal Father.

Philosophy had virtually shut out from her schools all, who from the necessity of labour could not give themselves up to study and discussion, or whose names would add no lustre to a sect. The costly services of heathen mythology received coldly at their shrines the destitute and the wretched, who most needed the sympathy of heaven, while the rich and the great subsidized gods and oracles. Even under the Jewish ritual, the humble worshipper, who could bring to the altar only a pair of turtle doves or young pigeons, needed strong faith not to feel abashed and discouraged as the rich pressed forward with the best of flock and herd. But Jesus came as a poor man, to preach glad tidings to the poor. He does not refuse his truth to the rich, because they are rich, nor give pardon to the poor, because they are poor; but he passes by the petty distinctions upon which men pride themselves, and addresses himself, first, to those with the least worldly advantages, that he may show, in a manner not to be mistaken, how God, who is no respecter of persons, has sent by him messages of mercy to man

as man, offering love to all who are willing to confess themselves poor before God, teaching holy wisdom to all who become as little children, and beating down all, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the mighty and the weak, to one common level, that whosoever will, may rise through faith to the dignity, privilege and inheritance of a child of God.

I. The preaching of the Gospel to the poor demonstrates its adaptation to the wants of human nature.

There is no disguising the fact, that in all ages and conditions of the world, the poor have been looked down upon and made to suffer wrong. Classic antiquity did not produce one advocate of the poor. They were "the profane and hated vulgar." The Pharisees, who comprised within their sect, all the rich, cultivated and fashionable among the Jews, except the Sadducean skeptics, pronounced the common people "accursed." In modern Europe (passing by those dark ages, when a proud chivalry considered the peasant and the mechanic, the scum of the earth) but little regard is paid to the rights of the many; yes, even in that nation, the greatest, the proudest, and, as some think, the best of them all, where the utmost magnificence contrasts closely with the utmost squalor of wretchedness, where

the labourer's bread is stinted that the gorged aristocrat may secure his rents from foreign competition, where invention is racked to discover how small a portion of food and comfort will suffice to keep a pauper's body and soul together, and where the splendour of the upper classes is but as the decorated marble of a sepulchre, hiding within cold, hard walls corruption and death. Nay, it is true of our own land, though the theory of the laws acknowledges the equality of all, that millions of the same human kind with ourselves, whom God made, and Christ died for, and the Holy Ghost is ready to sanctify for the Christian's heaven, are denied the privilege of reading the Book which God commands to every creature; the necessity of labour is deemed by many almost a shame, and ranks in society are graduated by differences in honest pursuits; the worst brunt of any pecuniary pressure is put upon the hard-working striver for daily bread; the very instinct of pity toward widows and orphans has been made the cover, under which they have been robbed of the precious savings entrusted by the dead to hands they thought honourable, and laws, strong as steel to the vulgar thief, are like cobwebs to the gentlemanly defaulter.

It is true, that poverty, especially in the happy circumstances of this country, is often the result of

crime, and for this reason, among others, accompanied by crime; but, that this is so universal as to furnish a rule of judgment, God himself denies, when he declares even to the Jews, whose economical system was the very best guard against pauperism, "the poor shall never cease out of the land;" and that "the poor are the Lord's heritage;" which could not be if crime were the only cause of poverty and the poor necessarily vicious. On the contrary, the circumstances of life, in which the Saviour chose to set forth an example of perfect man, together with his saying, "How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of God!" go far to show that the piety most like to his own, may be found with even those who have not where to lay their head. Sickness, mistakes in management, and imprudence, not greater in their narrow sphere than that which often wrecks large fortunes of men accounted upright, may bring extreme destitution upon the industrious, temperate and well-meaning.

It is a common thing to declaim against the vices of those whom in our pride we call the lower orders, but true charity should rather wonder that they are so few, where virtue has such feeble encouragement from the world, and is beset by such strong temptations. It ought to be easy for those,

whose competence puts them above want, to be honest; whose mental culture and social advantages supply them with higher pleasures than animal gratification, to avoid licentiousness; and whose friends are thick around them, to stand firm in integrity through the hour of trial. Yet have they not always proved themselves free from crime, and, could the vail be lifted from the deeds their opportunities enable them to conceal, perhaps the account of sin in the two classes might not be as unequal as many think. But it is far different with those, in whose heart want contends against poorly educated principle, to whom wealthy lust or ambition offers bribes, and who, despised or forgotten by the world, have none to cheer them in their self-denial, practised amidst toil and necessity, while all stand ready to hunt them down for the slightest crime. Certain I am, that many of us, who, with comparative plenty about us, walk in the pride of our virtue, if we were reduced to the trials of the poor, would lose much of our boast; and, that in the day when the guilt of crime will be graduated by the moral circumstances of the transgressor, many a sinner of the drawing-room will look as loathsomely as the culprit of the penitentiary.

In a religion which comes from God, the Creator of all men, we must expect comfort and

help adapted to the necessities of all; we must see the Almighty hand reached down to raise up the lowest as well as the high, the most wretched as well as the fortunate; we must find motives to virtue stronger than man has ever discovered; we must read truths linking the soul to God and his universe, yet comprehensible, not only by minds trained in study, but by the simple, the child, the poor, who have no such talent, cultivation, or time. There must be in it a charm to throw sunshine upon the dreariest and ruggedest lot. It must be as a friend to stand by us and cheer, when all else overlook or forsake us, and, in the darkest and coldest hour of human suffering, promise an immortal day of light and satisfaction. Therefore, did Jesus at once vindicate the divinity of his religion by preaching the Gospel to the poor. Wealth could not buy it, rank could not win it, power could not compel it; but, when they heard it, the slave looked up and was free eternally, the beggar by the way-side became rich, the widow knew she had a husband and a father for her orphans, the labourer went cheerful to his toil for the sake of his Master in heaven, the lisping child was made wiser than the ancients, breaking forth into praise more sublime than all the speculations of the schools; nor could the rich, and the wise, and the great,

share in the blessing, until they had passed through the same strait gate, and kneeled at the foot of the same cross with the outcast and the despised. This is a religion worthy of a God, and such as only God could provide.

II. The Gospel preached to the poor vindicates the providence of God toward men.

The existence of poverty and wretchedness is a sore stumbling block to one who is inquiring after a God of love and goodness. Were we all miserable alike, the difficulty would be less, for we might then conjecture a common cause for the common ruin. But the varieties of human allotment and experience are very distressing to mind and heart; nay, but for the light of revelation, must seem capricious and cruel. We are born into the world with the same cravings and sensibilities, yet to one is given a strong and healthful frame, while another suffers from the cradle to the grave under bodily tortures, that make life a weariness and captivity. One is lapped in affluence, and trained for a maturity of honour by the watchful eye and hand of intelligent love; another, stamped in the same image, is cast forth a child of shame and heir of infamy. One lolls in easy luxury, with many waiting at his beck to serve his artificial wants; another, perhaps every way his superior in mental and moral quali-

ties, drudges, a burden-bearer, through the world, with scarce a pittance for food and shelter. One inherits a throne, another lives and dies a slave.

Industry, virtue, and a pursuit of knowledge, may do something to relieve, and even to prevent these inequalities, but not enough. Riches are not always a proof of virtue, nor power the reward of honourable means, and the best talent is often a crippled pensioner upon wealthy and niggard ignorance. Wherefore, then, these distinctions? Are we not all alike human, creatures of one God?

We may be told that there is less difference of happiness among men than meets the eye; that every lot has its trials and every heart its bitterness; that luxury has its pains as well as penury its wants, and that, however prosperous vice may appear, virtue has in its own consciousness a far better reward; but such declarations are mockeries, except as they may be found written by God's own hand in the blood of the New Testament.

Poverty is a bitter thing. There is no reasoning against hunger, and cold, and disease; against the shame of debt and the slavery of dependence. The brow may be calm, and the eye patient before the world, but "the iron is rusting into the soul," and the heart is dark in the sunshine. The strongest mind quails before its shadow, and the best

thoughts fall sickened and sad to earth, as the reality is forced home upon the bleeding sensibilities. What, then, must be the trial to those less strong by nature or education? Tell the famishing mother, as she clasps her famishing child to a bosom whose fountain is dried up, both shivering with a chill worse than death, that they who live in warm houses and fare sumptuously every day, have their troubles as well as she, and she would shriek out her answer, "O for the crumbs that fall from their tables, the poorest garment in their wardrobes, to feed and to warm my dying babe!"

Virtue its own reward? It is so in the Christian's heaven, but it is not so on earth, except when the hope of heaven antedates its bliss. The human heart cannot live alone. It must have sympathy. Consciousness of right will not uphold us in distress, except there be some one to whom we may breathe it, some friendly eye to answer ours, some kind voice to say, "Be of good cheer!" Until the lonely sufferer knows that there is a God above him, and that eternity will compensate for the apparent injustice of time; until he finds a way of access to a Friend almighty to deliver, into whose compassionate ear he may pour out all his sorrows; until a response comes to him from the excellent glory, "The Lord God shall wipe away all tears

from off all faces." Virtue can no more be sustained by consciousness than a pillar by quicksand, but will fall by its own weight.

This strength does the Gospel afford. It first teaches us that we are all under sin, and that, whatever be the distresses of men here, they are light, trivial in comparison to the full wages of impenitence, when they shall have passed through death to the eternal world; and then, having probed the ulcerous evil to the quick, it brings nigh the balm of healing. The Man Christ Jesus walks before us, the poor, the despised, the rejected of men, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. What are all our sorrows to his sorrow? We see him bow his innocent head under perjured accusations, and, abandoned by his God, give up the ghost upon the accursed tree. Again, we look up and see a human form like our own, seated at the right hand of God, the adored of angels; the administrator of providence, and the excellent in glory; yet in his hands and feet are the prints of nails, as though he had been crucified, and beneath his crown of power is a scarred circle, as though thorns had been driven in upon his brow. Can this be the Babe of the manger, the Man of sorrows, the executed Nazarene? Yes, it is He, who, having proved the just wrath of God against sin, and expiated it for all

who believe, is, therefore, exalted to be a Royal Saviour. Now is his word of mercy spoken to every sufferer, "I was once a sufferer like thee;" to every poor man, "I was poor like thee;" to every despised one, "I was despised like thee;" and "I was all this, that thou mightest be convinced of my sympathy with thine every temptation, and power and readiness to raise thee up to my right hand glorious as myself, if thou wilt accept my grace, drink patiently of my cup, and bear my cross. Now it is good for thee to be afflicted. The fire is purging the dross from thy gold, and I, the Refiner, am watching the process. Only be thou faithful unto death, and, for thy light afflictions, thou shalt have a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They who live nearest to me in tribulation, shall stand nearest to my throne."

The vindication of providence is complete by the preaching of the Gospel to the poor.

III. It is necessary that a religion, which promises redemption from the effects of the curse, should be preached to the poor.

A living divine of the Church of England, whose pious eloquence well deserves the fame accorded him in both hemispheres, introducing a sermon upon a text nearly parallel to our own, declaims with great earnestness against the doctrine of a na-

tive equality of rights among men, which he considers a direct contradiction of the word and providence of Him who has said, "The poor shall never cease out of the land." "We hold it," says he, "to be clear to every student of Scripture, that God has ordained successive ranks of human society, and that uniformity of worldly allotment was never contemplated by his providence; and, therefore, we hold that attempts at equalization would be tantamount to rebellion against the appointments of heaven, and that infidelity must upheave the altars of a land ere its inhabitants would venture out on such an enterprise."*

How melancholy to see a strong mind and most benevolent heart thus forced, by the tyranny of early prejudices and in misguided wresting of the truth of God, to the sustaining of opinions at war, equally, with the impartial goodness of the Creator and the hopes of our race! If, as assumed by the Preacher, and as is doubtless true, the gradations of human society are mainly founded upon different degrees of poverty and wealth, it is clear from Scripture that such distinctions have arisen, not from the original allotments of providence, but from man's violations of the divine laws. All wealth is the product of labour, and it was sin

* Melville. Provision of God for the Poor.

which brought out the drops of toil upon the face of man. But for sin, the necessity of labour would never have been felt upon earth, nor the various crafts of men found a place in all its happy fields. They, whose food grew spontaneously, would never have disturbed the soil by the deep-wounding plough. Innocence, unblushing in her pure beauty, would never have shorn the flock, nor robbed the worm, nor toiled at the loom. Neither roofs nor walls would have shut out the pure atmosphere; and commerce could have added no benefit to those who had no wants, and craved no luxuries. There would have been no pride to barter bread for ornaments, nor warring ambition to forge the spear and sword. No leech's skill would have been needed by immortal bodies, nor learned counsel to settle disputes where there could be no quarrel. God would have been the sole Legislator, and his will the only Executive. Some distinctions there may have been, some stronger though all strong, some wiser though all wise; but never could there have been those distinctions which now arise from poverty and wealth, for, where all had enough, none could have been poor, and, where none needed service, none would have been servants.

Circumstances, consequent upon the provision

of mercy by the Son of God, have in many regards greatly alleviated the curse, and turned the necessity of labour into a blessing; yet the fact remains the same, that poverty and riches, with the distinctions founded upon them, were introduced by sin, and, therefore, so far from justifying the belief that some classes of men will be perpetually subject to others, we should confidently hope, that, as the Gospel makes progress in the conversion of men from sin, thus removing the causes of degradation and the necessity of trial, the inequalities of human society will become less and less, until all mankind, adopted into a common sonship and animated by one spirit, shall dwell before God as a brotherhood sharing a common inheritance. So far, then, from believing that the doctrines of equal natural rights and the probability through grace of that equality becoming actual, are contrary to the word and providence of God, I hold that their acknowledgment, even in theory, is no small step in a return to the original peace and happiness God intended man should enjoy, and a step, which never could have been taken, nor even dreamed of, but for the revelation of the Gospel which is preached to the poor. It is when we see the Son of the Highest incarnate as a poor untitled man, that we learn how the highest dignity is independent of

such accidents as wealth or birth; when we hear him preaching to the poor lessons of the vastest importance and widest range, that we learn how the Great Teacher of all can make man's wisdom foolishness, and man's simplicity wisdom; and, when we look forward to the eternal world, at whose threshold all the distinctions of this life vanish like shadows before the morning, and within whose spiritual scenes naught can avail but the holy dignity of souls restored to the image of the Creator, that we learn how perfect is the triumph of redemption over apostacy.

To teach us all this, Jesus preached his Gospel especially to the poor, who, to outward seeming at least, have suffered most from the evil of sin, which brought the curse upon our world and race. He did not, as some falsely pretending to his name, have done, attempt to overturn in sudden ruin all the institutions existing contrary to his original purpose; he preached not to the slave rebellion against his master, though he came to set the captive free; nor to the subject treason against his king, though his only is the right to reign; nor to the destitute an agrarian covetousness of rich men's superfluities, though his doctrine was that Providence cared equally for all. He preached his Gospel to the heart, that, delivering the spirit of man

from the oppression of sin, subjecting the conscience to the rule of God, and inspiring the soul with longings after eternal riches, the fountain of all our evil might be purified within us; and that, as men become temperate and lowly-minded and unworldly and full of love to Him and to each other, the insolence of prosperity might be taken from the high, and the ignominy of depression from the mean, until every valley being exalted, and every mountain brought low, all men should meet on the blessed plain of universal happiness and interchanging affection. We are not optimists nor dreamers about the perfectibility of man, because of any faith in human nature itself, or the wisdom of human economists and reformers; but our hope is in Him who preached his Gospel to the poor, and in the power of the Gospel he preached, that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, that every yoke shall be broken, that there shall be none to hurt or destroy, and that again the morning stars shall sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, when the Regenerator of our fallen world looks down from heaven upon his finished work, and says, "Behold, it is very good!"

Here are lessons for us:

As sinners. There is no hope for us but in the Gospel, and no hope for us in the Gospel, until

putting away all pride, we cast ourselves before the cross of Him who was laid in the manger; and stripping ourselves of worldly covetousness, we pass through the strait gate and follow Him in the narrow way, who loved all and did good to all.

As patriots. It is from the Gospel alone, that the true principles of national freedom can be taken. There only the fathers of our country found the type of intelligent liberty, and only as we spread the Gospel through our land, and by the blessing of the Holy Ghost inspire with it the hearts of our people, can we hope to confirm our unequalled institutions. The Bible, the Bible for every man, is the Palladium of our safety. Let the Bible be taken from us, and the ark of God is lost.

As Christians. The Gospel is the grand means of philanthropic reform, because it goes at once to the heart and strikes at the root of all sin. The time and the labour we devote to the lopping off this or the other branch of evil, is lost. The vitality of sin to produce the fruit of misery remains in the trunk. Oh! that we could unite the scattered energies of all God's people in the one work of spreading the simple Gospel! Then should we soon hear the loud voice of universal humanity saying, NOW IS COME SALVATION AND STRENGTH, AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD AND THE POWER OF HIS CHRIST. Amen.

SERMON III.

THE

HEALING TOUCH OF CHRIST'S GARMENT.

THE

HEALING TOUCH OF CHRIST'S GARMENT.

Matt. ix. 21. If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

The story of every cure, which our blessed Lord wrought while he was upon earth, has much spiritual instruction in it; for He, who was ever ready to heal the sick in body, is the willing and almighty Saviour of the sin-sick soul. Indeed, it was only as the Saviour of the soul that he had power to heal the body; because, as death and all that tends to death were brought into our world by sin, none could take them away but He, whose blood was accepted as an atonement for sin, and whose righteousness, having magnified the broken law, justified a remission of its penalties. Every instance, therefore, of successful application to Him for relief from bodily ill, encourages and directs the penitent sinner to apply for the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The narrative from which we have taken

the text, is especially rich in such encouragement and advice.

One Jairus, a ruler of the Synagogue, whose daughter was at the point of death, had just made an earnest request of the Master, that he would go into his house and lay his hand upon the sufferer, asserting his confident belief that she would then be restored. There was a weakness in the faith of Jairus, for he seems to have thought it necessary that Jesus should go into the chamber of the dying or the dead, and lay his hand upon her, in order to her restoration. Yet, feeble as it was, our Lord answers his trust, and at once arose and went with him. On the way, however, he finds an opportunity of working a more striking miracle, and of rewarding a stronger faith. Much people, Mark tells us, were following him, some few in devout love for his person and doctrines, and the many, with perchance an idle and gaping curiosity, to see or to hear some new thing. But there was one in that crowd, conscious of personal need, and intent upon personal benefit. It was a woman who had had an issue of blood for twelve years. During her long infirmity, she had spared no means in her power to obtain her cure. She had applied to many physicians, and in submitting to their treatment, suffered many things of them, until she had spent all

that she had; yet so far from being better, she rather grew worse. It was a peculiar aggravation of her trouble, that it rendered her, according to the strictness of the Levitical law, unclean; and every thing and every person she touched, unclean also. She was thus separated to a loneliness in her sorrow.

Having, no doubt, heard of our Lord's power to heal, or seen some of his cures, and now observed with what readiness he undertook to restore the ruler's daughter, she learns hope for herself. His must be a power above all human skill, and a freeness in mercy which asked for no price in return, else she could not have thought of applying to him. But how shall her application be made? Will he, in the midst of his admiring disciples, and on his way to do a kindness to a ruler, turn aside to relieve a poor wretch like her? Besides, modesty forbids her to state her case to him before the crowd, and she fears their resentment for mingling among them, and thus defiling them. Most probably, too, she thinks the Master himself will shrink from her unclean touch. What can she do? He is her last, her only hope, and she cannot go away without relief. Ah! what ingenious earnestness a sense of need teaches us? "Surely," she says in her heart, "the virtue of

this blessed Healer is not confined to his hand, his word, or even his look. He needs neither to hear nor see me apply to him. Yet there must be some application, some method of receiving benefit by communicating with him. This will I do. I will not go before him, nor speak to him in the hearing of the crowd, nor will I even touch his holy person. I will creep behind him, and 'touch but the hem of his garment, and I shall be whole.'" Her faith prevails; she touches but the utmost border of his garment, and instantly she feels that she is healed of the plague. That momentary touch of the farthest border of the garment of the One mighty to save, does more than her many physicians, their many prescriptions, and all the money she spent upon both.

Some commentators say, that in ignorance she thought to steal a cure, or that she could obtain the blessing unknown to Jesus. But there is no reason for this, and such an idea was utterly inconsistent with her strong faith in his power. She could hardly have doubted that his knowledge was as great as his ability to save. Her trembling and fear, when our Lord's declaration that virtue had gone out of him, made it necessary for her openly to avow herself, may be very well otherwise accounted for. Perhaps she feared that she had done

wrong in not asking a more formal leave, or that the blessing was too great for her poor desert. She may have trembled with fear at the supernatural dignity of one so honoured of God, as to be able to heal even by the hem of his garment. It is true, she told him all the truth, but that was before all the people, and rather a public acknowledgment of his kindness and her emotions, than informing him of what she supposed he was ignorant. Certainly there is nothing strange in the agitation of the poor woman, on finding herself healed from her long disease by such wonderful and divine means. We hear no words of censure from her Master's lips, and we have no right to pass any. "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace." Gracious words of gracious love! "Be of good comfort;" let no fear of having offended embitter thy joy: thine was an act of faith, not of presumption. "Go in peace," in a consciousness of perfect health, and of thy Master's love. Are we presumptuous in believing that those words conveyed life to her soul, and that He who stayed the plague in her body, delivered her from her worst disease, the plague of sin?

That we may profit by an example which our Saviour so highly approved and honoured, let us observe what constituted its excellent character.

First: Her confidence in Christ.

Her case, so far as mere human help was concerned, was desperate. Her disease was of long standing, and daily growing worse. She had sought the aid of many physicians in vain, and, even if there were any that could help her, she had no money to purchase their advice. Yet the very desperateness of the case makes her cling yet more closely to her hope in him. She believes that he can cure her, and will. Her case was peculiar. She had been long defiled, was poor and, so far as we are told, friendless. There seems not to have been one in all the crowd to speak for her, or with her. Yet, though polluted, and poor, and alone, she is confident that his merciful heart will not turn away from her need, nor let her depart unblessed. When was he ever known to reject the petition of any, because they were poor and helpless? Who ever asked his grace in vain? She knew he was mighty to save; of that she had abundant proof; and, though all his other previous cures had been wrought by his hand or his word, she does not believe his power to be dependent upon any particular means. She did not think, like Jairus, that the Master was confined to one way of communicating his virtue. She could not go before him, nor speak to him in the hearing of the crowd, nor ask him to lay his hands

upon one so polluted, nor even think of stopping him on his way to a Ruler's house; but she believes his power to be such, that if she touch the hem of his garment, she shall be well. I know not how faith could have been stronger than this.

Secondly: Her humility.

We have no instance of great faith, unaccompanied by great humility. The more we recognise of the glorious excellence of the Divine character, the more we must feel ourselves vile in the contrast. The more self sinks, faith rises, for faith is the dependance of weakness upon strength, ignorance upon wisdom, unworthiness upon righteousness. Thus it was with this daughter of Israel.

Her's was a pressing and bitter affliction, and had she been like some people, who think that their personal grief should be made the griefs of all around them, she would have made a great noise about her troubles. We should have seen her rush with frantic cries and gestures to clasp the knees of the Lord, and demand her cure. But she is content to remain silent among the crowd, unknown to all but Him in whom she trusted. A less humble heart than her's, would have vented itself in murmurings. She would have complained that her affliction was too great, and that it was cruel to consider her polluted and separate her from

her friends, for what was not her own fault. But we hear no such murmurings from her lips. She bows in silent meekness to the hand of God, and seeks relief only from the Divine mercy. She was willing to be cured by the grace of Jesus in any way he chose. Helpless and miserable as she is, she never thinks herself of such importance as to need a notable miracle for her cure, or that the Saviour must strive especially hard to effect it. A single unobserved touch of his garment is all that is necessary, not because she needs no great deliverance, but because Jesus is so great a Deliverer. Though she must have almost grovelled upon the ground among the feet of the crowd, to reach the hem of the Master's garment, yet she stoops and gladly humbles herself that she may be exalted. Her cure is well-gained, so that it be gained at any sacrifice of pride or ease. I know not which was greatest, her humility or her faith.

THIRDLY: Her personal application of the Master's healing influence.

She knew that he could heal all manner of diseases, that he had healed them, and was still willing to heal them. But it was not enough for her to know that he was a mighty Healer. She needed that his power should be exerted in her behalf, that he should heal her. What personal benefit would it

have been to her to know that every one else could go unto him and be healed, if her disease remained unabated? She is determined, therefore, that he shall be *her* Saviour.

She knew, that though he was willing to receive and bless all who came to him for healing, that he could not be expected to do it without her seeking the grace, or without some proof of her willingness and desire to receive it from him. In other circumstances, she would have knelt before him and openly besought his blessing, but, since she cannot do that, she determines to touch the hem of his garment, which gesture, though slight in itself, expressed in the fullest manner her faith and anxiety.

She knew, also, that there must be some mean by which the healing influence was to be conveyed to her, some method of communication between her sick body and her Lord's virtue. Had he touched her, at her request, the touch would have healed her; had he spoken to her, his words would have healed her; had he even looked upon her, the look would have been sufficient. Therefore she determines to touch his garment. Slight as the connexion was, which a touch of the hem of his garment made between her and her Lord, it was necessary to her cure, and it was enough. Without

it or some other method of application, she would have had no relief. But she made in faith a personal application and appropriation of her Master's grace to her own case, and instantly she was made whole.

We are now prepared to see how sinners who desire a salvation, must seek for it from Christ.

1. We must put confidence in him as the Saviour of sinners.

Of this we cannot doubt, when we consider that God hath raised him up to glory "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." It is against God that we have offended, and God is the best judge of the sufficiency of any atonement offered for our justification. With Christ he has declared himself well pleased. The righteousness and death of Christ he has accepted, and pronounced sufficient, and in token of his satisfaction with the work of his Son, as the Redeemer of his people, he has raised him up from the dead, crowned him with glory and honour, given him to be head over all things to his church, and promised eternal life to all whom he presents by his blessed mediation. Who should question the ability of Christ to save, when God, whom we have offended, has assured it unto him? Who shall condemn when God justifies? What impiety, what blasphemy to doubt the suffi-

ciency of Christ, when to doubt it is to deny God's own holy truth and just decision! No wonder that he who believeth not, is damned, since unbelief involves such insult and effrontery.

But if we believe Christ's power to save, how can we doubt his willingness, when we remember all that the Saviour undertook, performed, and suffered, that he might win for himself the glorious privilege of saving to the uttermost all that come unto God by him? Was it not that he might seek and save the lost, that he gave himself for us? Can he now make void and vain his own mission, obedience and death? Oh! how he must delight to save, when he did so much to make himself a Saviour! To doubt his willingness is to make a mockery of his humiliation, his servitude, and his cross.

Nor can we doubt when we remember all the gracious offers and promises he has made to poor, lost sinners. It was to sinners he came to minister, not to the righteous; and between sinners he makes no distinction, if they be only penitent and desirous of life. The more we labour and are heavy-laden, the more urgent is he that we should go unto him for life. Nay, that we might have no doubt of his meaning us, each of us, all of us, when he invites he says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take

of the water of life freely;" and "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." That we might know his merciful will, he has sent us his Holy Scriptures, "written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." He has sent his ministers as ambassadors in his stead, beseeching us "to be reconciled to God." He has instituted his instructive sacraments, whose rites exhibit, in the most striking and affecting manner, his readiness to save. He sends his Holy Spirit to put the truths of his Gospel with power home to our hearts. Surely, in all this, he cannot have meant to deceive; to awaken hopes only to disappoint them. What greater proof can we ask of his being the Saviour of sinners, than his own and his Father's word?

And this especially, when we know that his saving grace has been extended already to so many lost sinners. Hundreds came to him and were saved during his life upon earth, and thousands when he had sent his witnessing Spirit at the Pentecost; and among them Mary Magdalene, and the sinner of the city, and the dying thief, and persecuting Saul of Tarsus, sinners apparently the most abandoned, and polluted, and obstinate. What a mighty host now swell in a harmony loud as the gush of many waters, that song of the redeemed,

which the solitary voice of the martyred Abel first raised before the throne of God in glory! Is his hand shortened now that it cannot save? Is his ear become heavy that he cannot hear? Has his blood lost its power? Can he be baffled by any difficulty in your salvation and mine, my fellow-sinner, Paul's fellow-sinner, Mary Magdalene's fellow-sinner? No, it cannot be.

"Dear, dying Lamb! thy precious blood,
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd church of God,
Be saved to sin no more."

2. We must have confidence in him as the *only* Saviour.

This poor woman went not to him until she had tried many physicians, and found help in none. So none are fit to come unto Christ, until they have abandoned all hope from any other source. Friends, however pious, cannot save us; the church, however zealous, cannot save us. Their prayers, upon which so many fatally depend, are of no avail, unless Christ put forth his power. They may direct and encourage us in going to him, but so long as we are out of Christ we are lost. Neither can we save ourselves. Every sinner, when unrenewed by divine grace, would like to be his own physician; and having healed, in a measure at least,

his own unrighteousness, go to Christ, only to complete the cure. But Christ will accept none such. If we could have saved ourselves, he would never have died to save us. He came to call sinners, not the righteous; to save the lost, not those who are in the right way. "When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." He and he alone can do the work, and to suppose that we can do any thing toward our own salvation before we go to him, is to prove our ignorance of our own condition, and of his office.

Nor is it enough that we go unto God for salvation. It is true, Christ is God, and God is in Christ, but Christ is also the incarnate Saviour, and the only Mediator between God and man. According to the determinations of God's own justice, it was necessary that Christ should die and intercede, before the sinner could be saved. Out of Christ, God is still "a consuming fire;" his law is still dishonoured, his wrath unappeased, and man must bear the burden of his own guilt. To look to God for pardon, and not to look to him through Christ, and implore his grace for Christ's sake, and hope for justification only through Christ's righteousness, is to reject the whole plan of the Gospel, and deny the necessity of the atonement which God ordained in such wisdom, and

Christ wrought out by such faithfulness. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by him." He who keeps not Christ, as his atonement and intercessor, ever between him and God, must die without Christ. For there is none other name under heaven by which we can be saved, and no other salvation can give hope to a truly penitent soul.

3. We must have confidence in him as a complete Saviour.

As we can accomplish no righteousness of our own before we come to him, so we must mingle no righteousness of our own with his after we have come to him. We must take his mercy as this poor woman took her cure, without price, wholly and freely from his hand. It is true we are to follow him, and run in the way of his commandments, but this we can do only by his divine grace. The moment we attempt to go in our own strength, we shall stumble and fall. He must not only raise us up, but hold us up; for they who have no strength to rise, can have but little strength to stand. His grace was as necessary to preserve this woman in health, as it was to cure her. Christ's work is not a mere washing, it is keeping us clean. He must deliver us not only from our guilt, but from our corruption. He must be the finisher as well as author of our faith. Therefore,

though we should endeavour after good works, relying upon his gracious aid, as the evidence of our faith, we must beware how we depend upon them as any part of our justifying righteousness, or mingle them with the righteousness of Christ. For what merit can we have in what we do only by his strength?

4. We must be humble.

Notwithstanding God in Christ has done so much for us, and is willing to do so much more, there is no reason for being lifted up in our own conceit. We are still poor, wretched sinners. It is of his infinite mercy alone, that he has mercy upon us. Therefore, though our approaches unto God should be earnest and persevering, we are not to demand salvation as a right, but as a free gift for Christ's sake, and his alone. We must humble ourselves before him while we plead, feeling all the while that we are the chief of sinners. The rich man must be as the poor, and the mighty man as the slave. We cannot enter heaven in full fashion, nor with plumes waving, and a haughty step. How can we have confidence in Christ as the Saviour of sinners, the only Saviour, the complete Saviour, and not feel our own utter worthlessness, and ill desert of any grace God may bestow for his sake? Yet many make here a fatal

error. They seem to think that, Christ having done all the work, they have a kind of warrant in God's sight, and may claim their soul's redemption without penitence and contrite shame. Not such was the character of this meek woman. We must humbly acquiesce in the justice of our condemnation, though we rejoice that it is taken away by the Saviour. We must make Christ our refuge from God's justice, not his supposed harshness and oppression. There must be a deep conviction that God would be clear of all undue severity, were he yet to sink us to everlasting ruin. Therefore, there must be no murmuring under the chastisements and inward griefs, which he deems necessary to make us sensible of our need, but a giving up of our whole selves entirely to his will, hoping for pardon only through the merits of the Redeemer. Until we have this child-like spirit, we can have no part with the sons of God, in the Son of God. Yet how many seek salvation only from dread of God's wrath, hating all the while the strictness of that law which makes the wages of sin, death, and desiring to be saved, not because they love holiness, but only because they fear to be damned?

5. We must gladly accept of salvation, in the way God chooses to bestow it.

To hear some inquiring sinners talk, though

they profess all the while to believe they are unworthy sinners, one would judge that they thought it necessary for them to be saved in some way peculiarly distinguishing. It is not enough for them to hear of Christ's readiness to save all sinners who trust in him, and of his many recorded promises. They are such great sinners, that they cannot believe there is mercy for them but from some extraordinary evidence, if not a new revelation made expressly for them; the common salvation will not do; the common Gospel is not sufficiently clear; and all this, they flatter themselves, arises from their deep sense of peculiar unworthiness. There cannot be a greater mistake. If they were thoroughly humbled and felt themselves really sinking, they would grasp the promise at once, and cast themselves into the arms of an Almighty Saviour. It is nothing but pride; a vain imagination of their importance, which leads them to think that the same salvation believing sinners rejoice in, will not be sufficient to meet their case. Who are they, what are they, that they cannot trust God's simple promise, but must be assured of heaven in some unusual way? Let them be convinced, that, unless they believe the promise written in the Book, they will have no other. Unless they are saved as all other penitent sinners are saved,

they will never be saved at all. A single drop of Christ's blood, but a single touch of the hem of his garment, is enough to save any soul, however guilty, or inveterate in sin. It is not, therefore, a sense of sin that prompts such unbelief, but a proud distrust of Christ, as though we needed a greater Saviour than he.

6. We must make a personal application of the merits of Christ.

It is not enough that we believe in Christ, as the Saviour of sinners in general. We must make the faith practical, and rely upon him as *our* Saviour. This is the vital act of faith, without which, indeed, it is not faith. For how can I trust in the merits of Christ's salvation, without believing in the application of those merits to my own soul? A belief in the skill of a physician will not avail me in sickness, unless I put myself under his care. A conviction of the efficacy of any medicine will be vain for my own relief, unless I take it. So must the sinner rely upon Christ as his own Saviour; not his own exclusively, but his own particularly: not as though Christ died for him alone, but as having died to save his soul. This is the definition which our church gives of true faith: "It is not only a certain knowledge, whereby we hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his

word, but also an assured confidence which the Holy Ghost works by the Gospel in my heart, that not only to others, *but to me also*, remission of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits."* While we rejoice to believe in the sufficiency of Christ to save all who go to him, we must go to him personally for ourselves, and rely upon him for ourselves. Thus the apostle, in the II. of Galatians, says, "He loved *me*, he gave himself for *me*." He perceived his interest in Christ, and knew that He was the Saviour of his soul; and Job, in the same manner, "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth." There must be, then, a separate transaction between each soul that is saved and Christ, as distinctly as though there were none saved beside. The publican's prayer was, "Lord have mercy upon *me*, a sinner!" The faith of the leper was, "If thou wilt, thou canst make *me* clean;" and the penitent acknowledgment of Thomas, "*My* Lord and *my* God." Until we are prepared thus to ask, and thus to receive, we cannot obtain peace. There must be some connexion established between the soul and Christ, some union to him, some engrafting into him. The moment we trust Christ as *our* Saviour, the salvation is ours; but until we do so,

* Heidelberg Catechism. VII. Lord's day.

we are guilty of unbelief and doubt, and can receive nothing of the Lord. Here is the difficulty with many anxious seekers for mercy. They would have the change first, and the faith afterwards; when, in truth, faith must precede and work the change. So long as they refuse this personal reliance upon Christ's word, they remain in their distress; but the moment they believe, they see the salvation of God. It is the simplicity of the act that staggers them. They cannot be convinced that all they have to do, is to believe, to put forth the hand, to touch the hem of the Saviour's robe of righteousness, and all will be done. Yet just so simple and efficacious is personal trust in Christ. O that I could persuade you all thus to believe and be saved!

What encouragement have we here to go to Christ? We are guilty indeed, and have nothing to merit mercy, but deserve wrath; yet Jesus loves to have us come unto him, and so far from chiding us, declares that such faithful coming saves our souls, and secures our peace. We may be obscure and dishonoured sinners, but we are not lost in the crowd. He knows us, knows our wants, and knows our faith. He perceived that virtue had gone out of him, the moment this woman touched him; and now upon the throne of his glory, he is as conscious of our approach as he was then

of her's. Though ten thousand sinners crowd around him, he has a sense for all. Blessed Saviour! thou hast a fellow-feeling for our humanity, and the omniscience of God!

Alàs! for those who will not come to him! They despise his grace, they consent to their eternal ruin, and they die in their sins with all the guilt of having rejected mercy, and all the remorse of having destroyed themselves. They will not be saved now, and in eternity they *cannot* be. God deliver you from such suicidal obduracy, such awful ruin!

SERMON IV.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD,

AND

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD,

&c.

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2 Timothy i. 7. God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Strange words in such circumstances! The apostle had for a long time been a prisoner at Rome for the sake of the Gospel, and was now in daily expectation of a cruel death, which, indeed, he suffered within a year from the date of this epistle. He was prepared for it, and exulted in the hope of a speedy martyrdom: "I am now," says he, "ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." As he sees his end approaching, the end of his labours on earth, and the end of his trials forever, he thinks of his "dearly beloved son" Timothy, whom he

would leave behind him in the duties and "afflictions of the Gospel." He knew well the fiery temptations that awaited the young, ardent Evangelist; but well did he know also the victory of faith over them all; and sends him this letter, the last he ever wrote, full of parting counsel and encouragement. The text, therefore, speaks to us with all the interest and emphasis of words from the lips of a dying friend.

"God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Strange language, the world may think, from a prisoner under sentence of death, to one sure to suffer like calamities! But the world is never more mistaken than when it pretends to estimate the spirit of Christianity. Men of the world talk and act, as if there were something weak and unmanly in the religion of Jesus. They have no objection to it in others, and are frank in acknowledging its good effect upon society. It does very well for women and children, the common people, or those less informed; but it suits not the dignity of their character, it reaches not their elevation as persons of large views and important standing. They cannot leave their philosophy, or their politics, or their extensive business, to trouble themselves about sermons, and Bible societies, and prayers.

I challenge your attention to my text, the words of one, whose strength of demonstration has rarely been equalled, and whose influence over mankind for their good has never been excelled, but by that of his divine Master; for I hold myself ready to prove, that it is the true Christian alone who lives worthily of his immortal being, intellect and heart; while men of the world are mean, and weak, and unmanly in their desires, purposes, and conduct. We have not received "the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

There is a strong antithesis in the text; not merely between the first clause and the last; but the spirit "of power," the spirit "of love," and the spirit "of a sound mind," are severally and successively opposed to "the spirit of fear." This, then, is the proper order of discussing it.

First: The spirit of Christianity is not a spirit of *fear*, but a spirit of POWER.

Secondly: It is not a spirit of *fear*, but a spirit of LOVE.

Thirdly: It is not a spirit of *fear*, but a spirit of A SOUND MIND.

First: The spirit of Christianity is not a spirit of *fear*, but a spirit of POWER.

The word rendered *fear*, is not that which we

find in Romans viii. 15 ("Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto *fear*"), and elsewhere, signifying a present emotion of fear, urging to flight; but one meaning cowardice, or a weak habit of soul, a constant apprehensiveness and dread of danger, unfitting a man for the resolute prosecution of great designs.

The spirit of *power*, on the other hand, is a high and well-sustained courage, which gives to him who has it, an indomitable energy of purpose, and bears him successfully over difficulties otherwise fatal.

The first is the spirit of the world, the last of Christianity.

The spirit of the world is *fear*. Homer always characterizes men as timid, or "danger-fearing mortals," using the adjective of the noun in our text. It must be so. Man finds himself dependent for happiness upon circumstances entirely beyond his control, and his best calculated hopes exposed to wreck from a thousand contingencies, which he can neither foresee nor prevent. If he have not a friend in the Supreme Disposer of all events, and an assured prospect of a better immortality, fear will be constantly present with him. His gods are upon earth. Children and friends, riches and worldly distinction, are the sources to which he

looks for happiness. Take these away, and what has he left?

Children? Can he guard the bed of his beloved ones from the thick flying shafts of the unseen, but sure destroyer? Can he look upon the precious group around his domestic hearth, when the tolling bell, or the heavy tread of a passing funeral, is heard without, and not fear? Or, as he sees the proofs of human depravity on every side, can he be certain that those, whom he rears up with so much tender faithfulness, may not live to be the disgrace of his declining years, and bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave?

Friends, so pleasant in our brighter hours, so necessary to our comfort in the darker, what are they? The world's writers are mournfully eloquent upon their aptness to change and fail us at the very moment we need them most. "Pointed reeds, which have not strength to bear, but sharpness to stab."* Or if faithful, are they not mortal?

Riches, which include so much of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" the provision for our families, the purchase of friendship, and the favour of men, are you sure of them? Can they always be gained? Or, if gained, can they be always kept? Or, if kept, can

* Richard Allestree.

they bribe away sorrow from your threshold, or sickness from your body, or guilt from your conscience, or death from your soul? Has the rich man no fear, when the storm rattles against his windows, or the cry of fire is in the streets, or sudden changes burst upon the market, and he thinks of his absent ships, his well-filled storehouses, and out-lying credits? Or, when a secret voice, more startling than thunder, bids him prepare to die, for after death is the judgment?

Worldly distinction, what is it but a fairer mark for envious calumny to shoot at? Popular applause, what is it but a bubble blown up by the foul breath of fools and knaves, and when at its greatest bigness, bursting into noisome air? Was ever demagogue borne aloft by the rank and sweaty palms of the mob, whose voices he begged with servile meanness, that did not despise himself?

Or what is posthumous fame, to which genius, disgusted with a present generation, has often turned with fond idolatry?—I stood once within the tomb of Virgil. Time, or the human despoiler, had stripped it of every decoration. The niche which had once held the urn which contained his ashes was empty. The rank weed and brier waved around it and over it. The vine-dresser near, sang a song in another dialect, and an inscription, at

whose barbarous Latinity the Mantuan would have shuddered, was all that guided the classic pilgrim to his doubtful grave, who, living, panted for an immortality of fame. What is fame now to him? Are the dead conscious of the bay or the laurel which crowns their statues? Can the loudest acclamations call them from their sleep to exult in their triumphs? Spirits of the mighty dead, do ye hear us when we praise you? They answer not. If in heaven, they are absorbed by its glories; if in hell, their anguish has no relief. What is earth to them?

Yet worthless as this fame is, how few secure it! How many have striven for it, of whom we know nothing! And when we consider the materials of which history is formed, what reliance can we place on its truth or judgment? The voice of party which now condemns or praises from hate or interest, will be echoed down to following ages, as corroborated testimony. A cold aristocrat may be immortalized as Aristides the Just; an earnest champion of popular rights as the turbulent Gracchus.

If such be the only good of life, (and what worldly man has more?) there must be fear; fear lest they may never be ours; fear lest, being ours, they may be lost, and fear of that ever impending stroke

which will dash us down in death, and force us from them into that eternal world, within whose awful gates we can carry nothing but the guilt of our sins, if we have not made sure of faith in Christ.

Not such is the spirit of the Christian. He has made the love and favour of God the portion of his choice. His treasures and his hopes are infinitely above earth and beyond time. God the Creator, the Disposer of all, is his Father and Friend, by faith in Jesus Christ. From Him, as the only source, he looks for happiness. He delights in the mortal objects of his affections, pours out no scanty tide of tenderness to kindred and friends, enjoys gratefully the comforts and real pleasures of life, and loves to have the confidence and esteem of those whose confidence and esteem are worth the having; but he does not regard these as original, essential good. They are the streams; God is the fountain, and all their faculty to bless is drawn from His blessing. If the Christian love them well, he loves God more. He neither trusts in them nor relies upon them, but in Him and upon Him from whom they came, and who, in equal goodness, may take them away. Strip him naked of all the world holds dear or precious, and you have not touched his true wealth. He has yet God in his heart. God the

good, the merciful, the omniscient, the inexhaustible, is still his. "He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High; he abideth under the shadow of the Almighty."

Is his spirit made to suffer by the death or unkindness of those he loves? He turns the more earnestly to Him who never dies and "sticketh closer than a brother;" and "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost, which is given him." Is he poor? He sets his hopes more firmly on things above, where there is treasure laid up for him, and, while he remains below, his bread and his water is sure. Is he rich? He bows himself to God, as "poor and needy," richest in the thought that "the Lord thinketh upon him." Is he despised of men, like his Master; or has calumny done his good name wrong? He has a safe refuge in his pardoning and approving God. He has an honour through Christ, which the world cannot take from him; a lofty consciousness of future vindication, which lifts him above its censure and injustice, and carries him forward to "that day," when God shall crown him with his own hand, and robe him in eternal righteousness. He has, indeed, an immortality, an actual, conscious immortality of reward and glory through grace, which he will know and feel and luxuriate in; an immortality death cannot

mock; an immortality of God's approbation, of fame, living fame, among the countless worlds of God's holy servants. Where are they, the army of martyrs, who soaked the sand of the Roman circus with their blood? Who fed the fires of Smithfield with their life? Whose bones whitened the valleys of Piedmont, the marshes of the Low Countries, or the heath-covered hills of Scotland? No pious hand gathered their ashes. No monumental marble records their names and their constancy. The world has forgotten them. It never knew them. But were they unknown? Did they perish? Are they forgotten? O for one moment of that light which shone upon the dying Stephen, and we should see them close around the throne of the Lamb that was slain for them, and for whom they died, radiant with the beauty of blessedness incorruptible, the most noble host of the sons of God!

Fear? It is not the spirit of Christianity. He who fears God in the faith of the Gospel, has no other fear. "The Lord is his light and salvation, whom shall he fear? The Lord is the strength of his life, of whom shall he be afraid?" What energy of purpose, what indomitable will, what calm confidence in the result, must he have, who is thus girded about by omnipotence, guided by omnis-

cience, and bound, as it were, by his faith and love to the will of Jehovah himself. The annals of the world's heroism are poor beside those of Christianity. Our martyrology tells us not only of strong men, but of feeble women and youths, scarcely more than children, going to death with hymns of joy, singing till the flame choked their voices; of simple, obscure people, accounted as the offscouring of the earth, standing firm in faith against the might of empires, conquering as they died, and blessing their murderers. Our history speaks of those, who, with a more sublime resolution than that, which marched armies across the pinnacled Alps, or turned a prow into unknown seas to find an unknown world, have left home and friends and civilized life, to carry the news of immortality among the most cruel savages in the most unfriendly climes. Nay, could we lift the vail and see as God sees, we should discover in obscurity and poverty, Christian examples of endurance, steadfastness, and strength of principle, to which

> "Your Roman deaths, as falling on a sword,
> Opening of veins, with poison quenching thirst,
> Who doubting tyranny . . . . . .
> . . . . . desperately ran
> To death from dread of death,
> Were dead-eyed cowardice and white-cheeked fear."

Go with me to yonder narrow lane. There lives a poor humble woman, of whom the world knows nothing. She has but learning enough to spell out God's promises, and she knows his will. She is a wife, but (oh! what misery!) a drunkard's wife. Brutal in maniac fury, he comes from the hell of the tippling shop to make, if he could, his home another. Idle himself, he seizes upon and wastes her little earnings; blows, and worse than blows, cruel, unholy, shameless words, his only return. She is a mother, and gather closely as she will her little ones around her, she cannot save them from their father's violence, and, worse than violence, his blasting tongue and foul example. Yet she never murmurs. Her brow is calm as an angel's. Her tears flow fastest when she hears the language of the Comforter. Her prayer is fuller of thanksgiving than mourning, save when she mourns for sin. She is meekly patient, resolute in every duty, firm against all temptation, and kind of speech and act. What gives her this valiant virtue? The Gospel: she has "not received the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power," the spirit of Christianity.

SECONDLY: The spirit of Christianity is not a spirit of *fear*, but a spirit of LOVE.

We have already said, that fear has a strong con-

trolling influence over worldly men. Even their better deeds are often prompted by dread of disgrace; and they are in the same manner often restrained from outrages upon the decorum or peace of society. The fear of punishment from the world, in some form or other, operates more strongly upon the generality of persons, than the hope of its approbation or rewards. Hence legislators deter from vice by the threat of penalties, but rarely (except in Xenophon's Utopia) encourage to virtue by promises of gain. Fear is the passion by which communities are held in subjection to laws, and the universal conviction seems to have been, that no other power was sufficient. It is the master spirit of the world.

Nor is this true, as some would fain think, only of the vulgar and uneducated. Every one, who seeks his honour from his fellow-men, and makes the opinion of the world the breath of his happiness, is a slave to fear. To him their ridicule is torture, their contempt worse than death. He obeys the changing will of his many-headed tyrant in all things, from the shape of his garment to the articles of his creed and the rules of his morality. What ties, what affections, what hopes, what principles have not been sacrificed for that which the world calls honour!

Trace the history of its idolater. His mind may be cultivated to a rare pitch of excellent learning, and his heart expanded by large views of social interests. He loves his country, and his country has answered his love by committing her higher trusts to his care. He has objects yet more dear. He is the husband of an affectionate wife, and the father of worthy children. He promises to himself many years of patriotic usefulness and domestic happiness. But in an evil hour his duty has led him across the path of one, who lives only for vengeance. He is challenged to the field, where there is no distinction but in the assassin's skill and the bravo's desperation. He knows and he abhors the barbarous rule which calls him forth. He thinks of his country, its dangers, its necessities, and his power to save it. He looks upon his loving household, smiling, unconscious of the agonies in his soul, which he dares not utter. He sends them to sleep with the first falsehood that has ever passed his lips. He arranges the scanty fortune, which, in another day, may be all they will have to supply the loss of his care. And then he thinks of heaven. He opens his Bible, but it has no promise for him, and he dares not read. He kneels, but he dare not pray. How can he pray with murder in his heart? The morning dawns upon his night of horror. He

braces himself for the conflict, and seems calm, for he is afraid to confess the wretchedness he feels. The brutal punctilio is settled, and in another moment he is before an angry God, or lives a self-abhorrent and guilty thing, with a "damned spot" upon his soul no tears can wash out. Why? Because he was a slave of the world's fear; a very coward, who dared not do right; a selfish coward, who would sacrifice all he ought to love and maintain, rather than bear the taunt of fools; a senseless coward, who rushed upon God's wrath to escape such sneers as true valour should despise. Is not the spirit of the world a spirit of fear!

Fear marks the spirit of the world toward God. The idea of a Supreme Governor has a place in every man's mind. All, but the most besotted or barbarous, feel that there is a Power above them, in whose authority, however stoutly they may seem to deny it, they must believe. There are moments, when the dread conviction forces itself upon their souls and compels them to awe. But what are the emotions which such thought of God inspires? You have an answer in the cruel rites of heathen worship, the slaughtered beast, and even the human victim. Those are not the offerings of love, but of fearful anxiety to appease the wrath of hea-

ven, prompted either by a consciousness of guilt in the sacrificers, or an apprehension of capricious anger in the gods they worship.

It must not be objected to this, that the rites of the Jewish system, or those of much earlier ages (from which, doubtless, the notion of vicarious sacrifice in every instance has been derived), prove the same thing. They do. The God of the Bible is an angry God, a consuming fire to every sinner not sprinkled with the blood of atonement. Every victim offered acceptably under the Old Testament, was the sacrifice of conscious guilt in hope of the promised Lamb of God, who would come to take away sin by the one offering of Himself. Dread and terror are the only emotions which the thought of God impresses upon the unchristian soul. "What time he thinks of Him, he is afraid."

Is it not so? Why else do men so dislike to retain God in their imaginations? Why is the thought of God so unwelcome an interruption of worldly festivity and pleasure a horror? from which they strive to escape by every avenue of dissipation or of skepticism? Why this hissing away of religion from the haunts of fashion and gaiety? If men loved God, they would delight to think upon Him, to make Him their friend and counsellor, to choose Him first as the companion of their

happiest hours and highest enjoyments. We do not dread the presence of those we love, and seek to avoid only those we hate or fear. Wherefore, also, the secret conviction, that it is necessary to prepare for eternity; yet the postponement of preparation to the latest possible hour? If men loved God, they would serve him now. They propose to repent before they die, not from any desire of his holy presence, but from dread of hell. They believe that there is a God, and tremble.

Not such is the spirit of a Christian. He fears God, but it is in the spirit of adoption, the affectionate reverence of a child for his heavenly Father. Every revelation of God is to him full of love. He is a sinner; but his guilt has been washed away by the atoning blood of the Son of God, who for our sakes became man, and was obedient until the death of the cross, and then rose for us to the right hand of the Majesty on high, the Forerunner of his people, and the Head over all things to his church. He is an unworthy sinner; but he is clothed upon with the perfect righteousness of his divine Saviour, as a spotless garment. He is a corrupt sinner, without any strength of his own to do well; but he has within his soul the grace of the Holy Ghost, sufficient for him, to comfort, strengthen and sustain him. He turns penitently and humbly to seek

again the God from whom he has wandered, and against whom he has sinned; and, like a forgiving Father, God sees him while yet a great way off, meets him with his invitations, encourages him with promises, clasps him in the arms of the covenant, and makes him welcome as a child and heir of heavenly blessedness forever. What but love can flow from a faith, which recognises a love so great towards him, the love of the Father, who gave his Son; the love of the Son, who gave himself; the love of the Holy Ghost, by whose grace he is enabled to believe, repent, obey and hope? What must be the effect of such love, but a cheerful, zealous obedience? You know, I trust, by experience, how sweet it is to obey the wish of an affectionate and venerated parent, whose every desire tends to your happiness. You may form some idea of the gratitude of one, who has been snatched from impending destruction by a generous deliverer; or of one, raised from the lowest depths of infamy and despair to riches and honour, by some disinterested benefactor. You may faintly imagine these obligations to affectionate service; yet add them all together, multiply them a thousand fold, and you have scarcely begun to estimate the flood of love, which sweeps the Christian away from the

seductions of sin, and bears him onward to holiness, "as the love of Christ constraineth him," a love deep as the abyss from which he has been saved, high as the heaven to which he is raised, and wide as the eternity filled for him with all the joys of immortality. Oh! greatly do the world mistake, when they think it superstitious fear that keeps the Christian from idle follies, and calls him aside to usefulness and devotion. He has better pleasures than the world can give, and joys that the world knows nothing of. As the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, it drives out of it meaner motives and unworthy desires.

Such trust in God and love for God must produce abounding love for his fellow men. God has commended them to his affection and service; and, as there is no just limit to the gratitude he should have toward God, so there should be no limit to his kindness in their behalf. As his faith prevails over his fallen nature, he is lifted above all fear of the world, and every passion which mars its peace. He should have no pride, for he is a sinner saved by grace; no envy, for the world has no riches that can rival his own; no jealousy, for the quality of his blessedness is such, that all may share it and he have none the less; no revenge, for

the world can do him no real wrong; no fear of the world's disgrace, for his record is on high, and he knows in whom he has believed. He has not received the spirit of *fear*, but the spirit of LOVE.

THIRDLY: The spirit of Christianity is not the spirit of *fear*, but the spirit of A SOUND MIND.

The spirit of a sound mind signifies that control over our judgments and discipline of our hearts, which secures the adoption of sound opinions, the pursuit of right objects, and the choice of proper means.

There is no need of argument to show that such a sound temper of mind is incompatible with fear, which necessarily discomposes and embarrasses the judgment, and often drives it to frantic excesses. Calmness and deliberation are essential to prudence and wise foresight. Yet it has been a favourite charge of the world against the Christian, that he is the victim of a distempered imagination and melancholy enthusiasm. He is pitied for his strange seclusion from many scenes of worldly pleasure, and his stranger day-dreams of communion with God and anticipations of heaven.

At this stage of the discourse, I shall not labour to refute the calumny, but I ask, what is a sound mind? Is it not that which chooses the best good? which readily yields the present and fleeting plea-

sure to secure an eternal blessedness? which prefers the immortal soul to the perishing body? which thinks more of the judgment of God than the ever varying opinion of men, and of the love of God than of all other love besides? Is the man of the world, tempted, tempest-tossed and disgusted by the uncertainties and disappointments of this life, yet with no hope of a better, of as sound a mind as he, who finds in religion a charm giving sanctity to his joys and a value to his sorrows, calming his fears, confirming his courage, strengthening his virtues, and turning even his infirmities to occasions of joy? "Call no man happy until you have seen all his life," was a saying of the ancients; so ask him who has drained the cup of worldly vanities to its dregs, and he will tell you, that in the end it is vexation of spirit. Go, man of the world, and moralize over the grave with your own Shakspeare. Open the tomb of the world's idolater. The delicate and luxurious body is become a little heap of loathsome dust. There, in that hollow skull, was the brain which worked in unhallowed thoughts or proud ambition. There went forth the avaricious or the lustful sight. There the ear drank in the voice of music and of praise. There spoke the tongue its gay or blasphemous wit—"He was a fellow of infinite mirth, of most excellent imagina-

tion!" But what is he now? For him the summer ended, and the harvest passed, and he was not saved.

The Christian must not be judged by this life. He may be, for this life only, of all men, most miserable; but the hope of heaven is in his soul. He has already begun a new and eternal life. Wait till you see him calm and patient, expecting the messenger to call him home; till he goes down thankfully into the valley of the shadow of death; till he stands glorified and honoured at the right hand of the Judge; till heaven's gates are lifted high for his entrance amidst the songs of angels and the redeemed; till ages upon ages have rolled away, and his soul is expanded with holy knowledge and love, and joy and righteousness, yet then scarce past the threshold of his eternal bliss. Judge of the Christian, as immortal men should judge of immortal men, in the light of eternity, and say, if the apostle was not right in his boast through grace;

"God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

And now, my dear hearer, which shall we choose (for we cannot have both), the spirit of the world, or the spirit of Christianity? One or the other must be our master; fear, keeping us always "sub-

ject to bondage;" or Christ, setting us free by his perfect law of liberty. We choose for eternity. Our souls hang upon our decision. We may have the world, but we must take hell with it. We may have heaven, but only if we have the spirit of Christ by faith, which overcometh the world.

SERMON V.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD,

OR THE

PSALM OF FAITH.

(FIRST SERMON OF THE YEAR.)

THE GOOD SHEPHERD,

&c.

The sacred historian, describing the pilgrimage of Israel through the wilderness to the promised land, tells us, that "the Lord went before them in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." (Exod. xiii. 21–22.) A most instructive figure of the providence of God towards his true Israel, and of the manner in which that providence is to be regarded by us!

"The Angel of the Covenant," "the Angel of the Lord," "the Angel of his Presence," "the Shepherd of Israel," (for by each of these significant titles He is known in Scripture, whom Moses, as just cited, unhesitatingly calls Jehovah, and whom we verily believe to have been the Son of God, the Head of his Church in all ages.) was *ever*

with his people; but he was with them *ever in a cloud,* veiled, whether in brightness or in shadows, from their sight; and, with a memorable exception, when the cloud removed and stood between the rear of the host and the pursuing Egyptians, or, perhaps, another when it rested upon the mount during the giving of the Law, he was *ever before them.* They knew by constant experience that they were under his care; the very cloud, which hid him from them, was a sure sign of his Presence, and, though as it went before them, they could not see through it the way they were going, they were always safe in following the Lord who had promised to bring them to the end. Ever with them, ever shrouded from their sight, and ever before them, Jehovah was to his people a Guardian, a Mystery, and a Guide. Such he is to his people still, present though invisible, assuring them of his love by his merciful acts, his unfailing word, and his witnessing Spirit; thus they are to follow him implicitly and without fear, not knowing how he may order their lot in this life, but certain that he will bring them by the best method to an eternal rest.

My dear friends, we have begun another year. A happy custom calls us to a review of the past, and a consideration of the future. At such a time the preacher usually exhorts to repentance for sins.

and to new purposes of duty. The counsel is wise and should be obeyed. The past is unalterable, and, however deeply we may regret our unfaithfulness to God, the best lesson we can learn from experience, is to provide for the future by an unreserved committal of ourselves to God in Christ. The young and the giddy may lose all thought of days to come in the hilarity of the moment, but there are few of graver years and responsibilities, who can regard the unknown events before them without anxiety. What will the coming months bring forth? Amidst the changes and uncertainties of the world, will our temporal fortunes be secure, and a comfortable plenty crown our household? Shall we, notwithstanding our moral infirmities and the frequent lapses of others from virtue, be preserved from the snares of temptation? Is there no heavy calamity approaching though unseen, which, like a sudden thunder storm, will darken over our heads, and desolate the scene around us? Will our good name be shielded from "the strife of tongues," evil, busy and venomous? May not death be about to drag us from opportunities of preparation before the judgment seat? These are questions of awful meaning, not only with regard to ourselves, but to those around whose welfare our own is entwined. Who can answer them?

The Holy Ghost has declared that faith is the great instrument by which the soul purifies itself and overcomes the world. May not, therefore, a contemplation of that serene courage, which faith has inspired, be of use in persuading us to a more religious practice? At least, we shall see how strong a confidence Christians should have in God, and the peace in believing we might enjoy if we sought it earnestly. The text I have chosen, is one of the fullest and most tender declarations of humble faith, recorded for our learning, and a spiritual song, which has made more and sweeter melody in the hearts of God's children, than, perhaps, any other the singer of Israel composed for the redeemed in Zion. May the Divine blessing make it profitable to us now!

PSALM XXXIII.

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The order is clear and easy. The Psalmist, first, justifies his entire satisfaction with regard to the future, by a brief but conclusive argument: "The LORD is my *Shepherd.*"

He then states the several benefits, which are secured to him by this divine care;

And the last verse, is the inference of triumphant hope from the whole:

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Here, then, are,

FIRST: The ARGUMENT.

SECONDLY: The PARTICULARS.

THIRDLY: The INFERENCE.

FIRST: The ARGUMENT.

The logic is in few words and perfect. "The Lord is my Shepherd," therefore, "I shall not want."

This needs little exposition, but let us mark its several steps.

The name, "LORD;" the office, "*Shepherd;*" the appropriation, "*my* Shepherd."

1. "The LORD is my Shepherd." The original has Jehovah, the incommunicable name of the only

true God; who, because he is the Creator, owns all things; because he is omnipotent, controls all things; because he is omniscient, directs all things; and because he is holy, just and good, orders all things well. The providence of God, therefore, is sovereign, universal, infallible, and right.

2. "The LORD is my *Shepherd*." Jehovah rules over all men, but there are those over whom he graciously exercises a peculiar office, which is compared to a shepherd watching his flock. The flock of Jehovah is his people, his true Israel, all who, in every age and throughout the world, trust in him as the Lord their God, and are saved by his grace. Thus Asaph prays in the lxxxth Psalm, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;" and the Shepherd-Jehovah is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, as we learn from the prophets, his own declarations, and the testimony of apostles. Isaiah, speaking of the Messiah after his incarnation (xl. 11), says, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young;" and in Ezekiel (xxxiv. 23), the Lord, after declaring his purpose of acting as a shepherd towards his chosen, says, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them,

even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd; (24) and I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them." So our Lord himself (John x. 11) declares, "I am the good Shepherd, the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep:" (14) "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine;" and the apostle, in the Hebrews (xiii. 20), calls our "Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep;" while the apostle Peter speaks of him (1 Pet. v. 4), as "the chief Shepherd." When, therefore, as Christians, we read of "the Lord our Shepherd," it is our blessed privilege to know that it is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The title, shepherd, is one of dignity, implying authority. For in ancient times, when riches consisted principally of flocks and herds, the greatest princes were shepherds; and, as a shepherd rules his flock by superior wisdom and strength, kings were called shepherds of the people, because of their authority over them, as we often find it in Homer, and as the Lord said of Cyrus (Isaiah xliii. 28), "He is my shepherd, he shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built." But at the same time, as sheep are naturally foolish and incapable of self-government, the Lord Jesus being the Shepherd of

his people, implies their entire dependence upon his wise government, because they are by nature ignorant, blind and perverse.

Shepherd is a title of proprietorship. He watches over his flock, because he has an interest in their welfare. They are his wealth, and from them he derives profit. Thus our Lord makes a distinction between the hireling shepherd and the true shepherd, whose the flock is. (John x. 13, 14), "The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine . . . . (15), and I lay down my life for the sheep." The flock of Christ is his own, he has bought them with his blood, and redeemed them unto himself, that from them, under the providence of his grace, he might gain, by their salvation and obedience, revenues of glory in all ages, before men and angels.

Shepherd is also an affectionate title. The shepherd loves his flock, and all his offices toward them imply tenderness, feeding them in good pastures, defending them from danger, binding up the wounded, carrying the lambs in his arms, and gently leading the feeble and the gravid. So affectionate is Christ to his flock. His office is not to slay, but to preserve them unto everlasting life. He knows their dangers, for he knows their temptations, their ene-

mies, and their infirmities, because he has had experience of them all except sin. As he is man like us, so is the Shepherd of his church the Lamb of God, who once, "as a sheep is dumb before his shearers, opened not his mouth," and bowed his meek head in death, that he might be "the Lamb which was slain." Well does the Shepherd of the church love his flock, as the purchase of his blood, the helpless objects of his care, and his brethren by nature and by grace.

3. "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." Here is appropriation. Why might the Psalmist, why may the Christian, call Jehovah-Jesus *his* Shepherd?

Because he believes in his name. The Saviour calls to sinners as lost sheep; he declares that he has laid down his life to make them his; he offers them pardon through his blood, and healing through his grace. Whoever, therefore, accepts his invitation, and returns unto him by a true repentance as unto "the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls," he certainly receives, and to every contrite one that calls him, "My Shepherd!" he becomes a Shepherd.

Because he obeys his Saviour's will. The true penitent, who comes to Jesus, acknowledges his blindness and folly, puts himself under his Saviour's rule, and invokes his pastoral care. Therefore does the Lord Jesus gladly receive him, as one

that was lost but is found, and guides him in the way he is to go.

And because he confides himself to his Shepherd's protection; for knowing himself to be weak, his enemies mighty, but his Saviour mightier than them all, he relies upon His power, His promise, and His covenant, safe under His watchful eye, and safe only there.

Thus he is able to say, "The LORD is *my* SHEPHERD, I shall not want."

SECONDLY: The PARTICULARS.

Under this head we shall briefly consider the several benefits, which the believer expects from his Shepherd-Jehovah. They are five: Provision; Guidance; Comfort; Vindication, and final Glory.

1. *Provision.* "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." How delightful a description of *repose* in the midst of *plenty!* The flock "lies down" in green pastures. They are not merely driven along, permitted only to snatch a mouthful of herbage by the way, nor from one little spot of verdure to another, as was often the case with flocks in a desert land, but the green meadow is their resting place; they eat and rest; and rest to eat again. The waters, to whose side the Shepherd leads them, are not the foaming, turbid torrents, which in the season of

rains roar along, but soon are dry again. They run deeply, quietly and clearly, from perennial fountains.

So with God's believing, obedient, trusting people. Much of this world is not promised them, but the good Shepherd careth for them, and their "bread and water shall be sure." What the wise Shepherd deems best for them they shall have. Their souls shall never lack abundance of food. The word of God, his doctrines, his precepts, and his promises, shall ever be to them as a wide, rich, and cheering pasture, within which they may repose in satisfaction; and the grace of God, flowing from the rock, Christ, shall be ever abundant, and the Shepherd shall lead them, when athirst, to drink its living waters. They hunger and are satisfied. They fear not for the future, because there will be ever enough. Grace is sufficient for them.

2. *Guidance.* "He restoreth my soul: he maketh me to walk in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

In using the word *restore*, our translators have been very happy; for the original, like the English, signifies not only restoration from *wandering*, but also restoration from *weakness*. The sheep that has wandered from the green pastures and the still

waters, will be faint and exhausted. He not only needs to be brought back to the right way, but to be strengthened again. Thus does the good Shepherd restore his wandering ones.

Ah! my beloved Christians, what is it that we fear most? Is it not that we shall backslide from righteousness, that we shall be too weak to keep in the ways of the Lord? Here is the promise for us. Let us keep near to the good Shepherd; and, if we are conscious of having wandered, let us call aloud again for his help, as a silly sheep, bleating, cries for the guardian he has left; and Jesus will not only bring us back, but heal all the sickness of our backslidings, and by his own grace make us to walk in his ways once more.

Mark the emphatic reason; "for his name's sake," for his regard to his own name as our Saviour, our Shepherd and Friend. What security is here! He loves to save, for his glory is in salvation; and will he not save his people when they cry? For his own "name's sake." All things work together for his glory, and, if by our faith, obedience and trust, we unite our good with his glory, all things shall work together for good to us. Only let our desire and endeavour be after righteousness, and the name of Jesus secures that we shall not fail.

3. *Comfort.* "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Circumstances of depression and gloom are frequently represented in Scripture by a valley; as in the lxxxivth Psalm, "the valley of Baca," or of tears. "The shadow of death" is the dark forebodings which precede or threaten evil, as darkness comes over the sight of the dying, "the shadow of" approaching "death." The Psalmist means, by "the valley of the shadow of death," any great trouble. The flock is passing through a valley darkened by hanging rocks, threatening from above, and making the dangerous foot-track dim, where, if left to themselves, they would be full of fears; but the Shepherd has not forsaken them; he is bringing them by the gloomy path to richer pastures beyond, and the same staff which upholds himself, he gently stretches forth to turn each straggler right again, and as they feel its touch, they know that he is with them, and are comforted.

So with the believer. He may, he must pass through sore and bitter trials, where he will have little light from the smile of God's countenance, and his path of duty be shadowed by doubt and overhung with fears. But even then, if he be anx-

ious to obey the will, and trusts only in the promises of his Lord, the good Shepherd will not forsake him; He, who was once himself "tempted like as we are," whose human infirmity was upheld by the word and Spirit of God, will be at the pilgrim's side, sustaining him by the same word and Spirit, and with tender faithfulness guiding him through the sorrow to a far more unspeakable and eternal glory. The darker hours of a Christian's life try his trust in his Master's grace, and prove his Master's faithfulness. Yes, and when he is called to go through the dark difficulties of death itself, He, who has died but is risen again, will be near him to whisper, "I am with thee;" and the Christian will fear no evil, for the "staff" which supported his Shepherd, when opening the way for His people, shall be as the Shepherd's "rod," to "comfort" him through to the pleasant rest and perfect day of heaven.

4. *Vindication.* "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

The Psalmist, that he might not strain it, leaves the figure, and speaks of himself in person. He has told us, before, of his being satisfied with provision, and the main thought here is not the preparation of a table for him, but its being prepared "in

the presence of his enemies." His enemies were many, crafty, and full of hate. They would have taken his life if they could, and, failing in this, they slandered him busily, charging him with wrong he never did, and warping his good deeds from their right motives. They denied his religion, or yet more wickedly foretold that his God would forsake him. But the undaunted believer maintains his trust that God would vindicate him from all their malice, and that, as a princely host receives an honoured guest, ordering a feast to be spread before him, anointing his head with fragrant oil, and filling his cup to overflowing with joyous wine, so the divine Judge, who knew his heart, would acknowledge him openly by a distinguishing providence. This was true of David in this world, as well as in eternity.

Perhaps the most cutting trial of the Christian, next to his inward temptations, is calumny; a torture no sincerity may hope to escape, for the Master died under it, and it follows those most who most follow Him. Sins he knows he has, and from God he asks not justice but mercy; yet, when he means best, and by the grace of Christ does best, to hear from those he sought to serve, the taunt of dishonesty, or bear the pointed scorn of a world to which he would fain do good, he needs the same

Spirit that came from heaven to comfort Christ. If, then, he might not look up to God, and know that his Advocate is on high, he would be miserable indeed. But this is the Christian's privilege. He waits patiently for God, and God will vindicate him. Even the spiritual enemies of his soul shall not prevail against him. Though persecuted, he shall not be destroyed; though he seem to fall, he shall rise again. We have no warrant for believing that he will be vindicated openly in this life. Jesus was not, and many a martyr to lying hate has been driven to a grave, which will be infamous until the morning of the resurrection, when the judgment shall illustrate it with glory. Yet his "table shall be prepared before" him. His enemies cannot rob him of the sweet provisions of God's word; the grace of Christ's love and sympathy shall be poured upon his drooping head, and his heart, like a cup running over with grateful libations, shall be full of joy from the presence of his Lord. But oh! how glorious will be his triumphant name, when, before all men and all angels, God shall lead him forth, radiant with his Saviour's image, as one whom for Christ's sake He "delighteth to honour!" If he must wait for his vindication until then, will it not be worth waiting for? The very hope of it is as a feast prepared before him, as precious oil upon his head, and

as a cup running over with the wine of the kingdom.

5. *Glory.* This is also found under our last head, which may well be brief because so rich that no human skill can enlarge it.

THIRDLY: The INFERENCE:

"Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

His inference from all that he has said, is strong and not to be shaken, that all shall be well with him for time and eternity, "all the days of his life" and "forever," because of the Lord's *goodness*, the Lord's *mercy*, and the Lord's *ordinances* (house).

1. Because of the Lord's *goodness.* The Lord is good, and delights in goodness. Therefore does the believer know, that, however dark and mysterious for a time the ways of providence may be, they will all be right. This, indeed, would be no comfort to him as a sinner, for the ways of right were fatal to his happiness could he not also say,

2. Because of the Lord's *mercy.* He deserves nothing, but God for Christ's sake has pardoned him all his sins, and promises to withhold no good thing from him; in proof of which, He has given him Christ as his Saviour, his Shepherd, and his Judge. He has the earnest in his daily comforts,

his strength in trial, and his heaven-reaching hopes. He will have mercy; though mercy does not forbid him trial, because trial is the best mercy, as the fire which purifies the gold; and his trials do not make him murmur, but obey the better, cling closer to Christ, and hope the more. Yet this is not the hope of a sluggard or a careless soul. It is

3. Because of God's *ordinances*. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This includes a resolve on his part. He hopes for goodness and mercy, because he "will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." David was often driven far from the temple and made to thirst for its advantages of worship, but, wherever he went, he carried the spirit of the worshipper with him. The Christian, though he does and should desire the privileges of the sanctuary, may worship God in Christ, may find the spiritual house of the Lord every where. It is in the means of grace God is found upon earth: in his word, the humble prayer, the communion of saints, the imitation of Jesus by religious and charitable acts, and, where they can be enjoyed, the preaching of the word and the sacraments, all testifying God's delight in the salvation of our souls, and all pointing the believer to the temple above, where the type shall be made perfect and lost in the reality. The Christian hopes that

"goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life," and that his life here shall be exchanged for a better life above, because he purposes to be faithful in the house of the Lord, by an open avowal of Christ, by a diligent growth in grace, and by a constant reference to eternity.

Shall I attempt to describe the *glory* which shall follow? Like the spies who went into Canaan before the tribes, I have shown you, and I trust you have tasted some of the clustering fruits which Christian hope may gather from the field of heaven. What will the full vintage be? If these be the earnests, what is the reward?

Christian, such is the courageous spirit which believers have had in Christ and his providence. If we cannot attain unto it, it is because of unbelief, impenitence or indifference. How can we trust Christ for eternity, if we cannot trust him for time? How can we desire heaven, when we find not God on earth? How can we hope that God will bless us, if we follow him not as our "good Shepherd?"

Alas for those, who wander from Christ as silly, lost sheep! They have no shepherd to feed them, to guide them, to comfort them, or to defend them. They will not follow Jesus, and they live without God to die without hope. Die without hope! How

fearful a doom! Oh! Eternity, eternity, eternity! the undying worm, the unquenchable flame! the eternal remorse of the soul that hath destroyed itself! the wrath of the Lamb, love turned to anger, pity to contempt, mercy to vengeance!

Come, my people, let us all return to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls! Let us pray to be received into his flock, and gathered at last into his heavenly fold.

SERMON VI.

FAITH, OUR BEST REASON.

FAITH, OUR BEST REASON.

Job xxvi. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him?

An ancient king (Hiero of Syracuse) asked a philosopher (Simonides) to tell him, what God is, and how he exists. The wise man begged a day to consider of it, and, when that was past, two more, and then four, until, having often thus doubled the time, the king, in surprise, demanded the reason of such delay; "Because," said he, "the more I meditate upon God, the more mysterious does he appear to me."* So it is, my brethren, with every devout student of the Holy Scriptures; for, although God has revealed as much of his nature and will as is sufficient to teach us how we ought to love, worship, and serve him, there must be mysteries in the divine being and counsels, which it is impossible for us to comprehend, and, therefore, profane for

* Cicero de Nat. Deor. L: I. 22.

us to inquire into. To know God as he has made himself known, is to know that he is infinitely beyond the compass of our knowledge; and, as his perfections are unfathomable, his thoughts are above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways. This those, who have been best taught of God, have most reverently confessed: "Clouds and darkness are round about him," says the Psalmist (xcvii. 2); and in another place (cxxxix. 6), while meditating upon the divine attributes, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The apostle Paul, writing to the evangelist Timothy (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16), humbles himself in a doxology unto Him, "Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." Even the sinless Seraphim, who, from the first moment of their heavenly existence, have been rapt students of Jehovah and his glad servants, were seen by Isaiah in his vision (Isaiah vi. 1, 2, 3), covering their faces and their feet with their wings, as if unable to endure and unworthy to appear before the glorious grandeur of his throne, while "one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of

his glory;" and the apostle James declares that the devils, who, because they are fallen angels and creatures of great intellectual energy, know much of the glory of God, tremble at the thought of his awful Majesty (James ii. 19). When, therefore, such weak and sinful creatures, as we are, attempt the study of religious truth, it were most irrational for us to expect that the infinite God will be brought within the grasp of our reason, and all the mysteries of his Being and Providence levelled to what is termed common sense.

Yet is this mistake made, in a greater or less degree, by every inquirer after religion; his curiosity being not so much to know *what* God has declared to be truth, but *why* it is truth, and *how* it is truth. For this reason the divine Master insists, that they, who would enter the kingdom of God, should become as little children, willing to receive the doctrine of God as truth, simply because it comes from the lips of our heavenly Father, whom we venerate, trust and love; and the great duty of the Gospel is faith, because the great part of Christianity lies in following not so much that which we discover to be truth by our own understandings, as that which we believe to be truth on the testimony of God. So far from its being rational, as some proudly think, to reject all mysteries in religion, it

were most irrational to receive any religion as divine, which does not contain mysteries. Reason itself establishes the fact, that man, the finite, cannot comprehend God, the infinite; and that beyond all God may condescend to reveal, there must be mysteries in the divine thoughts and ways immeasurably above our powers of perception and intelligence.

For consider, my brethren,

All that we know of God has been taught us by God himself.

There is, I am aware, a theory that the idea of God is born with the soul of man; a theory which might be readily refuted from reason, experience and religion; but none have carried it so far as to assert, that such an innate notion is sufficient without the farther manifestation of the divine perfections in divine works. God is man's Teacher as he is man's Creator; and all true knowledge comes from Him alone. Yet, with all the advantage of such teaching, what feeble powers do we bring to the study, and how short a time have we been engaged in it! It is but yesterday that we began to know any thing, and, since then, how little serious attention have we given to inquiries after God? Are we, at the very outset of our learning, to know all?

In any branch of science, the progress of the student is slow, and he must be indeed ignorant and vain, who, when he is endeavouring to master the first few axioms and definitions which lie at the beginning, will assume to know all the combinations they are capable of, and the far results deducible from them. Men of comparatively gigantic intellect and intense application, spend their whole lives in some particular scientific pursuit, and, when sinking into the grave, readily confess that the more they have learned, the more they see is to be known. "Art is long, life is short," has been the lament of the philosopher in all ages; but were ten lives added to his time for research, he would feel the need of an hundred more, and, even at the end of them, the result of all his investigations would be a knowledge of some few facts and laws, the reasons of which are hidden in the mind of Him whose will is the only efficient cause. If, then, the progress of man's acquaintance with but a very small part of God's works be so slow, and, at the most, so imperfect, how can we expect, after such brief study, to understand the thoughts and ways of the Author and Preserver of all! Yet men, who will modestly acknowledge their ignorance of nature's mysteries, prattle without hesitation about the mysteries of God. The physiologist, aided by

observations made through centuries, is still puzzled by a thousand secrets in his animal frame, cannot point out the subtle link which makes one man of soul and body, nor tell you what he means by life. Metaphysicians, after thousands of volumes have been written on the human mind, are still at war respecting the first principles of their philosophy. Shall man, then, dare to determine what is impossible in the nature, or contradictory in the ways of God, beyond what God has made known of himself?

Your human brother is by your side. He is like you in form and other perceptible accidents. Can you look into his mind and know his thoughts? Can you read the purposes of his heart, or foresee the effects of moral causes upon his conduct? How then can you penetrate to the reasons of the Divine will? You were once a child lisping your lesson at your mother's knee, but how far beyond the conceptions of that child is the various knowledge, which you have acquired during your following life! What would then have been to you senseless jargon, is now demonstrable truth; what now is utter folly, was then self-evident certainty. Yet what is the distance between the child and the man, compared to that between man and his Teacher, God?

Consider again, my brethren,

The essential difference of the nature of God from our own.

Because God is a spirit and the soul of man is a spirit, it does not follow, as many rashly infer, that they are of the same essence. Such a mistake is the proud and most dangerous error of the Platonists and their Transcendental followers, who would consider the soul of man not a creature of God, but an emanation from him, and, therefore, part of God; an opinion fraught with the monstrous consequence of making the divine spirit subject to the pollutions of human sin. There are various kinds and gradations of material being, so there may be and are of spiritual being, with methods of perception and processes of thought radically diverse from each other. God alone, who created, can look within and understand these several orders.

The dog, who feeds upon the fragments of your table, and is attached to you with a devoted fidelity rarely equalled by human friendship, thinks, feels, is ashamed, or angry, or glad. There is a spirit in the beast. But to him you are as a god, and to you he is a mystery. You cannot look into his spirit, and discern the methods by which he arrives at evident conclusions. Far less can he ascend to

the level of your reasoning, or comprehend the methods of your thought.

We have five avenues, by which the mind within us goes out in perception. There may be, in some of the countless worlds of God's universe, rational beings with bodily senses greater in number. Can you form the faintest notion of the ideas, which they receive from those means of perception in which they exceed us? No more than the born blind can understand colour, or the deaf mute sound. The angels, whose spiritual natures were never intended to be encased in material bodies, as ours are, derive their knowledge without the intervention of senses. They study the works of God, they do the will of God, they learn of God; but how? Can you tell? Can you even guess at the process of thought in an angelic mind? Must they not know truths now utterly incomprehensible by us? May not that, which is inscrutable mystery to us, be to them clear, harmonious reason?

If, then, we cannot understand God's spiritual creatures, shall we ask to understand God? God is eternal. What is eternity? You answer, That which is without beginning and without end. But can you comprehend this? The negative terms of your definition show that you do not. You know what eternity is not, but you know not what it is.

With God "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Can you understand how that can be? God is omnipresent, encompassing, pervading, exceeding all things, at the same instant and always. Can you comprehend this? God is omniscient; by a single act of his mind, (if it be not profane to venture even such an expression,) he knows all things in the present, all things in infinite space, all things in the eternal past, all things in the eternal future. Can you comprehend this? How, then, do you dare to challenge the mysteries of his being, who exists without cause, without bound, every where and "every when"? How dare you challenge the wisdom of His ways, who knows all things at once, without effort, without succession, without error? Nay, my brethren, let us humble ourselves in the dust, as we hear Jehovah speaking to us through his holy prophet:

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Let us learn from these vast truths,

1. To adore God.

This is the highest effort of reason, and the best

discipline of the soul. It is the constant employment of the blessed in heaven, and the nearest approach to heaven the Christian can make on earth. So long as we confine our thoughts to things beneath us and around us, we fancy ourselves to be beings of no small power and dignity. While we compare ourselves with our fellow-men, and measure ourselves by them, we find many reasons for pride and self-sufficiency. He is a miserable creature, who does not excel some other man in some thing. But if we bring such a temper to religious inquiry, we shall be most presumptuous and captious. We shall cavil, and dispute, and quibble about divine truths, as we do with our fellow-sinners about human affairs. Therefore, God commands us to adore him. For, as no man can look up to heaven and not have some feeling of littleness, no one can look up to God and consider his infinite, holy and glorious attributes, without feeling his own unworthiness and meanness. How utterly contemptible do the distinctions of rank, or riches, or wisdom, that obtain among men, appear, when compared with the sublimity of God? How poor are the utmost efforts of human mind beside the infinite grandeur of His thought! To say of a man, "Behold, he prayeth!" is to promise of him every Christian grace; not only because God answers

prayer, but because the very act of worship humbles, purifies, and, therefore, exalts and restores his soul to a healthful balance, by filling him with thoughts of God. Especially is this true with regard to doubts respecting the mysteries of religious truth. Our doubts always arise from love of sin or pride of reason. Mere reasoning never set right a single doubter, because the devil in our hearts is always ready with a sophism or a cavil in answer to the best argument. Reason cannot grasp the infinite, or discern the spiritual. But, when we adore God, reason becomes faith.

2. To receive all the truth of God's holy word.

There he has revealed the very truths which we ought to know. He has adapted them, and the language in which they are conveyed, to our capacities, our necessities, and our true ends of being. He has taught us mysteries, because without mysteries we could know nothing of Him, or of our own future; but those mysteries, when they show us our ignorance and weakness, teach us the good lessons of humility, dependence and faith. Nor is there a mystery of doctrine which is not necessary to give authority to precept and security to promise. To a faithful Christian the mysteries, at which other men most cavil, are the most precious portions of our creed.

3. To receive no truth as religious, which is not written in the Scriptures.

All the heresies, errors and disputes, which have disturbed the Christian church, have arisen either from the attempts of men to explain the mysteries of religion farther than the Scriptures have explained them, or to graft upon the revealed system some fond notion of their own. It is a duty of faith to receive simply what God has said. He has explained mysteries so far as we are capable of understanding them, and as they are good for us, but no farther. It is presumption in us to go beyond his teaching, and the attempt will always bring its own punishment.

This is true, also, of morality. God, who knows the end with the beginning, has ordained precisely the rules, and all the rules, for our Christian conduct. All super-scriptural inventions in morals will certainly, sooner or later, work mischief. The wisdom of God is better than our judgment, and, however promising any human scheme may seem, to entertain it is to doubt the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

So is it true of measures or forms in religion. God has appointed the means, and the only means, by which he will have his cause advanced. We are but his instruments, and, therefore, have no judg-

ment in the matter. The church, immediately after the apostolical age, was full of such unauthorized inventions, borrowed from Jewish habits, heathen superstitions, and heathen philosophy, which smothered her strength and spirituality until the Reformation, when the true reformers leaped over all the folly and mummery of patristical authority, to the simple word of God and the example of the apostles. Perhaps the time is not far distant when a second Reformation, which is greatly needed to burn the ill weeds, that have again sprung up from the seed of those ancient tares, may be granted to us. God hasten it in his time! Let us cling, my brethren, to the Scriptures alone. We need no other book to preserve the church from falling away. If we did, God would have given it.

4. To rely confidently upon God in Christ for our souls' salvation.

"Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!" Great the mystery of the incarnation! Great the mystery of the atonement! Great the mystery of sanctification by the Spirit! Yet it is the very mystery that we need. We could not go unto the divine Father, but through a divine Saviour, by a divine Sanctifier. It is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who undertakes the salvation of every penitent and believing soul. There

must be mysteries in the divine work. Therefore let us trust where we cannot see, and adore when we cannot comprehend. For, though high as heaven above the earth, are the ways of God above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, yet are those ways mercy, and those thoughts love, toward all who rely upon the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is our joy and our strength to believe that our salvation is in his hands, and not in our own.

SERMON VII.

HOW TO USE THE WORLD

AS

NOT ABUSING IT.

HOW TO USE THE WORLD,

&c.

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1 Cor. vii. 31. . . . They that use this world as not abusing it.

The world is to be used, but not abused. Its abuse is forbidden; its use is required. The text is against two opposite parties, into which men, except a very few clear-headed Christians, are divided: the one shrinking from the world so as to desert the duties of life, the other pursuing the world so as to neglect the duties of religion. Either course is sin.

The duties of life and the duties of religion are inseparable. Obedience to God is the end of piety; and the law of God commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves. The strength of faith is proved by the outworking of social virtue; the exercise of social virtue is necessary to strength of faith. If, in one parable, our Divine Master condemned the servant who abused his lord's goods by a criminal self-indulgence, forgetting his responsibility; in another, he pronounces that servant wicked, who put the talent

entrusted to him uselessly away, dreading his responsibility. Jesus, our Example, was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," yet was ever among sinners doing good; and wisdom from the Father of lights sanctifies the believer's soul, that, in his following of Jesus, he may let his light so shine *before* men, as to excite their grateful adoration of its supreme Source. If duty has its difficulties, they are not comparable to its rewards; and, since it is surrounded by temptations, to be faithful, we must overcome them. Were there no conflict, there would be no triumph; and he, who, like a good soldier, endures the temptations for the sake of the duty, shall receive the crown of life; not the coward, who abandons the duty to escape the temptations. "Every creature of God is good," writes the apostle to Timothy, "and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;" but how can we receive thankfully the pleasant gifts of God, with which, to solace our trials, he has embellished the world, if we consider every thing in it polluted, and adopt the profane creed of those ascetics, denounced by the apostle, (Col. ii. 20, 22) as pragmatical, self-righteous hypocrites, who say, "Touch not; taste not; handle not." Surely, contentment, so necessary to a Christian temper, has some reference to this life; and, if even that, which

because of its liableness to abuse, is called "the mammon of unrighteousness," can be made an everlasting friend, there is nothing permitted to affect us here, which we cannot make an occasion of profit. The serpent may lie hidden beneath the meadow flowers, or within the faggot on the hearth; but for this reason, shall we never gather the incense-cups of nature, or warm our hands at the flame? Rather let us bless God for his beautiful bounty and genial kindnesses, trusting his grace that, should the reptile fasten itself upon us, we can "shake off the beast and feel no harm." The race set before us, like our Master's, lies through the world. It needs patience, because painful sometimes, and always arduous; but it should be run with courage, because, through the power of Him, who finishes the faith of his people, it is safe; while none will ever reach the goal, above which Jesus sits triumphant, if, from any weariness or faintness in their minds, they refuse to follow his steps.

Still the question recurs, How are we to use the world so as not to abuse it?

Much of the trouble conscientious Christians have in finding a satisfactory answer, arises from their attempting to decide each particular case by its own particular rule, instead of establishing certain great principles, which would determine all.

If the heart be faithfully kept, its issues in our actual practice will be right; but no scrupulosity of outward demeanour can hide from God an inward rebellion. Nothing weakens our moral sense more than hair-breadth distinctions and minute observances; for soon, under such fantastic discipline, we come to make the colour of our garments, or our daily diet, matters of absurd importance; as if an honest mind were more acceptable to God under one coat than another, or a Christian the better man for eating fish on a Friday rather than flesh, within the bounds of a healthful decorum.

Then, again, we are apt to confound the world which God made good, with that world, which, if I may use so bold a figure, we have made for ourselves. What comes from God, cannot itself be evil, nor has the devil power to render it hurtful. When used in the manner and within the limits which God has prescribed, the world must be not only good, but beneficial; when we pervert or exceed its natural ends, we torment ourselves by our own sin. The warmth of a winter's fire is no reason for burning down one's house, nor the refreshment of a bath for suicide by drowning. The pleasantness of food to the hungry, does not justify an epicure; nor the sweetness of rest after toil, the sluggard. If we fling ourselves from the pinnacle

of a temple, we cannot expect to be upborne like a bird on its wings; and, if we will adventure to walk on the sea, we must sink in its depths. As the author of the Book of Wisdom says, "Seek not death by the error of your life, neither procure ye destruction by the works of your hands; for God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living. For he created all things that they might be, and he made the generations of the earth for health; and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon earth; for righteousness is immortal."

The world to us is, therefore, properly, *the condition or the sphere of things in which God has placed us;* and, since no mischief can reach us through it, which does not come from ourselves, a proper government of ourselves in view of our relations to it, will regulate properly our use of the world.

Thus we are to regard ourselves as creatures, sinners, Christians, and heirs of heaven; which should lead us to use the world obediently, cautiously, thankfully, and zealously.

First: Obediently, as *Creatures;*

Secondly: Cautiously, as *Sinners;*

Thirdly: Thankfully, as *Christians;*

Fourthly: Zealously, as *Heirs of heaven.*

First: Obediently, as *Creatures*.

We are creatures of God, and, therefore, have no right to ourselves, except in subordination to his right as our Creator. The things of the world are creatures of God, and we have no right to them, except as he allows them to us. Our fellow-beings are creatures of God, and we have no rights inconsistent with those, which he has given them.

The Creator alone perfectly understands the nature and purposes of his own works; except, therefore, as we learn from him, we can know nothing aright as to the management of ourselves, the uses of the world, and the just interests of our fellow-beings.

God has given us a sufficient revelation to direct our choice, define our liberty, and adjust our conduct towards others; in which he proposes motives of reward and punishment, while he declares that he will hold us to a strict account for all he has committed to our hands as his stewards.

It follows then, that, as creatures, dependent upon God, ignorant without God, and responsible to God, his will is our only guide. Every use of the world, conformably to His will, is right; every use of it contrary to His will, is an abuse. We are as much bound to use it according to His commands, as we are not to abuse it in violation of

them. The lot assigned us is the sphere in which God requires our service, and to be faithful, we must neither shrink from it, nor presume beyond it, but obey God.

SECONDLY: CAUTIOUSLY, as *sinners*.

Sin has wrought such a deplorable revolution in our natures, that the mind, originally the ruler of the body, is now, unless delivered by grace, its subject. Our appetites bias our judgment, and our tendency to indulge them unduly is constant. We should always suspect ourselves of an excessive desire for the things of sense, and try our hearts scrupulously by the law of God.

What would be innocent and even nutritious to a healthful body, may be like poison to a diseased digestion; so, what was allowable to our moral nature when holy, may be pernicious to us now that we have become corrupt. Sensual gratification feeds our evil propensities, while it weakens our reason. We must practise restraint, if we would keep our consciences vigorous and our bodies under.

We have departed far from the ways of God, and have now not merely to pursue a right course, but to recover ourselves from courses which are wrong. Hence the Master enjoins self-denial and taking up the cross as the very beginning of a Christian life.

We may, therefore, be sure that we are abusing the world, unless we have radically changed our moral principles and practices. Long cherished habits are with difficulty put off, and we relapse into them readily. The path of duty is upward and slippery. Most anxiously should we scrutinize our conduct, lest any evil remain in us, and most circumspectly should we walk, lest we fall. We can never be thoroughly right or perfectly safe, until we reach heaven, because, though the world be not itself evil, we are sinners.

THIRDLY: THANKFULLY, as *Christians*.

Faith in Christ makes us children of God. We are under the care of an all-wise and most merciful Father. Whatever, therefore, we have or have not of this world, we should regard as the manifestation of his love, as that which he determines is best for us, and as the means of our growth in grace. If he give, we should thank him for honouring us as his stewards; if he withhold, we should thank him for sparing us from temptation; if he take away, we should thank him for chastening us from a probable idolatry.

By faith we become followers and friends of Christ. While he was on earth, he demonstrated the divinity of his Gospel by his holy, patient and useful life. His virtue shone brighter from trial,

and persecution, and reproach, while he devoted all his energies to doing good. He has left his church to be witnesses of the same truth. The Christian is called to walk in the same path, to do the same human works, to bear meekly the same trials. Thankful, therefore, should the Christian be for his lot in the world, because it allows him opportunities to testify his love for Christ, to imitate Christ by setting an example of religion, and to manifest the power of the Gospel in the sanctification of his life. It is the cause of Christ, which requires him to resist the temptations of prosperity, to bear without repining the burden of affliction, and to make sacrifices of self for the best welfare of his fellow-sinners. The greater danger, the more honour; the harder work, the more reward; the deeper tribulation, the more like Christ.

By faith we have the grace of the Holy Ghost. But that grace can be enjoyed only when attempting our duty. It is seen only in its fruits. Yet the Christian is promised its ever ready help and entire sufficiency for every possible difficulty. There is no trouble it cannot enable him to bear, no enemy it cannot make him conqueror over, no duty which by it he cannot perform. His greatest trials have the assurance of greater blessings; and, with grace increasing as he goes on through

the world, he knows that grace will crown his work on earth, with the glory of heaven.

If, therefore, we be Christians indeed, we should use the world thankfully, as the lot our heavenly Father chooses for us, the sphere in which we may glorify our divine Master, and the scene of our sanctification by the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly: Zealously, as *Heirs of heaven.*

It is the Christian's peculiar faculty to look through this life and contemplate eternity. Because he knows that his home is there, he feels himself to be a pilgrim and sojourner here. The world being thus thrown under the light of heaven, he judges nothing here to be of value, but every thing hurtful, except as it tends to his eternal advantage. The proper use of the world, therefore, is preparation for eternity; and that preparation, God has taught us, lies in the Christian performance of our present duties. The providence of Christ, as Head of his church, is perfectly consistent with the providence of God, as Creator. All the relations appointed to us by God in Christ, are legitimate means of ripening for eternity. At that judgment, from which men will be forever separated in the two opposite directions of heaven and hell, we shall be tried by the unchangeable law, Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. There

are no greater pests in religion than those, who would separate the morality of the law from the practice of the Gospel. Our obedience to God is the evidence of our faith in Christ, for the end of his salvation is the deliverance of his people from sin. In consequence of our fallen state, certain evangelical duties have been superadded, which could not have been needed were man innocent; such as those belonging to our repentance, the relief of human suffering, and the spread of the Gospel; but all our original duties remain not the less binding. Therefore, as we would wish to make our calling and election sure; to obtain, through the merits of our Advocate, acquittance before God, and to be faithful stewards of the things he has trusted us with, we should be zealous in our obedient, cautious, Christian use of the world.

Besides, though the saints of God will doubtless serve him forever in heaven, there are methods of doing his will and advancing his glory, which belong only to our present sphere. It is in this life that souls are to be converted. No mercy reaches those who have died impenitent. Christ preached his Gospel only on earth, and, in this life, set before men the perfect example which they must follow to gain heaven. As his servants in the work of salvation, our zeal is confined to this life. The rela-

tions which we sustain to our fellow-sinners, and which give us more or less influence over them, should, therefore, be zealously used for the great end of their salvation. Here the parent should train up children for God, friend should persuade friend, and, in the wide range of His love who died for the world, man should not rest while a fellow-man remains unconverted. Whatever of the world can legitimately be made to help us in spreading the Gospel, should be cultivated, that it may be subsidized for the glory of Christ, the welfare of other men's souls, and, intimately connected with our efforts on their behalf, the advantage of our own. Now we may hope, by the divine blessing, to rescue immortal creatures from eternal death, and to increase the population of heaven with happy, holy worshippers of the Lamb that was slain; but, one moment after they or we have ceased to breathe this lower atmosphere, our opportunities are past forever. When we think of this, and the blessedness of our hope, for which we should render grateful devotion to Christ, there is no limit that ought to be set in our following of Him who wrought while it was day, because the night cometh, after whose fall no man can work.

Heaven is the place of reward. We can enter it only by the merits of Christ, and prepare for it

only by the grace of Christ; yet not the least provision of mercy is, that God will then pay rich wages for every service rendered him by Christians on earth. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours and their works do follow them." All the stars of the firmament are glorious, yet one differs from another in glory; so, while all the redeemed are radiant with joy immortal, their rank will be determined by the degree of their fidelity, and those stand nearest the throne, wear the richest crowns, sing the loudest hallelujahs, who have done and suffered the most for Christ. The Redeemer's reward is seeing in bliss the multitude, whom he purchased by his blood, justified by his righteousness, and secured by his intercession; and the reward of his follower will be, seeing the sheaves he has helped to gather for the heavenly harvest. How should this thought fill us with a holy ambition, by a zealous use of the world, to lay up each hour some treasure in heaven!

Consider, in connexion with these high aims, how short life is at the longest, how uncertain our hold of it! How much there is to be done! How feeble our powers! How few there are to work with us! Heir of heaven, "the fashion of this world passeth away," but eternity remaineth!

The fires of hell are unquenchable; heaven's reward is immortal! Let us use the world for that endless consequence, remembering that else we abuse it irremediably. No wasted moment ever returns; no diligent hour but has perpetual fruits.

Be not, my hearers, among those who despise the world. Count all that a sinful heart would propose of its evanescent pleasures and gains and honours, as loss for Christ's sake; but, at the same time, cherish all that is in it, which you can use obediently, safely, thankfully and for eternity, precious as God's gifts, Christ's honour, the soul's redemption and heaven's reward. Love life, as the brief space into which is crowded every opportunity of preparation to live forever, the arena on which you are to win the crown of righteousness, the road which you must travel to reach your Father's house.

Refuse not the bounty of God. He has filled earth with beauty not to tempt us, but that we might temperately enjoy, serve him more cheerfully, and bless him at all times. "What God has cleansed, that call not thou unclean." It is superstition, the spirit of antichrist, to make life a penance, and to fling back the gifts of a good Providence as too dangerous for his children.

Above all, think not of saving yourself from sin,

by escaping from duty. Arm yourselves with the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the hope of salvation, and the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; then, press onward with patience in the race set before you. Fulfil your duties to your family, to your neighbourhood, to your country, and to the world. The Christian's rule is, Love supreme to God, and to his fellow man as himself, for God's sake. He is not called to be a hermit. Let him leave the forest to the beast, the desert to the reptile; but, as a man among men, show himself a follower of Jesus, who blessed with holy converse the social board, delighted in the household of Bethany, loved the friend who rested on his bosom, and permitted not the prattling children to be sent away, until he had taken them up in his arms and pressed them close to his holy heart. How did He recommend himself as a Teacher of righteousness? Was it not by kind deeds, gentle words, and courteous gesture? Thus did also our apostle Paul, that pattern of a Christian gentleman, who was willing to make tents for his bread, but declined no method of winning favour, except the withholding of truth. So should we be pitiful and courteous, loving the brethren and honouring all men, that when we would speak to them of Christ, they may listen to us as friends.

Yet, let us remember always, that we are God's creatures, and should obey him in all things, making his law our only rule; that we are sinful beings, who should use cautiously even permitted things, lest we abuse them to sin; that we are Christians, bound to deny ourselves, and bear the cross after Jesus, while we thankfully improve all our opportunities of good; and that we are heirs of heaven, whose life is a pilgrimage, and whose only purpose here should be to reach eternal rest, while we carry with us all whom we can persuade to be fellow heirs of our Father's kingdom, by becoming fellow servants with us of his Son Jesus Christ.

What shall be said of those who abuse the world, by an utter forgetfulness of the divine law and neglect of the divine Gospel? Their every act, word, thought, is sin. They neither obey God, nor honour his Son. They waste in present folly that divine bounty, which might be made fruitful of immortal blessing, and lay up for their endless future only an accumulated condemnation. Of all they have had, enjoyed or suffered here, they have nothing to carry before the judgment seat, as a proof of their fidelity or their gratitude. Every gift of God will bear witness against them, Christ will offer no argument for them, and remorse will burn within them like a fire unquenchable, at the thought that they have destroyed themselves.

SERMON VIII.

FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, VICTORIOUS.

FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, VICTORIOUS.

1 John v. 5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth Jesus is the Son of God?

Compliments are freely paid to the morals of the New Testament, at the expense of its doctrines. Many, who would rather be considered our friends than our opponents, often say to us: "Why waste so much zeal in contending for points of abstract faith, which you acknowledge is worthless without good works, when you might be so much more profitably employed in setting forth the simple moral teachings, and the beautiful example of Jesus? There lies the grand excellence of your scheme, the true glory of Christianity above all other religions."

This advice, plausible as it seems, and well-meant as it may be, we unhesitatingly reject. It is at variance with the essential spirit of the Gospel, the express declarations of its divine Author, the re-

corded methods of its inspired apostles, and the avowed experience of its best professors. The evangelical doctrines are not mere abstractions, but fundamental religious truths, upon which the evangelical morality is established, and without which it has neither strength nor consistency. "Who is he," asks the apostle, "that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" It is the dignity of his person, "God manifest in the flesh," and the attractive glory of his cross, the atonement for sinners, which give to the ethics of the Galilean sage their authority and power. It is faith in the cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, that "GOD IS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF," which, by subduing the heart to the love of God, and opening to the expectation of the soul a spiritual and eternal heaven, constrains the believer to follow in the foot-prints of Jesus, and uplifts him triumphant over the difficulties of virtue and the temptations of time.

The heathen philosophers, from the first Zoroaster to Confucius, taught every duty, which, apart from a religious consideration of his immortal well-being, man owes to man. Open any of their books, of whatever sect or nation, and you may read eloquent and wise discourses upon piety to parents, the sanctity of friendship, the advantage of tempe-

rance, the dignity of continence, the nobility of justice, and the grandeur of truth. They may be written in other words, but, *separated from faith in the doctrines of Christ*, there is little new in the ethical maxims of the New Testament, and little in its illustrative examples transcending what the world has already seen.

That the evangelical morals and examples are incomparably superior to all others, it is the glory of a Christian to know; but, at the same time, they both derive their peerless advantage from that system of doctrine to which they are inseparably united. If Jesus of Nazareth taught the rule so wonderfully comprehensive and clear as to win the instant suffrage of all who hear it, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also even so to them;" Pittacus, of Mitylene, had said to his disciples six hundred years before, "Do not that to your neighbour, which you would take ill from him."* The better class of his time would have agreed with Cicero when he declared, "It is better to suffer an injury than to do one;"† and, though there is a vast interval between this sentiment and our Lord's commands, "Love your enemies," and "Render good for evil," Christ himself drew his higher rule only from that doctrine, which the Tusculan philo-

* Stobæus, Ser. III. † Tusc. Quæs. v. 19.

sopher knew nothing of, the mercy of God towards us: "Shouldest thou not have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I have pity on thee?" Forgiveness toward others is a debt we owe to God's forgiveness of us, as we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Plato drew from his own philosophical imagination the history of a JUST MAN, steadfast in truth under universal reproach, and, having been scourged and mocked, dying a martyr *on a cross*, serene in admirable submission to an over-ruling Will.* Socrates lived poor and careless of himself, that he might spend his time in teaching men practical goodness; and, blessing his friends and forgiving his enemies with his latest breath, willingly surrendered his life to the executioner, that he might seal the truth of his creed and consummate his example.

Yet what did those heathen teachers accomplish for mankind? The world persecuted them while living, wept for them and deified them when dead, but grew worse and worse. It is from the very date of the first who made morals a science, that we trace the most rapid decay of morality. Plato dreamed of abstraction from the multiplicity of matter into divine unity, while Athens grovelled in excesses under the sanction of a false religion which

* Rep. II. 51, 52.

he dared not impeach; and Seneca, after having studied antitheses for his feeble apothegms, went from his most luxurious home to sup with Agrippina and his pupil Nero.

Whence was this insufficiency? Were they not agreed in the great truth, that Virtue is the highest good, and its own best reward? Was this less true from their lips, than it is on the page of the Gospel? Has not the human mind, however heretical the human heart may have been, assented to it in all ages and among all people? Why, then, such universal failure out of the Christian school?

My brethren, they lacked the two grand characteristics of the Christian system, AUTHORITY and MOTIVE.

They had no infallible umpire to decide what was virtue, or what was truth. They had no sufficient evidence, that one eternal law of righteousness ruled heaven and earth, time and eternity, making it sure that what a man sowed he should also reap, if not in this life, in another. Their morality, at the best, was but the guess of human reason, not the teaching of God; and, as such, a theory, beautiful, but incomplete; probable, but by no means certain. The wisest, the most candid, and the best of them all, deeply felt the want of such authority, when he hoped that God would send ONE from Himself, who

should teach us how to pray, and how to live acceptably to him.

There was, consequently, a want of *motive*. They saw no Almighty love and wisdom embracing each other and coming down from heaven to earth, inviting them, drawing them, and opening the way for them from earth to heaven. The world around them was full of triumphant vice; and virtue, applauded in the theatre or lecture hall, was hissed at in the streets, ridiculed at the banquet, and ostracised from the state. Life beyond the grave was doubtful, and, even were it certain, they had no reason to believe, that the same evils would not pursue them, and the Gods be as unjust in eternity as they were in time. If, then, in their better moments, they had some aspirations after virtue, where was the motive to nerve them against the insurgences of appetite, and the allurements or persecutions of the world? They were sure only of this life, and here vice had more reward than virtue. No wonder that they gave up so soon the unequal struggle, and resolved "to eat, and drink, and crown themselves with roses, for to-morrow they would die." Their ethics were of the head, not of the heart; virtue was beloved as an intellectual pursuit; their heaven (if heaven there were) belonged to the few who could cultivate mental abstraction; and their moral

maxims, beautiful as they sometimes seem, were like the pale up-shootings in northern skies from regions of eternal frost, fitful, ungenial and cold.

Not such is Christianity. Jesus, our Teacher, is no feeble, fallible, doubting struggler, like ourselves, amidst shadows and difficulties. He is God come down from heaven. The Almighty Supreme, who thought it not beneath him to create man, condescends to the nobler work of redeeming him, renewing him, guiding him, and elevating him again to the knowledge and holiness he has lost by sin. To assure us of his love and nearness to his earth-born children, he takes our nature, and wraps it around his parental deity. To demonstrate his estimation of steadfast virtue, the Man in whom he dwells is a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men; yet, burdened as he is with grief, marking, by his human feet, the strait path of righteousness in which God walks before his children. In his one example we behold the holiness of God and man's true virtue; and we learn that the perfection of human morality is likeness to our Maker, the Lawgiver and Judge of all worlds.

Nor is this all. Had the Son of God only exhibited the perfection of that virtue he requires of us, his coming would have been to condemn; for who can stand if tried by His life? If the example of

Jesus be the only way to heaven, who of us can walk in it, who can reach its sublime purity and goodness? Better leave us to doubt with the heathen, than overwhelm us in despair! But, when "the law in the hands of the Mediator," has convinced us of sin, of our guilt, our weakness, and of judgment to come, God, by the same Teacher, and the same history of his life upon earth, reveals his mercy; shows how, by the obedience and sufferings of the man Christ Jesus, sustained and dignified from the God within him, He can be just, and yet save to the uttermost every penitent soul that will submit to his righteousness, by accepting pardon through the merits of his Son; and then encourages us to attempt the arduous, upward duty of following Christ by the promise, that as God dwelt in the man Christ Jesus, and wrought, through him, his beautiful and constant virtue, so his divine Spirit will dwell in the sin-weakened man who implores his help, renewing him with a holy energy as life was breathed into him at his first creation, and working in him both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. The sinner thus pardoned, raised from the depths of his infirmity by an Almighty hand, conscious of divine sympathy, and animated by divinity within him, looks upward through the veil rent by the Son of God ascending in our na-

ture to glory on high, and beholds the honour, the joy, the immortal splendours which await the faithful follower of Jesus after death.

It is because the Christian believes in the authority, the atonement, and the glory of Christ the Son of God; in the love and sympathy of God in Christ; in the promise of the Spirit's sustaining grace, and in the certainty of an inheritance upon which his Forerunner has for him entered, that he has from the Gospel sufficient motive to preserve a constant obedience to the morals of Jesus, at the cost of any worldly shame, self-denial or suffering. Tear those morals away from the divinity of Jesus, the atonement of his cross, and the power of his throne, and they would be cold, inoperative and uncertain, as those of the Porch, the Academy or the Garden. Tell me that Jesus was a mere human teacher of truth, and his death nothing more than a martyrdom for truth's sake, and how shall I decide between the Son of Sophroniscus and the Son of Mary? But, when I see the sun hiding himself in unnatural eclipse, and feel the earth shuddering in strong convulsions as the Crucified expires, I exclaim with the centurion at the foot of the cross, "Truly this was the Son of God." When I trace his admirable life as an example of the virtue I must attain, before I can follow him in hope of im-

mortal life, I bow myself in my infirmity and despair. But when I hear the cry, "It is finished!" from my Saviour, as he gives up the ghost for me, and know that his righteousness covers all my unworthiness, that his blood washes away all my sins, and that my reconciliation to God is complete in Him, then do I cast myself without fear upon His love, "who of God is made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Therefore it was, that when Jesus wished to fling down the self-righteous from his pride, he said, "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments;" but, when he met a sincere inquirer after God, he declared his divine Gospel, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Therefore it was, that his chiefest apostle, after having "concluded all under sin," demonstrated "peace with God" to all who are "justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, also, the beloved disciple declares, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our *faith*. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" Take away this faith from Christianity, and, however classically you may drape it, it is cold as the marble which human hands have

fashioned into a counterfeit of life; the heart of religion has ceased to beat, the divine glory around her head shines no more, and we are left amidst the dark shadows of what is called natural religion, to wallow in the vices of heathenism, or, at best, to dream in the unsubstantial philosophy of those who slept in the regions of death. As for us, our Master is the Son of God, the Crucified; our ethics, faith in Him who died for our sins, and "left us an example that we should follow in his steps."

> Talk they of morals! O thou bleeding Love,
> Our best morality is love of Thee.

Our inspired text strongly vindicates the doctrine of justification by faith from the charge of tolerating a negligence of practice, for the apostle declares that the PROPER EFFECT OF FAITH IS A CONQUEST OF THE WORLD. "The world" is an enemy against which we are to fight.

The world, as God made it, is no enemy of ours. All the works of God should lead us to him; all his gifts should make us grateful, and our sorrows should convince us of his parental faithfulness in afflicting us for our good. It cannot be that the Creator, who has given us senses so exquisitely susceptible, and has surrounded us with so many sources and occasions of delight, filling the world

with beauty, grandeur and variety, is pleased when we turn away our eyes from the charms of nature, or close our ears to the voice of music, or trample ungratefully upon the incense-breathing flowers, or satisfy our hunger and take our repose, without some sense of enjoyment. All this richness of bounty is intended for man, and man adapted, if he will use the mercy aright, to receive from it happiness and profit. Ascetic seclusion from those pleasures which God offers in his glorious and graceful works, is an impeachment of his wisdom, a refusal of his kindness, and a departure from Himself. The finest bursts of pious emotion came from the soul of the Psalmist, when he discovered the God of redemption in the works of his hands; our blessed Lord, our best Teacher, took the texts of his holy sermons more often from objects of Nature than from the written Word; nor could the revelator of the heavenly vision describe to us the joys of the New Jerusalem, without painting them in all the language we use to express what God has made delightful on earth. It was within a garden, a garden of delights (Eden), that man first rose from the dust, to begin existence in communion with God; and heaven, where he will be restored to perfect holiness, is the second Paradise;

there must, therefore, be some important connexion between a right enjoyment of the works of God and our best interests.

This argument is still stronger, with regard to the gifts of God more necessary to our life. They are good. We must not doubt their goodness, because they are creatures of God, and fruits of his bounty. He has qualified them to give us gratification, and for the enjoyment we have in them, we should be thankful as well as for the things themselves.

Afflictions are painful. They were meant to give us pain. When they cease to be painful, they cease to be afflictions. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Yet it is the Christian's privilege to believe his very troubles blessings, because they are part of that discipline, by which God is preparing him for a higher, holier happiness in eternity.

The world of men, is not to be regarded by us as an enemy. We are commanded to love and to serve them, seeking their good as Christ sought theirs and ours. They may hate, persecute, and what is far more dangerous, tempt us. It may be our duty to guard against them, and to suffer from them. Still the spirit in which we are to live among them and with them, is that of love and be-

nefaction, such as our Master manifested until his last breath upon the cross.

Where then is the enemy, which the apostle calls "the world"? and where is the proper scene of this victorious conflict? My brethren, our enemy is within, not without. The battle is to be fought in our own hearts; those hearts, which from their infirmity and sin, are prone to turn into evil that which God made good, and to find occasion of guilt, where he opens opportunities of virtue. It is against the illusions, the seductions, the oppositions and the sufferings, which our evil hearts, or the infirmities consequent upon sin, make in the world. If our principles of religion be right and firm, there is no seeming evil from which we may not extract good; if they be wrong or weak, there is nothing so good but we may turn it into evil. Is the beauty of Nature an evil, because man turns his back upon God as he admires it? Are the food and drink God gives us evils, because man gorges himself in gluttonous excess? Is suffering, or even temptation, an evil, when God means it as a test of our truth, and a purifier of our thoughts, because we have not the courage to bear or withstand it? No. The fight is to be maintained within, and the disposition of the heart to make good evil by abuse, must be changed into a

temper which makes every thing and every event a means of godly virtue.

We are not to escape from the world, but to "overcome" it. In the world lie our duties. It is the theatre upon which we are to obey God and serve our fellow-men. Hard as the struggle may be, it is unfaithful cowardice to fly from the scene where God requires us to act. No Christian would justify suicide, as a method of escaping temptation. But is not that a moral suicide which, for the sake of cultivating our personal piety, secludes us from the world, and all the fair occasions of doing good to man, or of setting an example of Christian steadfastness, to the praise of the grace of God? Will not God demand of such a spirit, as he did of the first murderer, "Where is thy brother?" Where is thy neighbour? And who will dare to reply, that he was too much absorbed in the care of his own soul, to "be his brother's keeper"? There are certain forms of temptation, indeed, from which we are to fly, as he fled, who exclaimed, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" "Flee youthful lusts," says the apostle. But these are exceptions, nor is it necessary to fly out of the world, for the apostle adds, "*Follow* righteousness, faith, charity."

Neither do we escape the real evil by such

seclusion. The devil tempted Christ often, but his most cunning trial of our great Example, was when alone, in a desert place, and after a long fast. We may change the form of temptation, but not escape from temptation. The object of the tempter is to drive us from our duties, and, when we fly, we yield. The virtues of the Christian life are social; they must be practised among our fellow-men. They lie in temperance, not abstinence; in doing good, not in forsaking it. The Christian warrior has a helmet for his head, a breast-plate for his heart, and shoes for his feet, with a shield of faith, by the interposition of which he can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; but there is no armour for his back. The moment he turns his face from the conflict, he is defenceless.

Since, then, the battle is within the heart, the method of the Gospel is clearly the only successful warfare. It is to overcome motives to evil by motives to good; by the superior force of those motives which give sanction to the laws of Christ, to defeat the power of those temptations our evil hearts find in the world to sin. How is this accomplished?

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our *faith*." "Now," says the apostle, "faith

is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" faith in the unseen, to overcome the sensible; faith in the eternal, to overcome the earthly and the passing.

A man believes in God; believes him to be his Benefactor, his Saviour, his Judge, and ever present. A temptation, strong, subtle and immediate, presents itself before him. No human witness is nigh. His nature urges him to yield. In another moment he would fall. But faith comes to his aid, and throws, between him and the sin, the presence of his God, the cross of Christ, the terrible judgment seat: "Thou, my God, seest me; thou, O Holy One; thou, O Christ; thou, Searcher and Judge!" he exclaims, and he is safe. Faith has fought in his heart and overcome the world.

"Faith worketh by love," says the apostle. It is a principle of God's government that love must urge us to every duty; and for every relation of life there is an affection. Look at that young woman. A little while since, she seemed only to live for herself, for pleasure and admiration. No rewards could have bribed her to self-denial, retirement and watchfulness. But follow her now to yonder shadowed room. She is beside the cradle of her babe. She has forgotten the world. Her world is in her child. The babe is sick. Fever

has breathed upon it. It has lain for weeks, hovering betwixt life and death; but the changed girl is there, unwearied by day, sleepless by night. The babe grows. He is a wayward boy, a disobedient and profligate youth; but, though all cast him away, the mother's heart yearns over him, pities him, pardons him, loves him still. Why? What reward has she? What has thus changed her whole nature? The love which grew with that babe in her heart, and was born unquenchable with his immortal life. Now, my brethren, this is the powerful charm by which faith does its work in the Christian's transformation. When God converts a sinner to his service, He inspires him with love. The love of Christ constraineth him to live not to himself, "but to Him who died for him and rose again." It is the remembrance of Christ, his best, truest, most faithful friend, which prevails in his heart over the world's temptation to sin? How can he sin for his own pleasure, when Christ, whom he loves above all others, died to save him and make him holy?

Hope is the child of faith. The Christian believes in an eternal heaven, and, therefore, he hopes for it. What were we without hope, the nerve of enterprise, the soul of patience, the cordial of the sick! The sailor braves for it the storm and the wave; the merchant ventures for it his wealth and

his name; the student gives for it his long and anxious nights.

The Christian hopes; and when the world tempts, and his evil nature incites, and the devil flatters, he looks upward to Jesus, where He sits at the right hand of God. "A little longer," he says, "and the struggle will be over. My sorrows shall fly away before the eternal morning; and the crown, the palm, the harp, and the smile of God shall be mine." He believes the promise of his Lord. He has a hope of the better, the nobler, the more enduring. His faith has overcome the world.

Thus is the Christian's life a fight; but he struggles manfully, courageously, cheerfully, and confidently. He knows that God is with him. He knows that God will help him. He knows that God will give him the victory.

His fight is onward, still urging forward his march, through ambush and ranks of open enemies, until he reaches the grave, and bows his unconquered head to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Angels have watched him through all his difficult career, though he has seen them not. Now, they hover within his dying sight. He seizes the omen. "Victory!" he cries, as he gives up his breath. "Victory!" shout his guard of heavenly friends, as they bear upward his exulting spirit

from the world he has overcome. "Victory!" respond the keepers of the everlasting gates, as they fling wide open and uplifted the portals of the skies. "Victory!" "Victory!" "Victory!" is heard in thundering acclamations, as he passes on through the shining ranks toward the inner circle around the Lamb that was slain, and kneels at his feet. "Blessed art thou, for thou hast overcome!" pronounces the King of the Church, and crowns him with leaves from the Tree of Life. Now heaven is hushed to hear the voice of their ransomed brother; and clear, and reverent, and joyful, is that voice, as he casts from his head the crown at his Master's feet, and cries, "Thine be the praise, my LORD and my GOD. Thy faith hath given me the victory. I have triumphed in thy name!" Then burst from countless armies of souls redeemed like him, floods of praise loud as many waters, "Thanks! Thanks! Thanks! Thanks be to God, who gave us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

SERMON IX.

THE WAY TO WIN GOOD WAGES.

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1 Corinthians iii. 7, 8, 9.

Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Now he that planteth, and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

For we are workers together with God.

It is not our aim, at this time, to open the full meaning of these words, but only to take out of them a few thoughts that may be of use to such Christians, as wish to employ themselves in doing good for their Master's sake.

The occasion of the text was this. The apostle had heard that there were foolish and wicked contentions among the Corinthian Christians. He had himself founded their church, as we learn from the xviii. of Acts, where it is said, that after leaving Athens, he came to Corinth, and there reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading the Jews and Greeks; and, being encouraged by his success and a vision from the Lord, he abode among

them a year and six months, teaching the word of God. After the apostle had left them, Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, who, Luke tells us, was a man of learning, eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, and fervent in the Spirit, went, followed by the prayers of the brethren, to labour at Corinth. It is not unlikely, that they were visited by Peter also, as, it is thought, he once made a journey through the synagogues and churches in that part of the world; that they knew about him, and his peculiar character as the apostle of the circumcision, is certain, for Paul speaks to them of Cephas, his Hebrew name, by which the converted Jews loved to call him.

Instead, however, of giving God the glory, and of profiting by the great advantage of having such good preaching, they turned this very grace of God into an occasion of sin. They quarrelled about their preachers, each insisting that the one he liked the best, was the best, and worthy of the most honour. Some, who perhaps were converted under Paul's preaching, or whose stronger minds more readily felt the force of his strong reasoning, called themselves Paul's people, or Paulites. Others, perhaps converted under Apollos, or carried away by his glowing and rushing eloquence, boasted themselves as his admirers. Others again, more

bigotted about circumcision, as Peter or Cephas was somewhat himself, put him above the other two. While there were yet others, proud in their own conceit, who, forsooth, scarcely willing to be taught by any servant of the Lord, would interpret Christ's Gospel their own way, and claimed to be Christ's, as though none were such pure Christians as themselves. Thus they spent their time and their zeal, which should have been given up to doing good, learning religion themselves and teaching it to others, in glorifying mere men, and breaking the church up into parties.

Paul rebukes them sharply for this, putting them in mind, that whatever good they gained from Christ's servants was from Christ himself; and, therefore, that they should give the glory to Christ alone, instead of racking his church into pieces by stickling about the merits of his followers. "What," says he, striking with greater force at his own admirers, lest he might be thought jealous of the others, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius (afterwards he adds the household of Stephanas), lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name;" and, doubtless also, lest any should boast that they had been baptized by

him. Again, in the verses about our text; "While one saith, I am of Paul, another of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man," or blessed the preaching? "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." All the good they had gotten from these servants, was because of God's blessing upon their labours. Paul, it was true, had planted, and it is not likely that Apollos would have done so much good, if Paul had not gone before him; Apollos had watered, and it is not likely that Paul's preaching would have done so much, if Apollos had not come after him; but they were both sent by God, both were instrumental in the good done, both were useful only as they were blessed by God, and each would be rewarded, not according to his seeming success, but his zeal and faithfulness in labouring.

What a lesson is here for Christians in our own day? How often, I had almost said how constant-

ly, do we find them falling into these same errors? How much of what they would fain call religious conversation, is not of the grace and glory of God, the claims of his cause and the method of serving it, but about this preacher and that preacher, their comparative merits and defects, their successes or failures? How often is the doctrine of a sermon forgotten, while they praise the eloquence of the man; or the practical lesson disregarded, because his voice, his gesture, or his diction, is not to their taste?

It is natural and right that we should have a stronger love for those from whom we have received the most good, or whose manner of teaching seems best fitted to the character and habit of our minds. We learn to love that particular copy of the Bible, which we are accustomed to study, better than another, though it may have been printed by the same types. We love best the hymns with which we are familiar, and the more when we sing them each to its most accustomed tune. A strange voice, though it may discourse most excellent truth, rarely touches the Christian disciple's heart, like one with whose every tone he has associated some profit in the past. The artist paints best at his own easel; the mechanic works best with his own tools; and the musician plays best upon his

own instrument. It is true, also, that all persons may not get the same good from the same teacher. One may be of a logical turn, and like demonstration; another more imaginative, and like more of figures and tropes. One needs rousing, another cautioning, another comfort. So God puts various kinds of ministers in the church; one fitted for this kind of labour, and another for that. But whatever useful talent they have, it is his gift; whatever good they do, is through his blessing. We are not to despise a faithful servant of his, because he does not happen to please our taste, or to make a little god of him, because the Lord sends us good by him, like a treasure in an earthen vessel. We may thank the servant for bringing us the good, but we should never forget that God sent him, and gave him the good to carry. Nor must we think, because we do not happen to receive profit from him, that the Master may not make him the messenger of grace to the souls of others. To sit in church as critics of the preacher, rather than as disciples of Christ, is to bring the manners of the detestable play-house into the house of God. To follow a preacher, is not always a following of Christ. Admiration of an eloquent sermon will not take us to heaven, though neglect of what we pronounce a dull one may keep us out of it.

Man is but the instrument; the truth is the Lord's; the profit is from his blessing; the loss of profit our own fault.

Would we, therefore, have the cause of Christ prosper? and do we pray for the triumph of his truth? Let us rely upon his power to bless his word, and not consider the success as dependent upon the instrument he may employ; nor, if he do send the blessing, should we give the praise to a worm of the dust, like a husbandman who would worship the cloud, or burn incense to the sunbeam. The first would be almost certain to prevent the grace; the second, to provoke its being taken away.

Much of the mischief, that has come upon the church, has arisen from this very error. It is this, principally, which has divided the church into sects, and distracted it with parties. All teachers of religion are not like Paul, but many are but too fond of becoming petty popes in their little circles; and to baptize, if not in their own name, for their own credit. The large mass of the Christian laity hold the same great truths, and when they are found opposed to each other in extensive controversies about nice points in theology, they ordinarily know very little as to the real occasion of the dispute; but nine-tenths rush to the battle, because their favourite

minister is on one side, and ministers they do not like on the other.

O my friends, it is Christ that saves us, his truth that edifies us, his Spirit that blesses us. He could make out of a stone in the street a more successful preacher, than any that has ever been encircled by the applauses of men; and, I doubt not, in his final revelation, it will be found that some, whom the church has thought the least of, God delighted most to bless.

We have, from the text, great encouragement to work for Christ.

We may be very weak, our talents very few, our opportunities, seemingly, still fewer; but our success does not depend upon our own force, or genius, or influence. It is God's blessing that gives the increase. Without it, the mighty demonstrations of Paul, and the burning eloquence of Apollos, would have been in vain. With it, the simplest child in the school of Christ can overturn citadels of error, and build up the waste places of many generations. Compared with each other, some men may appear great, and the rest small; but, compared with God, as he looks down from the height that knows no measure, and compared with the immense difficulties in the way of his cause, all are worms of the dust, whose strength is that of the moth. He

does not need our wit to devise cunning plans and new methods of doing good. Experience should have taught the church by this time, that their boasted moral inventions, wonder-working philosophies, and new-fangled labour-saving schemes, answer in the end but very little purpose, and, generally, do more harm than good. God has appointed his own ways of doing good; and the humble soul, who knows enough to see what God would have him to do, by reading the plain precept in his Bible, is sure of doing God's will, for he labours together with God. It needs little talent to learn God's will, but it needs much grace; and God gives that grace to the humble.

God does not need our strength to accomplish his purposes, though he is pleased graciously to employ us in his service. The united church could not, of itself, make a single blade of grass to grow, much less convert a single soul. Omnipotence is needed to do either, and omnipotence is his own, and was his own, before ever a human heart beat, a human sinew was stretched, or a human mind thought. The strongest among us is utterly impotent for any good work; but the weakest among us is mighty, if he work with God. "Without me ye can do nothing," saith the Saviour. "I can do all things through Christ's strengthening me," said

his apostle. If we think to be efficient causes of good ourselves, we shall be disappointed. If we are willing to be instruments in the hands of God, we can accomplish any thing he pleases, for the power will be his, not ours. The weaker, then, we feel ourselves to be, the better for our success, if we try to do good; because God will put his strength in us, only as we put reliance upon our own strength out of us.

Besides, God loves to work by weakness, that his power may be the more clearly seen. What is more feeble than a rod? yet a little rod in the hand of Moses rolled up a sea before his people, and brought down its waves again upon the chivalry of Egypt. It was not the rod, nor was it Moses; but the Lord Jehovah, who moved the hand of Moses when the appointed rod was in it. The hosts of the Philistines were strong, and Goliath, in his armour of proof, was the strongest of the host; and yet a shepherd boy with a sling, and a few smooth stones from the brook, brought their champion to the dust, and scattered their thousands in death. But it was not the stripling David, nor his sling, nor the stone from the brook, but the Lord of hosts, who accomplished the victory. Do you desire to do good, my brother? Attempt it in the way God has appointed. But you are weak, poor,

have no influence, no talent, nothing? Be it so. All God asks is your heart, your faith in him, your endeavour. Give those to him, and he will take care of the rest. You shall be successful and get your wages for it.

We see from the text, that we are not to be discouraged, because the sphere, or the manner in which we are called to labour, is a humble one.

We do not choose our lot; God assigns it; but he does expect that we will endeavour to do our duty in it, whatever it may be. God made Paul a master builder, and set him to laying the foundation of the church. He did not give Apollos the same work, but the apparently inferior one of carrying on the building thus skilfully begun. Yet was Paul only successful? Was he only rewarded? No, says the apostle, "he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." There are diversities of operations, and so there are needed different workers; but there is one grand result; and each faithful workman contributes to that result, and shall rejoice in seeing the work of the Lord prosper in his hands. Christ compares the church to a body, of which he is the Head. He sees for us the way in which we shall go and act; he speaks for us to the Father, and hears his words of counsel,

promise and command; he thinks for us, and directs our movement and exertion. All must begin and proceed from him. But then, as the apostle tells us, borrowing the fable of a Latin historian, the body has hands and feet. Each member has its office, and the healthfulness and efficiency of the body must be found in the due exercise of all. "Shall the hand say to the foot I have no need of thee?" or the foot refuse to carry the hand to its work? So, our stations in the church are different; but our care should be, to do our duty, not to get higher places. If we only do good for the honour's sake, where is our duty to God? If we be willing to do our duty to God, we should be willing to do it where he bids us. Each in his place may contribute to the main success, and each shall share in the reward. Who is there among us, that has not an opportunity to do something? We may not all be preachers; we may not all be rich; we may not all be people of worldly influence; but we ought all to be Christ's followers, God's servants, and the friends of our fellow-men. I had rather have been that poor woman, who "did what she could" in anointing the Master for his burial, than Iscariot, who quarrelled with her expensive courtesy, though he then ranked among the apostles. The two humble Marys, who stood by the

cross, and afterward went with their spices in the dark, damp morning to embalm the Saviour's body, had a vision of angels, and one of them the risen Lord's first words, instead of the eleven who fled and deserted the Man of sorrows. Ah! my friends, never repine at being called to work in a humble sphere. It is honour enough to serve Christ, and (oh! excellent above all honours) to be labourers together with God. God has a use for high hills, and he raises them; but the highest are the most barren and the coldest. The lowly vale is secluded, but it is fat and fertile. There the water-courses flow sweetly and freshly; the trees on their banks are strong and flourishing, and the lilies abound in the thick, green grass. God has declared himself to dwell in two places: the highest throne in the highest heaven is one; the humble heart, that trembleth at his word, is the other. (Isaiah lvii. 15.) Let each of us pray: Father in heaven, make my heart humble, that thou mayest dwell with me on earth, until thou takest me to dwell with thee in heaven.

One thought more: The faithful labourer must not despair of his reward, because he does not see his success now.

Every man shall receive the reward but of his own labour (not of his own success). His reward

shall be according to his zeal and industry. This truth flows from those we have been examining. For no man's success is his own. The success is God's. He gives the increase, and his is the glory of it. Our part is the doing of our duty. We do not deserve any reward for that; because, having done all, we are unprofitable servants. But God, for Christ's sake, is pleased to promise us a reward in seeing the glory of God; and of this, if we be faithful, we are sure not to be disappointed. It is only they who labour for their own glory, who shall reap the wind. Where is our faith, if we can only work while we see ourselves successful? That is only sight, with which the Christian has nothing to do. It should stir us up to anxious labour if we do not see good done, but it is no reason why we should give up labour in despair.

Besides, the labours of believers are so intermingled, that it is impossible to tell who is the properly successful one. Indeed, success does not belong to the solitary. The spinner of the flax does not despair, because she only forms thread. Another must lay the warp and ply the loom, before the cloth can be perfected. Yet the thread must be spun first. Who makes the cloth? The spinner or the weaver? Both. Just so it is in the church of God. Had Abraham and the prophets

no part in bringing about the kingdom of God, because they entered their rest and their labours followed them, long before the fulness of time? Had Eunice and Lois, who taught Timothy the Scriptures, when a little child at the knee, no share in the success of his ministry? Will the martyrs, who sowed the seed of the church in their blood, have no part in the final harvest? The mighty reformers, who battered down the walls of tyrant error about the ears of wicked priests; the studious scholars, who translated the Scriptures into the common tongue; the contemplative theologians, who like busy bees stored, in past centuries, the hives of the church with honey, upon which we now feed, and in the strength of which we now work, the Flavels, the Howes, the Baxters, the Barrows, the Leightons; have they no share in the glorious revivals, and the missionary zeal of the nineteenth century? Nay, my brethren, we do not doubt this. So it may be with us. One may plant, another may water, and one before them both may have broken up the fallow ground, and yet another may reap the harvest; but is the success only his who fills his bosom with the sheaves? The pious parent, who teaches her lisping babe; they, who sit unweariedly, Sabbath after Sabbath, like Charity in Raphael's picture, with their Sunday

school children around them; the conscientious instructer, who seeks to infuse wisdom from above with the maxims of daily life into the hearts of his charge; the tract distributer, who goes forth scattering leaves from the tree of life on the winds of God's providence; the bed-ridden saint, who can only pray and suffer and hope; all are contributing to the great work, as well as he, who bids the penitent welcome to the supper of the Lord, or the angel, who bears upward on rejoicing wings the immortal conqueror over death and sin.

We may not see immediate success. There is ordinarily some space between the seed time and the harvest. But the day is coming, when the work of the Lord shall be complete, and every faithful servant be recognised by his Master, and his labours follow him. He that soweth, and he that watereth, and he that reapeth shall rejoice together. They are all one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour; and oh! beloved Master, to see thee on thy throne, worshipped by the countless shining ones of thy love, redeemed from sin and sorrow and death; yes, to be one of those who shall sing Hosannas at thy feet, will be reward enough!

SERMON X.

LOVE OF HUMAN PRAISE, FATAL TO FAITH.

LOVE OF HUMAN PRAISE,

&c.

John v. 44. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

It is often a matter of astonishment, even to those who do not call themselves Christians, how the Jews who listened to our Lord's persuasive words, and saw his miraculous, merciful works, could have withheld their consent to doctrines so full of hope, adorned with a morality so pure, and confirmed by an example so perfect. "Vice," we are told by a common proverb,

> "is a monster of such horrid mien,
> That to be hated, needs but to be seen."

How then could He, "the perfection of moral beauty," who lived in constant benefactions, excite such rancorous malice in the bosoms of those he sought to save, that they pursued him to the last ignominy and torture of a felon's death? The astonishment

is increased when we see, that the chief actors in the horrid conspiracy, the leaders and agitators of the demoniac mob, were those best learned in prophecies, whose every page testified of the meek and lowly Lamb of God, and who claimed, by their very name of Pharisee, a peculiar consecration to virtue and religion. The common people, we are told, heard him gladly, until they were urged on by those whom they were accustomed to consider their teachers and examples.

But the Saviour has given frequent solutions of this seeming mystery; and taught us, that the crime of the Jews is the crime of human nature, and that, when the truth of the Gospel is pressed home upon the conscience, the cry, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!" has an echo in every unconverted heart. There are impossibilities in morals as great as any in physics. We "cannot serve God and mammon;" and "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." The heart cannot be a divided empire, and it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." So long as our highest affection, the affection which rules the motives and the life, be not fixed upon God, and we seek our happiness elsewhere than in his good service, there will be an unwillingness to consider the truth of his law and his Gospel,

fatal to faith. It is not the lack of evidence, but the absence of a heart seriously to inquire and candidly to weigh the evidence, which prevents men from being honest Christians and makes them practical skeptics. Were a man heartily willing to live only for God, zealous in his efforts to keep himself in an entire virtue, and ardently desirous to reach a state of being where he could live in the Divine Presence without spot and offence, he would at once clasp the Gospel to his bosom with a delighted confidence, because he would see in it an adaptedness to the wants of his heart, which only God could give and apply; and would at once pronounce it a scheme as worthy of the holiness of God, as it is necessary and elevating to the soul of his creature. But he, whose pride will brook no such subjection, who is conscious of no such pure desire, and looks no higher than earth, and no farther than time, for his happiness and his hope, will deafen his ears, if he can, against arguments which rebuke his selfishness and pronounce his doom; or, if he be forced to listen, will hear with a biassed judgment and offended spirit. From the fall to this day, from Adam, who hid himself from the face of the Lord God among the trees of the Garden, to the unbeliever who listens with a careless heart to this sermon, "Every

one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved;" and "this is the condemnation" of us all, until we become children of God in Jesus Christ, "that light," the light of truth, the light of holiness, the light of mercy, the light of virtuous hope, "has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Hence the necessity of that entire change of the heart, which the Scriptures call a new birth, the acquiring of a new nature, before we can enter by faith into the kingdom of God.

One form of this evil influence so fatal to faith, our Saviour describes in our holy text. The Pharisees were enraged against him for the strange crime of healing a poor paralytic on the Sabbath day; but their rage rose to madness, when he declared that he was working his Father's will with the power of God. They were ready to put him to death because he proved that he was the Son of God by an act of miraculous mercy, which nothing less than divine power could have performed. So true is it, that when men are determined to find fault, they never lack a pretext; and that there are none so skeptical of goodness as those who are hypocritical boasters of their own morality. Our Saviour flings back the charge in their false faces.

He shows them, that, if they truly believed in God, they could never doubt such mercy and such power. Then, as with a two-edged sword, he pierces to the malice rankling in their bosoms, and says, "I know ye, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name," with the manifest proofs of my Father's approbation, "and ye receive me not. If another come, in his own name," one, like yourselves, pleasing your pride with a less holy doctrine, "him ye will receive.

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

The doctrine is plain. No man can believe in Christ, who, for the sake of praise from men, neglects to secure the approbation of his God.

Let me guard the proposition from being misunderstood. The Master does not mean to say, that a Christian may take no pains to have a good character in the world. On the contrary, in another place, he calls his true disciples, "lights of the world," bidding them "let their light so shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven;" and Paul commands in his Lord's name, that we "let not our good be evil spoken of," and "avoid the very appearance of evil." Christian character

has taken the place of natural miracles in proving the moral power of religion. The Christian should guard his character as not his own, but the testimony and property of Jesus Christ; and foul guilt rests upon those who, from envy, or malice, or idle tattling, mar the fair fame, and so hinder the usefulness, of any child of God. They become one with the devil in the loathsome office of accusing the brethren and the saints of the Most High. Our Saviour here means to say, that the approbation of God should be our first care; and the praise of men sought only while obedient to his will. Though all the world should hiss and scoff, we are to hold fast our integrity in the sight of Him, who knoweth the heart and meteth out unfailing justice.

We cannot believe, if we seek the praise of men rather than of God, because,

First: In so doing we forget God.

The first idea of religion and the fundamental article of belief, is the existence of God; but to be practical, it must carry with it a sense of responsibility. We might as well have no God, so far as morals are concerned, if he take no note of our conduct, and award neither punishment nor reward. The character of God is revealed to us in his word and his works, especially in the word and

work of redemption, that we may intelligently adore him, and, knowing what he is, know what he would have us to be. Thus we find the chief source of exalted piety, in all ages, to be a living sense of the Divine Presence. "Enoch walked with God." Abraham was "the Friend of God." Joseph dared not do evil "and sin against God." Moses endured "as seeing Him who is invisible." David, in his better hours, "set the Lord ever before him;" and the apostle Peter applies the same rule of life to David's Lord. Paul exhorts, that "Christ should dwell in our hearts by faith;" and another apostle, that "we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts." The effect of this is three-fold: the thought of God's terrible majesty awes us into constant submission; the contemplation of the divine character fills the soul with images of holy beauty and truth; the remembrance of divine goodness and mercy awakens us to gratitude and love.

All this restraining, transforming, and elevating influence ceases, when the idea of God is absent from the mind. We become for the time practical atheists, setting up idols before us, and at heart putting our trust in creatures to the dishonour of the Creator. How true is this of us, when we seek the praise of men? The eye cannot be fixed at once upon them and on heaven. We cannot watch

their faces to read their favour or dislike, and at the same time regard the face of our heavenly Father. We study their characters that we may flatter their weak pretensions, and low, contaminating images displace the perfect idea of divine purity. We consult their opinions that we may seem to accord with them, and the dark but ever-shifting shades of human error obscure the holy rectitude of divine law. We dread their censure or court their smiles, and the false tribunal of worldly opinion rises between us and the eternal judgment. We dare not pray for heavenly guidance, lest we should be astray from the path of preferment, and bring upon us the sneer of knaves or the laugh of fools. We live for our own honour, not the glory of Him who made us, and invites us to himself. With such cares, such hopes, such aims, how can we believe in Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world? How can we hold fellowship with him, "the despised and rejected of men?" How can we share his spirit who was "meek and lowly in heart?" How can we live like him, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?" How can it be our meat and drink to do the will of our Father? How can we make life a pilgrimage to the rewards of heaven, and hope to share the

glory of that noble throng, who, out of great tribulation for the sake of Christ, rose upon angels' wings, to wear the crown of victory over temptation? Nay, my brethren, faith is a victory over the world, and has no kindred with that mean ambition, which can stoop from the hopes of immortal life, to win the honours of this.

Secondly: The praise of men is rarely won except by practices adverse to the law of God, which is the rule of a believer's life.

I say, rarely. There are occasions, when the public necessity manifestly requires some noble and generous spirit to rise above the petty suggestions of private interest; when the people feel, that nothing less than the divinity of virtue can save them, and the same sense of danger, which makes a drowning blasphemer pray, bids them call upon the servants of God. Then, when true virtue comes forth from her modest retreat, to cheer their sinking hopes and restore their perilled safety, will the acclamations of the multitude be long and loud. But the moment the danger has passed by, the good man is forgotten in the flatteries of the demagogue, and perchance hissed away from the station, that makes the reproach of his virtue too conspicuous, and the restraint of his example too strong. The just man

is banished, because he is so just; and they are glad that Cincinnatus has gone back to his plough.

Ordinarily, the world insists upon our conformity to them as the price of their favours. They set their affections upon earthly objects, and, however false their hopes of happiness may be from them, they frame an ingenious sophistry, and construct plausible maxims to confirm the errors of their hearts. Wo to him then who interferes with their plans, and attempts to dissipate their delusions! Yet, notwithstanding all, they would fain have the name of propriety, and, if possible, of religion. They "call evil good, and good evil." Wide-spreading dishonesties, in which many are parties, are denominated necessities of business; bloody revenge and bullying bravado is called honour; compromises of principle, praiseworthy sacrifices of private opinion; idle frivolities, rational amusement; relaxation of religious morals, liberal charity to human weaknesses. While, on the other hand, stern integrity and cautious honesty is smiled at as behind the age; meekness or forbearance is cowardice; steadfastness, bigotry; piety, cant and hypocrisy; self-denial, superstition; and rebuke of crime, pragmatical censoriousness. Each flatters and cajoles his neighbour, and is flattered and ca-

joled in turn. They draw a circle around them, over which no adverse principle is allowed to pass. Religion may do very well in church on a Sunday, but what business has it in the ball-room or the festival? Decency must be observed in common conversation, but it is beyond all usage to expect it on the stage. The love of our neighbour as ourselves, and doing to others as we would have them do to us, was surely never meant to forbid a sharp bargain or a usurious profit out of a neighbour's difficulties. Charity owes her dollar to the plate, or a sixpence to the beggar, pays the debt with complacency, and looks around for applause.

Can it then be expected, that when faith comes into such a sphere, bidding men prepare to meet their God, pointing to a stern judgment, a near eternity, a holy heaven, and a deserved hell, that she will be welcome? Can it be, that stern truth, when it tears off the mask from dissembling self, and shows vice her painted mien in the clear mirror of God's word, will meet with applauses? Can it be, that Christian consistency, with the cross on her breast, her eye on heaven, her garments girded with God's love, and her feet sandaled with the preparation of peace, will put to shame the gauds of fashion, and the pomps of pretending artifice, and rouse no angry reproaches?

—Crucified Jesus, tortured apostles, martyred prophets, reviled confessors, when did ye find that friendship with God was friendship with the world? Many, who find it fashionable to praise your distant virtue, and to adorn your shrines, would, if ye were again among us, erect your cross, heap the faggots around your stake, and fire the pile.—The cross is yet the tree of reproach, and he, who would by faith share in the atonement of his Master's death, must expect to share its shame. So certain is this, that Jesus has left the record, "Blessed are ye when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." The reproach of the world is the baptism of Jesus, the badge of the apostle, and the budding honour of the saint. He who walks with the world must walk the broad way, for but few are found in the narrow path of life. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, the world hateth you." "Be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and holy will of God." How, then, can those believe, who love the praise of men rather than that of God?

Thirdly: The praise of men prevents that sense

of sin and unworthiness, which prepares us to believe in the Saviour of sinners.

Thus the more successful we are in winning the praise of the world, the greater are the hindrances of our faith. It is not until the law of God has applied its test to our hearts, that all the corruption of our nature is made to appear, and we feel the need of the Great Physician; nor, until the displeasure and wrath of God is made certain to our apprehension, that we will escape for refuge to the hope set before us. The heart is deceitful enough of itself, and we are but too loath at any time to judge ourselves strictly, and too willing to award ourselves praise, or frame self-excuses. It is only in honest solitude, when the presence of God is felt, and the word of life is burning before us, that we can at all see ourselves as we ought. The excitement of public engagements ever produces a moral delirium, and sways the mental balance; therefore it is, that the guilty hate to be alone, and the truly pious love to wash the wings of their spirit in the deep recess where the waters of life flow clearly, and reveal to them the stains they are ready to wash away.

But, when the flatteries of our own hearts are more than confirmed by an acclaiming crowd; when our misgivings of our virtue are drowned in

general approbation; when many friends crowd around us to keep the voice of rebuke from our ear; when they hurry us from scene to scene of gratified vanity; when even our solitude is broken in upon by distant echoes of our good report, and recollections of our triumphs, then it is that the tempter, the prince of this world, whispers most eloquently: "Ye shall not surely die. It cannot be that you, whom the world calls so good, so virtuous, so amiable, can be so stained with crime, that nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash it away. It cannot be that the head, thought worthy of so many honours in life, will sink beneath the flood of everlasting shame and contempt in the world to come." Then it is that the sinner hopes to pluck the forbidden fruit without punishment, and be a very God unto himself. Then we are prone to thrust aside religion as needful only to the poor, the outcast, and the criminal; but as unnecessary to the dignity of our position, the refinement of our manners, and the range of our intellects. How can the idol of the world consent to doff the robes of pride to put on the sackcloth of repentance? or leave the circle of admiring friends to kneel around the same cross with publicans and sinners? How can such weights of pleasing preferment be laid aside to pass through the strait

gate, and run, with patience, the race along the narrow and thorny way that leadeth unto life? How can he remember, that he is but a pilgrim to whom life should be as a desert, and transfer his affections to the better world, where all honour is God's gift, and honour granted only to him who has taken up the cross and followed Jesus? How hardly can he enter the kingdom of God? How can he believe, who has sought and won the praise of men? What a pitch of courage, far beyond mortal reach, to rise above all these evils and lay hold on spiritual life? Great God! with thy help it is possible; but with man it is impossible! O try us not with the praise of men, except thou be near us, Son of the highest, in the midst of the fire!

My hearers, forget not that you are in a world of delusions, where the evil one walks often like an angel of light; where the prince of the power of the air amuses and deludes with strange but fascinating phantasies; where tinsel glitters like pure gold, and the mists of earth seem like substantial things. O remember, that there is nothing true but God and his Christ, the word of his will, and the retributions of eternity! There is a world, and we are all rapidly approaching it, to which death will ravish us, having stripped us first of all we have acquired here, even of these bodies we have loved

to adorn and indulge. Alone, each of us must stand before the searching eye of the Pure and Holy. Then neither wealth, nor fame, nor honours, can avail us. Then the servant of the world shall look in vain for the help of his master. Then nothing can save, but a faith in Christ begun in life, and held firmly unto the last agony. Then shall He be ashamed of those who were ashamed of him, and His word, "Depart ye cursed," send away to shame and everlasting contempt, all who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Professors of Christ! do our feet stand sure? Are our garments unspotted from the world? Are we ready, having shaken its dust from our feet, to enter into the immediate presence of the Holy One? Alas! Alas! Does not the love of human praise mingle too freely with our best services? Does not its approval sometimes make our charities, our labours, sweeter than the blessing of God? Does not its sneer sometimes fright us from honest duty? Does not its blandishment often lead us into forbidden paths? Remember, remember, that the more we love the world, the less we have of a true faith, the less assurance of eternal joy. The more the world applauds, the greater is our peril. O then, let us keep the love of God in our hearts, our eye upon heaven! Let us meditate on our Saviour's cross.

and our Saviour's crown. Let prayer keep the Holy Ghost always near us, and a sense of danger and weakness make us cling to his almighty arm.

My hearers, let not your hearts deceive you. You cannot choose the world and God both. You cannot seek with the same heart honour from the world and honour from him. You cannot have your treasure in heaven and your hearts here. You must make your choice. Take the world and eternal death; or take Christ and eternal life. Never, never will ye believe, never can ye believe, until, postponing all else, you "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

SERMON XI.

THE DIGNITY OF SERVING.

THE DIGNITY OF SERVING.

MARK x. 44. Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

A DESIRE of honour and advancement is natural to man. His expansive powers suggest it, and the divine word gives it an indubitable sanction. God proposed such rewards for obedience in Eden, and the promises of the Gospel renew the motive. The crown, which man lost by the fall of Adam, is more than restored to the believer, by the coronation of Jesus, the second Adam, with glory and honour. (Heb. ii. 6–9.) All, who share in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ on earth, shall be kings and priests unto God in heaven; their robes shall have an excelling lustre, and their distinction be peculiar as those whom the King of kings delighteth to honour. Even among the redeemed there will be gradations of rank; for the martyrs shall stand nearest the throne, the wise shall shine as

the brightness of the firmament, but they that turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel xii. 3.) Christianity, so far from forbidding ambition and a love of praise, uses them as strong helps and incentives to virtue. It is only when wrongly aimed, that these powerful passions are sinful and hurtful.

But the departure of the human heart from God, is plainly seen in the false notion men have of greatness. Those are thought to be great, who are able to command or purchase the service of many others, and honourable titles are freely awarded to them by a selfish world; while those whose necessities force them to serve, are looked down upon as inferior, if not as degraded. Hence, a lust of power, in some form or other, is so general, that no one is supposed to be free from it. The scholar, in toiling for fame, really seeks the influence which fame secures; and wealth would not be reckoned worth the cost of earning it, if it were not the price of a similar elevation. The kindness of charity, the generosity of public spirit, and (there is too much reason to fear,) the purity of religion, are often counterfeited for the same end. A Cæsar or Napoleon differs only in extent of theatre, from the rustic, who aspires to be "the best wrestler on the village green;" and the poli-

tician, who intrigues for office, is but a slight remove from the silly struggler after fashionable notoriety. It is not to be denied, that this disposition to self-aggrandizement, though the fruitful cause of civil discords, bloody wars, political corruptions, bitter envyings and private feuds, has prompted many deeds, ostensibly noble, and really useful; but the Scripture condemns it, as at utter variance with godliness, because, the true standard of excellence being the will of God, our ambition should be to gain his approval, and our honour sought in the advancement of his glory. Thus our Lord demanded of the Pharisees, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" (John v. 44.)

This pernicious leaven was early at work among the little band of our Lord's nearest disciples. In the connexion of our text, the evangelist tells us, that James and John asked of the Master to have places, the one on his right hand, the other on his left, in his glory; and it was at once to condemn, emphatically, a lust for ecclesiastical preferment, which has since wrought such wide-spread mischiefs, as grossly inconsistent with the lowly benevolence of his Gospel; and to declare attempts at lordships over his heritage, treasonable against

the rights of his kingdom, that he gave them the answer: "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The same lesson was given by him, the evangelist Luke informs us, at the Last Supper, when there arose a strife among them which should be accounted the greatest. "The kings of the Gentiles," said he, "exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors (the title of the Ptolemies, as some modern monarchs are called "most gracious," "most clement," "most serene"); but ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve. . . . . I am among you as he that serveth." (xxii. 24–27.)

The proposition before us, therefore, is that

DIGNITY LIES IN SERVING.

"Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all;" or rather, "Whosoever among you *would* be chiefest, *let him be* the servant of all." In other words: He, who serves most faithfully his fellow-men, from the fear and love of God, shall be most honourable in His sight.

The truth of this will be made clear by several considerations.

First: It is according to the economy of nature.

It would be an impeachment of the Divine wisdom and power, to suppose that God has made any thing in vain. The slightest study of his works should convince us, that usefulness is the Creator's great design. That this usefulness may not, in all cases be seen by us, proves only the weakness of our perceptions; and what seems immediately hurtful, such as disease or suffering, is manifestly only a modification of the original system, because of some subsequent circumstances, declared in Scripture to be violations of fundamental laws by the free, intelligent creature.

Every fresh investigation of science, confirms and illustrates this doctrine. However we may, for the sake of convenience, distinguish several kingdoms in nature, there is in reality but one. The laws of all are radically the same. They are mutually dependent upon and contributive to each other. Each has its relative offices, and all unite for one grand result. Nature is every where busy, in the air, the sea, the soil, the mine, the animal frame. Labour is the irresistible law; inactivity a violation of it, that cannot occur. Labour is necessary to production; what seems to be rest, is a

recuperative force repairing the faculties of labour; and, instant upon stagnation, is the energy of corruption directed to future utility. We estimate the value of a thing by its usefulness. No one gathers thistle-down, or ploughs barren sands. Gold and silver, and gems, are called precious, because, added to their great utility in the arts, they have a real value as convenient representatives of things really useful, which they ordinarily will purchase. True wealth consists of commodities, things necessary or contributive to comfort; an assertion of political economy which no one would doubt who should find himself in a burning desert, without food, or water, or shelter, though surrounded by all the glitter of an Indian treasury. The sun we are accustomed to regard as the most noble of God's physical creatures, because his influences are the most extensive and salutary.

Nor is the pleasing variety of form, and hue, and sound, and taste, and odour, an exception to the rule; for, besides the delight it yields to the senses (a sufficient reason for the kindness of God), it is most useful to distinguish between various objects, and incite us to employ them according to their ends. What confusion would ensue, if all substances had the same colour, the same shape, the same flavour, the same tone? How should we know

the beloved from strangers, the nourishing from the pernicious, the thing we need from the things we need not? Experience has demonstrated a close relation between the graceful and the useful. The stream wanders widely in gentle ever-varying curves, that it may more widely diffuse its genial influences, or offer its flowing bosom to the assistance of man. The abounding verdure is a refreshment to the eye which it charms, and light (beautiful, most beautiful light!) pours out itself to bless, to gladden, and to heal. The aroma of plants sweeten an atmosphere that else were noisome, while the vulture scents from afar the decay it is his mission to remove. There is not a vibration of the air to a voice of nature, but makes part of a profound harmony, arranged by infinite skill, if we use it aright, to cheer the heart, refine the mind, and uplift the soul in aspirations of praise to that world, where a chorus, whom no man can number, strike the harp and swell the voice with diapasons full, unceasing, and of perfect joy.

Is man, because endowed with reason and will, exempt from the general law? Has he been made for himself alone? Is he more than God to receive from all, and to give nothing?

The circumstances in which we find ourselves deny it. Who can be happy alone? What is so-

ciety but an interchange of reciprocal benefits? What are laws but regulations to restrain us from violating this grand law of mutual dependence? What makes friendship, and the dearer ties which bind human hearts together, so precious, but this necessity of interchanging kindnesses? Which then should be put highest in the scale, the man, who draws in upon his stagnant self, means of a wide usefulness, to be converted into foul elements of pride and luxury; or he, who, like a fountain opened by the voice of God, sheds streams of usefulness to fertilize the world with happiness? Who but the useful is the most honourable? Even heathen wisdom knew this, for their ablest moralist taught that none were such pests to society, as those who sought for the honourable elsewhere than in the useful. "Whoso would be greatest among you, let him serve."

This leads to a SECOND consideration;

It is according to the best judgment of mankind.

By the best judgment of mankind, we do not mean the opinion they form of their own present conduct or that of their contemporaries, which is likely to be biassed by self, distorted by envy, and dazzled by glitter; but that which we hold when the delusive circumstances have passed away, or which posterity pronounces after time has applied

its searching test. Which awakens the warmest glow of admiration, the memory of the powerful, or the memory of the good? The memory of Socrates, or the memory of Alexander? Do we not all feel that the greatest triumph of the Macedonian, like that of Scipio, was in the hour when he subdued a luxurious passion to the dictates of a chaste clemency? If there be a memorial, which diminishes our contempt for the utter selfishness of him, who waded to power through the blood of Europe, offering ten thousand hecatombs of human victims to his gigantic vanity, and, among them, the fondest, most trusting heart that ever beat for a husband's honour; it will be found along those roads which levelled the Alps to the foot of the humblest wayfarer, and lead him, when bewildered or storm-beaten, to safe refuges among the perpetual snows. What gives such pure and steady lustre to the character of him, whom we love to call the Father of our country, but the admirable concentration and devotion of all his powers to mighty usefulness? What is it we delight most to recall of our friends who are dead? Is it, that they fared sumptuously, kept gay equipages, or indulged themselves in easy luxury? Do we not rather search for every instance of their goodness, their charity, or their usefulness? What record is it that we

write upon their tombs? No matter how rich or powerful they may have been, or what titles of rank they may have won, if we cannot speak of some kindly sympathy for their fellow-men, how cold and vain does the inscription seem? In our sober judgment we recognise the principle of the text as true, and reason unites with revelation when it says, "Whosoever would be chiefest, let him be the servant of all."

We pass to a THIRD consideration, immeasurably stronger:

It is according to the perfection of God himself.

"God is love," says the apostle. The nature of love is diffusive, and it is the glory of the Divine Being to diffuse himself. Creation is the diffusion of his power, his wisdom, and his goodness. Providence is the constant exercise of those attributes, which constitute the character of God. Intelligence in all its varied orders is the production of his will; and those laws, which define the way of life, with their awful sanctions to warn us from danger and persuade us to happiness, are evidences of his loving care which would make us like to Himself, that we might receive the blessings of his children. They are the rivers of his pleasures, flowing forth from Him the ever blessed Fountain, that the spirit of the obedient may partake and be

satisfied. This universal care and bountiful kindness give to God that glory, which makes him the object of our adoration and trust. In its sense of inferiority, service cannot be predicated of God; but in its sense of usefulness, God is, emphatically, the servant of all. He thinks for all and works for all. It does not sink, but exalt him, to provide for the wants of every thing that liveth. The insect, which lives its little hour, and finds the food for its brief life prepared by the hand of its Creator, shows his greatness more than the vastest of his inanimate creatures. Before his omniscience we may wonder, before his omnipotence we may tremble; but when we contemplate his goodness, and feel around us and beneath us his upholding arms, we love and trust Him. If to be like God, the source of all glory and the distributer of all honours, be glorious and honourable; who so like him, as the man that lives only to diffuse himself in works of usefulness, setting no limits to his beneficence, but those which God has set to his ability? Who so unlike him, as the man that lives only for himself, and prides himself upon making others contribute to his ease, luxury or importance? How can the service of our fellow-creatures be otherwise than most honourable, when God makes it his glory to do good to the meanest of us all?

This is especially shown in the plan of redemption. Though we had forfeited all claim upon the goodness of God, and his justice made our condemnation necessary, what wisdom, power and mercy he has displayed in providing a method by which our salvation may be consistent with his law? It was his thought from eternity, and, in the fulness of time, he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for lost sinners, to take away their humiliation by his own, to work out their righteousness, and endure their punishment, that he might open for them a new and living way to the throne of their reconciled Judge and Father. His almighty Spirit is sent to renew our fallen souls, and to become a suppliant with us, that we should accept the gift of life; and, throughout eternity, the same power and grace will be employed in rewarding and glorifying all penitent souls with heavenly bliss.

"O why should heavenly God for men have such regard;"

if it be not an honour worthy of God to do good? It is true that the Gospel glorifies God more than all his other works; but the glory is in the good accomplished for sinners. How can we approach his character more nearly than in spreading that Gospel, and working together with him for the

present and eternal good of our race? "Whoso would be chiefest, let him be the servant of all."

Fourthly: It is according to the example of Jesus Christ.

"For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He was on earth as one that did "serve."

Christ is the revelation of God in mercy; but he is also the pattern of man in perfection. He came to accomplish our redemption by his death, but also to direct us in a return to holiness by his life. He was God in man, that we might learn from him how man can be like God. What was his example? He brought all the resources of his Godhead, and all the offices of his Sonship, to bear upon his great work of doing good to man. Were his riches honourable? "He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." Was his power honourable? He became mighty to save. Was his wisdom honourable? He takes "of the things of the Father, and shows them unto us." The Holy Ghost has summed up his matchless character in few but strong words: "Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good." For human rank and honours, he cared nothing, but took his lot among the lowliest of men, and found his constant occupation in ministering to every want of all that ap-

proached him. He rebuked with stern boldness, the exclusiveness of the pharisee, and the oppression of the powerful, but his mercy went freely forth, from lips and hands, and even the hem of his garment, to every sinful sufferer that knelt at his feet. None so wretched or so despised, but he was ready to serve them with his almighty grace. He was the servant of all. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Oh! what contempt does the life of Jesus pour upon those, who pride themselves upon a useless wealth, and covet empty honours, while they look down with scornful neglect upon the poor, the stranger, and the ignorant, that need their help! If Jesus Christ be their Judge, everlasting shame must be their portion in that honest world, when the cloakings of hypocrisy shall be torn from every soul, which has pretended to dignity, yet practised no goodness. They can have no place among the angels, who are all ministering spirits to the objects of divine mercy; nor among the glorified saints, who followed Jesus, and whose works do follow them within the presence of their Father. They must depart from the holy and the good, to find a miserable companionship in suffering with the wicked and the vile; for those, who do no good, must share the punishment of those who do evil. If we would partake of Christ's

glory, we must partake of his work; and he was the servant of all. He took upon him the form of a servant, because the office of a servant was the most honourable office of man. Less than the most noble station, the Son of God and the Son of Man could not choose. He found it in doing good. Therefore, because he humbled himself and became obedient until death, even the death of the cross, as a servant, for man's sake and the praise of his Father, God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, to prove by the most sublime example, that "Whosoever would be chiefest, must be the servant of all."

The doctrine of the text should remind us, that we are not our own, but belong to God, our Creator, and to Jesus Christ, our faithful Saviour.

God made us for his own glory, and Christ has redeemed us for a yet higher accomplishment of the same end. Our place is that of servants, by nature and by grace. God has given us faculties with which to serve, the Gospel calls us to our work, and, by our profession, we acknowledge the duty to be our privilege. The only question that remains, is, How are we to serve? and that is answered by our Saviour's word and life. He, who has an acknowledged right to all our services, commands us to serve our fellow-men, and shows how

highly he estimates the work, by serving them himself. All we are is his, all we have has been entrusted to us by him, as stewards for his honour. To withhold, to pervert to selfish uses, not to circulate widely that it may return with a rich interest of praise to our Lord, any faculty of serving our fellow-men in the best things, is unfaithfulness to him, which he will not fail to rebuke and punish.

It is not their claims upon us, but his, that we are to consider. By his love to us, our service to them is to be measured. Examine, therefore, your means of doing good, my fellow-servant. Number your days, and think how short a time you have to live. There is not a dollar, not an hour of them your own. They all belong to Christ; and he has assigned the trust for a specific purpose, the good of the world. Are you ready with your account? Could you say, if you were now before his judgment seat, There, Lord, thou hast thine own, carefully used and made profitable by a faithful industry.

We should be careful to judge ourselves by the rule, according to which God will judge us.

With him there is no respect of persons. The petty differences of rank, riches or wisdom that obtain here, are as nothing to that far height from which he looks down upon us; but every act of

goodness or of wrong done to his creatures, reaches him at once. The genius which dazzles, the position which awes, or the pretences which deceive human eyes so often, avail not to hide the heart from him. He looks only at the inward principle with the outward fruits; and the worldly advantages which here hide, palliate, excuse, or give impunity to crime, only increase his condemnation of the sinner. If the present judgment of society were like His, how changed the aspect of the world would be? How many, before whom we now uncap as to our most respectable and distinguished citizens, would be hissed in the pillory of public contempt? How many a wretch, whose very birth consigned him to associations with vice, would put to shame some to whom we give titles as honourable and excellent? Let me sketch an illustration.

—Here is a man, to whom God has given a powerful mind. Every door of knowledge has been open to him from his most early years. His fellow-citizens have sought the aid of his talents, and made him rich. They have raised him to office, and made him great. His manners are courteous, and fashion flatters him. He adds to all this the graceful decency of a well-bred religion, and the church solicits his championship. But his heart is cold. He has no fellow-feeling for man as man. He

grows in wealth, reputation and influence, only to congratulate himself upon his success. The god he worships, the world he serves, is his own self. On a Sunday morning he drives from church, and at the door of his broad mansion he is looked up to by a shivering outcast child, begging for a crumb from his table, scarcely daring to hope for a kind word from his lips. It is an orphan boy, who has no friend to tell him that there is a God or a path of virtue, and no shelter but among the vile. There may be within that squalid raggedness a mild, loving heart, a resolute courage, and a determined will, with a generous wish to upraise himself. But the man, who might, by the blessing of God, make him a useful, conscience-guided Christian, spurns him away without a farther thought. Years roll on, and that neglected little one grows up (how could it be otherwise?) a thief and a felon.

Now, tell me, which will stand fairest before God in that day, when he will reckon the omission to do good by those who had the knowledge and opportunity, as most aggravated iniquity? Which is most guilty of crime, the felon, or the selfish contemner of a young immortal soul? Far rather would I be that wretched child, with all the consequences of his untutored life, than the rich, powerful, world-honoured man, to whom God will say:

"I gave thee wealth, and talents, and influence, that thou mightest be the stay of the helpless, the light of the ignorant, and an example of goodness to the world; yet hast thou, wicked servant, wrapped it all about thy miserable self. Away with thee to a hotter flame than theirs whom I sent thee to save and thou didst not!"

We should vindicate the truth of the Gospel by an earnest cultivation of its spirit.

The power of Christianity to do good, is the most direct proof of its divinity. No conscience dares to reject the evidence of practical virtue. As was before asserted, men may be blinded by prejudices at the moment, and crucify goodness under perjured accusations of evil; but they cannot avoid yielding admiring respect to examples of self-sacrificing generosity or wide public spirit, when distance of time or place sufficiently abstracts them from the misrepresentations of envy, jealousy, or selfishness. The skeptics of our Lord's time denied his virtues, but acknowledged his miracles, though they attributed them to Satanic influence. The skeptics of our own time deny his miracles, but acknowledge his virtues. In fact, Christianity, notwithstanding their sneers, has become so common a synonym for goodness, that they consider it an affront of their character if we refuse them

the name of Christian; and, when a professed follower of Jesus stumbles in the narrow way, they make a greater cry about it, than if ten thousand infidels had broken, a thousand times over, every law of social well-being. What is this, but a testimony to the living power of Christian virtue?

Richly has our religion earned the unwilling tribute. What purposes, what achievements of good are comparable to hers? How has the love of Christians, emulating His who gave his life for the world, and commanded his Gospel to be preached wherever there is a human soul to hear it, after filling every closer circle of family and friendship, and neighbourhood and country, outspread to the utmost limits of humanity, in the grand ambition of missionary enterprise. Talk of civilization! Where can you find the elements of civilization, domestic purity, enlightened love of peace, and mutual deference to mutual rights, but where Christianity prevails? There have been many philosophical speculators about the origin of society and the social contract; but, excepting the bloody horrors in which French atheism attempted experiment of its hypothesis, what effect have they produced? Where has there been a single nation, in ancient or modern times, converted from barbarism by phi-

losophy? Forgetting this, they ridicule the church for attempting to Christianize the savage before civilizing him; and, while they have been theorizing, Christianity has gone forth and done the work. A few simple minded men went with no other instrument than the Bible, and no other skill than faith in the power of the Holy Ghost, and changed nations of licentious cannibals to decent, industrious, enlightened, because Christian, men. Even science has received accessions far beyond her own power to make, from the same unpretending and little regarded zeal. Never, at least since the Macedonian conqueror filled the cabinet of Aristotle, have richer contributions been made to the material of the naturalist and geographer, than by missionaries of the cross. The number of written and known languages has been trebled by the labours of those whose aim was not philological distinction, but the translation of the word of God into the varied tongues of their fellow sinners. Nor should it be forgotten, that when Great Britain and our own country, desired to open communications with the vast empire of China, neither could have found an interpreter among all their proud universities or learned societies; but each was served by the skill the missionary had acquired, far in advance of commercial enterprise or political ambition, as he

taught the Gospel of Jesus to those who sat in darkness.*

It is from no pride that we claim these triumphs for Christianity, but humble gratitude and devout justice to the Divine Founder of our religion, who thus assures our faith in the power of his religion, to make mankind one brotherhood, and

* These are no exaggerated statements; as may be seen by reference to the reports of the British and Foreign Bible Societies, and several learned associations. It is well known, that we would be almost wholly ignorant of the American Indian languages, but for the labours of missionaries. The missionaries of the Dutch, as early as the middle of the seventeenth century, had made translations into the tongues of their East India possessions. The pious triumvirate of Baptist missionaries at Serampore, Carey, Marchman and Ward, overcame the difficulties of more than thirty dialects of Hindusthan, in their versions of the Scriptures, in whole or in part. (Edin. Encyclopedia, article Language.) Their American brethren have since achieved a great triumph by mastering the singular Burman language, which is (or was, a few years since) actually taught to their students for the missionary life, in this country. The interpreter to the British Embassy in China, during their recent negotiations, was the son of the missionary Morrison, author of the Chinese Dictionary, and translator of the Bible; the interpreter to the American Embassy, at the same time, was our excellent medical missionary, the Rev. Dr. Parker; and yet more recently, Mr. S. Wells Williams, an American missionary printer to China, on a visit to Paris, has taken rank before the best Sinologists among the savans there. These are a very few among many instances, which might be cited, if this was the proper place; and they are given merely to justify the assertions made in the above text.

crown the united family with all wisdom from above.

Let it be, I say, our aim to live worthily, as examples of Christian spirit, in seeking our highest honour with God, from the largest service to our fellow men.

Let it be our art to use, as our first, best, only instrument of such philanthropic zeal, the simple Gospel, which is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation; and to rest satisfied with no scheme of benevolence or human improvement, which comes short of man's conversion to God, and sanctification for heaven. Jesus, our Master, was the servant of all, that he might be a great Saviour; and he who would be chiefest among his glorified ones, must be most like him in humble benefactions to the world.

SERMON XII.

VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

(AN EASTER SERMON.)

VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST,

&c.

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1 Cor. xv. 55—57. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sublimity of the text overpowers us. It is the exultation of an inspired apostle. How shall we, weak and imperfect Christians, dare to take words of such fearless joy upon our sinful lips?

My brethren, the apostle inspired of God speaks also as a sinner saved by grace. The truth which gives him all his courage, he preaches for our confidence. His conquering Champion in the fight with death and the grave, "was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." He exults as a Christian in God the Saviour; and he invites all, who receive the Gospel, to join in his triumphant faith when he exclaims,

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

It is, therefore, our privilege and our duty to make the words of the text our own. God strengthen us, by their holy teaching, to rejoice in the victory, and to utter the thanksgiving with our whole hearts!

The apostle has demonstrated the glorious resurrection of the just in Christ by an elaborate argument, and states his conclusion as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (xxv. 8), that the Lord "will swallow up death in victory, and will wipe away tears from off all faces." "So," says he (54), "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass this saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." His pious soul, with that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for," anticipates the full triumph, now made certain by the resurrection and ascension to glory of Christ the Saviour, the Life and Forerunner of his church. He remembers the promise of God by the prophet Hosea (xiii. 14), "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Grave, I will be thy destruction;" and in a burst of eloquent exultation he defies his former enemies; "O Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy victory!" Thou hadst a sting, O Death! "The

sting of death is sin;" and that sting was deadly: "The strength of sin is the law;" but now is thy sting plucked out and all its venom turned into life: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The natural division of the text, and that which we shall follow, is

THE Challenge and The Thanksgiving.

FIRST: THE CHALLENGE.

"O Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy victory!"

SECONDLY: THE THANKSGIVING.

"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Under the first head we shall consider the sting of death and the victory of the grave; under the second, the Christian's victory over them; which will include an explanation of the intermediate verse, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."

FIRST: THE CHALLENGE.

"O Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy victory!"

The apostle, following Hosea, and by a strong figure, challenges death and the grave separately, though strictly they are one. The victory of the grave is the consequence of the sting of death.

It is a bold challenge to demand of death, where is thy sting? and of the grave, where is thy victory?

Where is the sting of death?—Alas! and is it nothing to die? Nothing to be made sure that we must die? Is it nothing to leave this fair earth, the light of the cheerful sun, our pleasant homes, our loving friends, and to be buried and become as dust beneath the sod and under the shade of the gloomy cypresses? Is it nothing to close our senses forever upon all we have cherished, and sought, and hoped for, and prided ourselves in? Is it nothing to have the sad certainty before us at all times, in the midst of our best successes, that the hour is coming when the cold, narrow, ignominious grave, shall hide us from them all? That our plans, contrive them and pursue them as we may, of ambition, gain, knowledge, service to those who are dear, zeal for our country and the welfare of mankind, must be broken off, and the brain which projected, the hand which wrought, and the heart which beat strong, become still as the clod, and the luxury of worms? Is it nothing that every step of humanity, the first tottering effort of the growing child, the sportive spring of youth, the firm tread of adult vigour, and the halt of the old man leaning upon his staff, is to the same vile end? That every hour

of sleep or activity, pleasure or sorrow, thoughtfulness or gaiety, alike urges us irresistibly on? Is it nothing that the blood shall be chilled at its fountain, and the clammy sweat-drops start out upon the forehead, and the breath come slow and in agony, and the life, clinging desperately, be torn away and cast forth by fierce convulsion?

Has death no sting, when we hold the beloved, who make life precious and the world beautiful, by so frail, brief, melancholy a tenure? Has it no sting for the yearning bosom, from whose warm sanctuary the little one has been taken never again to nestle sweetly there at waking morn, or for the noon-tide sleep, or in the drowsy evening? Has it no sting in that "life-long pang a widowed spirit bears?" Has it no sting when the faces, which reflected our smiles and beamed back upon us tenderness and sympathy and faith, are so changed that we must send them away and bury them out of our sight? Or when we follow the good man, the just, the generous, the friend of the sorrowful and the stranger and the poor, the wise teacher of truth, the advocate of right, and the champion of the weak, to that bourne from which he will return to bless the world no more? No sting in death? Is there one among us such a miracle of uninterrupted

happiness, so insensible to others' grief, as not to have felt its keen and lingering sharpness?

Where is the victory of the grave?—Where is it not? Power cannot resist it. The kings of the earth lie in "the desolate places they built for themselves." Riches can purchase no allies skilful to avert the blow. The marble in its sculptured pomp acknowledges the struggle to have been vain. There is no discharge in this war for wisdom, or youth, or virtue, or strength. In the crowded burial place they lie together, smitten down by the same hand. Obscurity affords no refuge. The slave falls beside his master, and the beggar is slain by the way-side. Some may maintain the fight a little longer, but "the same event happeneth unto all."

Where is the victory of the grave? What conqueror is so mighty, when all conquerors fight in its battles, and then bow themselves to death with their victims? The track of its march is cumbered with the wreck of fairest symmetry, and beauty, and vigour. The entire generations of past ages are crumbled into dust; all the living are following in one vast funeral; all posterity shall follow us. Were all the cries of those who have perished by flood, or battle, or famine, or fire, or sickness, and the wails of the bereaved over their dead crowded

into one, the shriek would shake earth to the centre. Were all the corpses that are crumbling or have crumbled to dust, laid upon the surface as the slain upon a battle field, there would not be room for the living among the disfigured trophies of the conquering grave, which, with the world for its prison house, must consume its captives to make room for more. Where is the victory of the grave? The silence of the dead, the anguish of the surviving, the mortality of all that shall be born of mortals, confess it to be universal.

Yet, were there nothing besides this, the calamity would be light. A gloomy anticipation, a few tears, a sharp pang, and all would be over. We should sleep and dream not. We should forget and be forgotten. But there is more than this. Whence came death? Why must man, with his upward-bearing countenance, his vast affections, his far-reaching thought, the most fearfully made of all God's wonderful works, die? How came there to be graves in this decorated earth, which God looked down upon with smiles and pronounced very good? My fellow-children of the dust, God is angry with us. None but God could take the life God gave, or dissolve what God has made. God has armed Death with fatal strength, and sent him forth the executioner of a divine sentence, the avenger of a

broken law. The victory of the grave is the conquest of justice over rebellion. It is omnipotence putting to shame and eternal defeat the treason of man against his Maker. It is holiness consuming the sinner. Death is God's wrath, for his favour is life.

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Death had no sting for man and the grave no victory, till sin entered into the world; but now "death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The law of God, which condemns the sinner, gives Death power to seize and hold him fast, with all the strength of God's wrath against the guilty. Wherever there is sin, its wages are death. Wherever death is, there must be sin. (Yes! even in thy death, thou sinless, crucified Lamb of God, for thou didst bear the sins of thy people!) It is enough that we are mortal, to prove that we are sinners, and condemned already by Him who declares, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Does any one doubt this? Let him solve the question why God slays his creatures. There is no evading it. Man must be a sinner, or his Maker a tyrant.

Here is the sharpness of death's sting. It is the evidence and punishment of sin. It is the lowering darkness of the storm of wrath, which is eternal.

It is the hand of God tearing the sinner's shrieking spirit out of the world, and dragging him to judgment, thence to be cast down into pangs everlasting; while the grave holds the body in its unyielding grasp, till the Son of Man comes in the clouds to execute his final vengeance upon each guilty soul, and its guilty instrument, the polluted flesh. O my hearers, it is the bitterness of death, that pleasant as sins may be now, death will soon and surely come; and after death the judgment, when every sin shall find us out, and the sinner have no excuse nor plea nor refuge, from the flashing terrors of the inexorable law; and after the judgment eternal wo for all the condemned, and a prison-house whose doors allow no escape, where remorse preys upon the soul like a venomous worm that never dies, and the wrath of God burns in fire unquenchable. O my God, what a strange lethargy must that sinner be in, who feels not the sting of death, but sleeps stupidly on dreaming of lust, and gain, and pride, till death wakens him with eternal agony!

Here we see the apostle's boldness, the strength and valour of Christian faith; for, knowing that he must die, and the grave cover him, he stands up bravely, and flings his defiance in their faces:

"O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

To learn the secret of his courage, we must consider,

Secondly: The Thanksgiving.

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

This, with the preceding verse, answers three questions: Whence is the victory? How is it given us? In what does it consist?

1. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory!"

God gives death its sting, and the grave its victory. So long as God arms and strengthens them, it is impossible to resist them. They are God's ministers, and in their ministry omnipotent. God, therefore, alone can give us the victory, by becoming our friend. When he is our friend, his ministers, which were our enemies, must be our friends and servants. Thus the believer looks to God, and relies wholly upon him. If there be no help from God, there can be none. He hopes not to deserve, or earn, or work the victory for himself. It must be given him by an act of free grace, sovereign mercy, and redeeming love. But when God comes to his rescue, his deliverance is certain. Therefore he says, "Thanks be to God!"

2. How is the victory given? Will the sting remain with death? or strength with the grave? If

so, how will the believer conquer? Will God arm his enemies against him, and yet fight for him? Will omnipotence contend with omnipotence? or mercy deliver the sinner whom justice holds bound? Does sin cease to be guilty, or the law abate its force? Hear the apostle:

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Death is the penalty of sin, and, while the law condemns the sinner, he must remain captive to death and the grave. But our Lord Jesus Christ, by satisfying the law for his people, plucked out the sting of death, and ravished the victory from the grave.

For this the Son of God became incarnate, that as man, in the place of man the sinner, he might be capable of suffering the punishment of the law, which is death; while his indwelling divinity gave to those sufferings an infinite worth. As God, he had the power to dissolve the bonds of death; but as the Redeemer, by his infinite atonement he purchased the right to remit the penalty of the law, which passed death upon the sinner. He became man to suffer; he died that man might live. Thus the apostle expressly says, (Hebrews ii. 9,) that Jesus "was made a little (or, as some read, a little

while,) lower than the angels, for the suffering of death;" and again, (14, 15,) "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, (the tormentor of the damned sinner) and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." He stood forth in our stead, to answer all the demands of the law against us; and the Sovereign Lawgiver accepted the substitute, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Then, having for us honoured the law, by a life of perfect obedience and infinite merit, he came to the passion of death. On the cross, he invoked the death we deserved in its most cruel and shameful forms. He stood between the venomed monster and us, and into his heart Death struck his sting deep, so deep that he could not draw it forth again, and losing all his power to harm, hung gasping and dying with the dying Saviour, and died in slaying Christ. In plain words, he exhausted the penalty, and satisfied the law, and thus death lost all its strength to hurt those, who by faith are crucified with Christ.

More than this, he demonstrated his victory over the grave. For, though he was buried, and the stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre in the

rock, and sealed and guarded, and the grave and the powers of darkness struggled mightily to hold him fast, "it was not possible that he could be holden by them;" but, bursting the bars asunder, he dragged them forth, captivity captive, making an ostentation of his spoils, openly triumphing. Thus did God the Father own him as his Son, and acknowledge the penalty paid, the atonement complete. Thus did the Holy Spirit crown him Conqueror, and anoint him Prince of Life. Thus did he show himself, to the believing sight of his church, as their triumphant champion, JEHOVAH THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and their "Living Way" through death and the grave, to the glory on high.

But the full manifestation of his triumph and ours, is kept for that day, when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, shall proclaim his final coming to judgment; and all the dead, the countless dead, whose dust is scattered over earth, beneath the sea, and in the very air, shall start to life; his redeemed, glorious in beauty incorruptible, like his own glorified body, to shine with him, his brightest trophies, forever; and the wicked, who would not have him to reign over them, confounded and terrified by the terrible splendour of the once crucified Jesus, to hear the sentence of death whose mortal agonies are eternal, and be cast down to

shame unspeakable, horror, and fiery torment, whose smoke shall rise forever. Thus will our Lord vindicate his conquest over death and the grave, by compelling them to give freedom to the holy bodies of the redeemed; that, as Adam walked in Paradise, body and soul, a perfect man, they, in their entire humanity, may enter the second Paradise of their inheritance undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and by making them ministers of his just vengeance upon the souls and bodies of all the wicked.

3. Wherein does our victory, through the Lord Jesus Christ, consist?

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The believer triumphs in Christ's perfect atonement.

By faith he is born again with Christ, and as Christ became incarnate for him, so is Christ formed in him, the hope of glory. By faith he obeys in Christ, walks with Christ in his holy life, and through Christ honours the divine law, which before he had broken. By faith he is crucified with Christ: "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle (Gal ii. 20). Every drop of the bloody sweat, every pang of the lacerated flesh, every agony of the sinking spirit, in which Christ poured out

his soul unto death, went to pay his penalty, and discharge him from the grasp of death, the executioner of the law's vengeance. For him death has no more sting. Death remains. Its precursors, pain and sickness and infirmity, remain. But their mastery over him exists no longer. He knows that they are changed. The curse is changed to blessing, the enemies to friends. Pain and sickness and infirmity, are now God's faithful chastenings; not precursors of death, but of a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory; and death is no more death, but life, life eternal, life exalted and heavenly. The grave has no victory over him; for there he buries his sins, his sorrows, his misery, lusts and vileness. He leaves his body there to be purified against the final redemption, while his soul goes free to exult, where it can feel no shackle, nor warring law, nor foul temptation. Thus he bears affliction with patient hope, as he would take a medicine with the certainty of better health, or submit to surgery, that an inveterate plague may be eradicated; and he calmly awaits the coming of death to unbolt his prison door, knock off his fetters, and lead him forth into purer air and boundless delight. The sting of death lost its power, when his sin was pardoned; and death itself waits like a captive upon its Christian master.

The believer triumphs in Christ's resurrection.

"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," says the apostle (Galatians ii. 20). He was dead in trespasses and sins; but, as the apostle reasons in Ephesians (1st and 2d chapters), he is quickened together with Christ's body by the same Holy Spirit, to a new and better life. He has a divine life in him. He is a new man in Christ Jesus; not in body, for there are natural causes which render its dissolution necessary; but a new man in soul, strengthened to bear the burden and resist the evil lusts of the flesh. Eternal life is begun in him, faint indeed, as life in the new-born babe, but, more than the earnest, the very pulsations of immortality. For this is the office and power of Christ, to give *eternal* life to as many as receive him; and this is the privilege of the Christian, even on earth, to have his conversation in heaven. Death has lost its power to divide him from God. He soars upon the wings of faith far above and beyond the gloomy barrier, enters the company of the church of the First-born, and listens to the harpings of the innumerable angels. Is not this a victory over death and the grave?

The believer triumphs in the final resurrection.

Christ not only arose, but he ascended up on

high. There the body, which was here bent by sorrow, has been made glorious in divine beauty; and the countenance, here channelled by tears, buffeted and spit upon, is altogether lovely, the radiation of its smile the fairest light of heaven; and the crown of all power, might, and dominion, is bright in the splendour of many priceless jewels upon the brow scarred by the mocking thorns; and heaven rolls up its waves of hallelujahs to the feet, in which the prints of the nails perpetuate the memory of the cross; and the hands, yet manifesting the cruel malice of men, are stretched forth to bless the countless throngs, uttering praise to the name of Jesus, the Lamb that was slain.

As the Redeemer is glorified in his flesh, so shall the believer be raised up to glory at the last day. What then to him, whose faith can grasp things hoped for and unseen, are all the passing ignominies, and pangs and insults, which now afflict the follower of the Man of sorrows, the Lord of life and glory? Every revolution of the earth rolls on to that fulness of adoption, "when this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to pass this saying, Death is swallowed up in victory;" when these eyes, now so dim and soon to be closed in dust, shall behold the face of God in righteous-

ness; when these hands, now so weak and stained with sin, shall bear aloft the triumphant palm, and strike the golden harp that seraphs love to listen to; and these voices, now so harsh and tuneless, shall swell in harmony ineffable the song of Moses and the Lamb, responsive to the Trisagion, the thrice holy, of the angels. Yes, beloved Master, we see thee, "who wast made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour;" and thou hast promised that we shall share thy glory and thy crown!

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" "Us!" and who are included in that sublime and multitudinous plural? "Not to me only," says the apostle, "but to all them that love his appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 9). Ye shall share it, ancient believers, who from Adam to Christ, worshipped by figure, and under the shadow! Ye shall share it, ye prophets, who wondered at the mysterious promises of glory following suffering! Ye shall share it, ye mighty apostles, though ye doubted when ye heard of the broken tomb! ye, martyrs, whose howling enemies execrated you, as they slew you by sword, and cross, and famine, and rack, and the wild beast, and flame! and ye, God's humble poor, whom men despised, but of whom the world was

not worthy, God's angels are watching, as they watched the sepulchre in the garden, over your obscure graves, keeping your sacred dust, till the morning break, when it shall be crowned with princely splendour! Yes, thou weak one, who yet hast strength to embrace thy Master's cross! thou sorrowing one, whose tears fall like rain, but not without hope, over the grave of the beloved! thou tempted one, who, through much tribulation, art struggling on to the kingdom of God! Ye all shall be there, and ten thousand times ten thousand more! Hark! the trumpet! The earth groans and rocks herself as in travail! They rise, the sheeted dead; but how lustrously white are their garments! how dazzling their beautiful holiness! What a mighty host! They fill the air; they acclaim hallelujahs; the heavens burst with shouts of harmony, the Lord comes down, and his angels are about him, and he owns his chosen, and they rise to meet him, and they mingle with cherubim and seraphim, and the shoutings are like thunders from the throne, thunderings of joy:

"O Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Christian, death is before us. The graves are thick around us. There lie many dear, dearer

because they are dead. We must soon lie with them.

I do not say, Suffer not. Jesus suffered. Faith teaches no stoicism. But suffer like men valiant in battle, whose wounds, when they smart the most, are incentives to new courage, and earnests of future honour.

I do not say, Weep not. Jesus wept. But sorrow not for the Christian dead. They are safe and blest. Weep for the sins that unfit you to follow them.

I do not say, Shudder not at the thought of death. Jesus trembled when he took the cup into his hand dropping with bloody sweat. It is human nature to shrink from the grave. But I can say, Fear not. Now it is your duty to live. When death comes, you shall have grace to die. Look through the dark avenue. Think of the good who are awaiting you at home, in our Father's house; think of the precious ones for whom you weep, but who weep no more. Fear not to leave behind you the living, whom you have commended to Jesus; He will remember your trust. Be ready to go, where you shall not be unwelcome to your Father, your Saviour, and the family around the throne. There await the resurrection morning, when the family shall be complete, "no wanderer lost."

But oh! be sure that you are in Christ; that you are covered by his atonement; that you have indeed received the spirit of adoption, and have put on the whole armour of God. Then may you be sure of the victory.

But, O my God, what shall I say to those who have no faith in thee, no repentance, no consideration? They are going down to death and the grave; yet they live and laugh on, as though they were to live here forever! How shall I tell them of the sting of death! the victory of the grave! the sting of eternal death! the grave of everlasting fire! Speak thou to them, O Holy Spirit! O merciful Saviour! O Father, pitiful of thy children! Turn them, draw them, compel them, to come under the wings of thy pardoning love! Spare them from a hopeless death, an unsanctified grave, judgment without an advocate in Christ, and the bitter pains of body and soul in hell forever!

SERMON XIII.

ETERNAL DAY.

ETERNAL DAY.

Revelation xxii. 5. And there shall be no night there.

We are told that, when Moses went up, at the divine summons, to his memorable conference of forty days with Jehovah, he entered into the midst of the cloud of brightness, or visible glory of the Lord, which was like "devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Exodus xxiv. 16, 17). This shows, as an eminent Christian father observes,* that God cannot be looked upon nor described. The same is true of Heaven, where the effulgence of God himself sheds an ineffable lustre upon all its holy scenes and glorified inhabitants. Thus the apostle Paul says, that while he was rapt into the third heaven, or Paradise, he "heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4); or,

* Clemens Alex. L. 1. Strom.

as good critics,* conformably to some more early translations, would render the passage, "unspeakable things which man has not words to describe."

There are mysteries in the glory of God, because his boundless attributes are not comprehensible by our finite faculties; there are mysteries in the life of saints above, because perfect holiness is not comprehensible by minds infirm through sin; but much of the mystery, which prevents our full knowledge of the heavenly state, arises from the unfitness and inadequacy of human language to convey ideas that lie beyond the range of our perception and experience. Our words have been formed with reference to things under the observation of our senses; and it may be more than doubted whether there is a single term of speech, however used at present, which had originally a spiritual or moral meaning. Hence the great difficulty of precision in metaphysical science; the impossibility of exact definition, and the consequent misunderstanding of each other's views by ethical or theological disputants. Not a little of what the world calls pious cant or mysticism, is a conventional style necessarily adopted by Christians, when treating of subjects known only to faith. The sacred writers themselves, though un-

* Beza, Raphelius, M'Knight and others.

der the guiding influence of the Holy Ghost, labour to express religious truths by phrases which have no religious import, except figuratively; nor could they have made known "things unseen" more fully, unless a new language had been given them by revelation, and men were taught by miracle to read it intelligently. Even our Lord Jesus explained the heavenly by illustrations from the earthly.

The names of no natural objects have more often such emblematical signification, than light and its opposite, darkness, because none are better for the purpose. Radiating from its glorious centre, and chasing darkness away, light is beautiful, calls forth life, sheds health, exhibits things as they are, dissipates fantastic fears, and wakens us to a cheerful activity. What light is to the body, truth is to the soul not blind through sin; it charms by its clear lustre, gives energy to thought, soundness to the affections, assures peace, blesses with joy, and moves the whole man to find pleasure in the practice of virtue for the honour of God. Night is the season of repose; but need of rest cannot be felt by spiritual perfection.

"God is light," declares the apostle (1 John i. 5); Christ is "the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings," declares the prophet (Malachi iv.

2). All light, all truth, are from God; He is "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift" (James i. 17). All saving knowledge, justifying righteousness and sanctifying strength, are through Christ; He is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah xxiii. 6); "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John xiv. 6). There is scarcely an effect of redeeming grace, which the Scripture does not somewhere call "light;" and Christians are "children of light" (1 Thess. v. 5), because children of God; they were "sometime darkness, but now are they light in the Lord" (Ephesians v. 8); for "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians iv. 6). Gregory Nazianzen discourses most eloquently upon this: "God is the supreme and unapproachable light, who cannot be comprehended by our thoughts nor described by our words; illuminating all rational creatures, being to the intellectual what the sun is to the sensible; revealing himself, that the more we look up to him, the more our minds may be purified by his light, and the more we contemplate the more we may love him, and the more we love him, the more we may know him; He beholding and comprehend-

ing all things, and shedding some little rays of his infinite glory upon his creatures."*

In the sphere of our present existence, God gives light, natural, intellectual and moral, through second causes or means. He shines upon the earth through the sun, and moon, and stars, which he created after he had said, "Let there be light, and light was." (Compare Gen. i. 3 to 18.) He shines upon our minds and hearts, through the goodness, power and wisdom visible in the works of his hands, and, especially, through his word by the instrumentality of men. Hence our light, though coming originally from Him, "the Fountain of light" (Psalms xxxvi. 9), "in whom there is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5), is dim, because of the media through which it reaches us (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12); and our imperfect vision prevents us from fully enjoying the light we have. But, when the process of redemption is complete, and the children of God are received among the holy angels into the heavenly sphere, all the preparative economy of subordinate means will be dismissed; for, "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away;" God will himself be the immediate, only, infinite Light; and the consequence to glorified man shall be an immortality of perfect holi-

* Oratio xl. p. 693, Bened. ed.

ness, knowledge, happiness, safety, and (in this transcending his first state of innocence) untiring activity, his body being etherealized into spiritual substance (1 Cor. xv. 44), without appetites (Luke xx. 35), necessity of food (Rev. vii. 16), or friction of its particles. Thus the text,

THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE; AND THEY NEED NO CANDLE (a mean of man's invention); NEITHER LIGHT OF THE SUN (a mean of God's provision); FOR THE LORD GOD GIVETH THEM LIGHT.

We are now prepared, with the help of the connexion and other relative Scriptures, to edify and comfort ourselves with these most precious words, which discover the doctrine, that, where God shines in the glory of his immediate PRESENCE (Rev. xxi. 23), there can be no night. This teaches us, that in the world promised to Christians, there shall be neither sin, nor ignorance, nor sorrow, nor fear, nor weariness, any more forever.

FIRST: THERE IS NO SIN IN HEAVEN.

The essence of sin lies in a departure from God. (Hebrews iii. 12.) When man came first into being, God was near to him as his Father, his Teacher, and his Friend. As the sun, shining through a clear element, makes it bright like himself, so did holy God pervade the pure soul with his own image. (Genesis i. 27.) But the soul, by

a mysterious use of its freedom, turned away from God to another teacher, and sought for fancied good in forbidden, and, therefore, unblessed things; his own self came between him and the sanctifying influence; shadows fell thick upon his spirit, and, troubled and polluted by irregular passion and appetite (Is. lvii. 20), it no longer received or reflected the likeness of beauty, and truth, and glory. Sin is in man's heart; but, the evil bias of his desires perverting his judgment, the good creatures of divine bounty about him become occasions of fresh disobedience, and easily permit a subtle tempter to lead him farther astray. The evil heart of unbelief, which began by departing from the living God, draws back—and back—and back unto consummate perdition (Heb. x. 38, 39).

So, when God determines to restore a wanderer from sin and death unto righteousness and life, he meets him with a new light from above, and turns his merciful face upon the soul which had turned away from him; not, indeed, immediately, for its faculties are too weak to bear his full lustre, but through the human face of Christ his Son, our Elder Brother. Nay, the Holy Ghost, by the truth and with it, actually shines into the human spirit, though with a reserved, and, as yet, very partial but increasing rays. As the light enters, and according

to its degree, enter healing and strength. The thoughts are again attracted upward, and, less agitated by permitted insurgencies of the lower nature, the image of God dawns gradually upon them; the judgment, assisted by faith, recovers its perception of things eternal in contrast to things seen; the sophistries of temptation prevail not against higher motives, and, more and more as the penitent turns again to the true source of good, he is sanctified by a divine life, and filled with a divine peace.

When the process of preparation is complete, and the soul released from all carnal impediment, the ransomed man will be caught up into the second and better Paradise. Then, there will be no necessity for the interposition of means between God and his sanctified creature. God will pour himself into the soul; and the soul, clear from defiling stain, transparent in sincerity, pure as its origin, and calm through His peace, "which passeth all understanding," shall be transfigured, like Christ upon Tabor, by glory shining upon it and glory from within it, to the lustrous image of Him who sitteth upon the throne; no polluting lust to solicit, and every tempter driven far away by His holiness burning like a fence of devouring fire against every "thing that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."

This transfiguration the apostle Paul speaks of, as being begun on earth by the enlightening power of the Holy Ghost, when he says (2 Cor. iii. 17, 18): "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. For we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (or, reflecting as mirrors) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." The apostle John (1 John iii. 2) anticipates the fulness of it, at the coming of Jesus Christ, as the best idea he could give of the believer's glory: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;" and David (Ps. xvii. 15) exulted in the same hope: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Brethren, what comfort there is in this promise! Here we mourn over our many sins, not only as offensive to God, but because they come like a cloud between us and him, throwing us into the shadow and chill of death. We carry about with us our worst enemy; our duties lie in the midst of temptations; our best purposes come short through infirmity, and we go to the throne of grace with shame on our consciences, scarcely daring to look

up. Yet, when light breaks in upon us through the ordinances, though dim, compared to the glory of heaven, as the stars to the sun; and we feel the Spirit contending successfully against our corruption, and the love of Christ expelling from our hearts their unholy preferences; how we love to linger on our knees, or over the Word of God, or among the worshipping brotherhood, or under the voice of the preacher "who bringeth glad tidings;" and, finding it good to be where Jehovah has been communing with us, we dread to go forth into the open world of danger, and gloom, and death! But in heaven there is no more sin. Even the tears of repentance shall be wiped from our eyes. We shall look into the face of God, as children conscious of obedience, with reverent boldness. Our purified vision will not shrink from the supreme effulgence; the conflict will be over, and love reign in liberty over all our affections; nor shall we be called to venture any more out, but serve continually and forever before the radiating throne. "O how great is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the fulness of thy house; thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the Foun-

tain of Life, and in thy light shall we see light." "There shall be no night there."

SECONDLY: THERE IS NO IGNORANCE IN HEAVEN.

Here, though we may be permitted to attain some little knowledge, it is ignorance compared to the possible extent and accuracy of human intelligence. Even in heaven, the soul will be forever expanding, and continually making fresh acquisitions; nor can the finite ever comprehend the infinite; yet there will be no error, nor any lack of sufficient knowledge for the purposes and satisfaction of the immortal mind. When the grand principles of all truths are fairly apprehended, there is, properly speaking, no ignorance; though the successful inquirer has not yet, nor ever can, follow them all out to their logically inevitable consequences.

Before we pass from our present darkened state to that of perfect knowledge, there must be a change in the learners; a change in the subject of their study, and a change in their teacher.

A change in the learners. Our perceptions are impaired by sin; we do not see things as they really are. Our moral sensibility is depraved; we do not honestly desire to find the good or the true so much, as what will please our vicious inclinations. Our memories are shattered, and we cannot call

up or grasp together, at the moment, all the ideas we have stored away. Our time is broken, and our chain of thought interrupted, by the constant occurrence of petty cares or follies. From all these causes, the reason is weak, the understanding confused, and the judgment distorted.

In heaven these imperfections will be no more. Our spiritual sight will be clear and strong. The celestial atmosphere will be too pure for any illusion. Our desire will be only for the right and the holy. Our memory, restored to soundness, will hold ever ready for our use, the material it has gained. Our joyful, sole occupation, and that of all around us, will be to observe truth; and, so far as it is capable, with its vastly increased and ever increasing energies, the action of the soul in all its powers will be unerring, vigorous, and direct.

A change in the subjects of study. Here, with few exceptions, our reasoning is all backward from effects to causes. We ascend from individuals to species, and from species to genera. The aim and labour of philosophy is to simplify, and to arrange the various and uncounted phenomena which come within its ken, under few laws; those, as science advances, merging into still fewer, thus tending upward from multiplicity to unity. Here, however,

lies a grand difficulty, not so much in the want of facts, as in the multitude of them. It is impossible for us, as we have seen, to grasp all; equally impossible to detect with perfect accuracy, the precise bearing they may have upon each other. Yet, as we know very well by experience, though we have ten thousand correct data, if we lack one, or one be misplaced, our whole reasoning may be futile or absurd; just as in the tables of an accountant, if one figure be missing or in the wrong column, the results of his balance-sheet must certainly be error. Neither is the reason strong enough to climb sufficiently high upon the steps of the immense ladder, which reaches from earth to the skies. We become dazzled by the intense lustre; laws magnifying as the inferior coalesce, become too vast for our hold; and we find ourselves at the utmost height of our knowledge, like one who has climbed from Alp to higher Alps, till, from the most lofty peak, he looks upward into the infinite space beyond, rolling full of orbs glorifying God.

In heaven, our reasoning will be entirely the reverse. There we shall study not the effects of God's power, but God, the First Cause, himself. "The Lord God Almighty will be our light." If to know things in their causes be wisdom, he, who

knows God, must be perfect in his philosophy; he stands face to face with the one single, grand, original LAW, from which all radiate, and to which all tend. He, who was tired in his earthly attempts to climb the mystery, is now rapt up by the Creator to Himself; and looks down with easy sight and a perfect intelligence, upon all the dependent economy.

What a change this must make in our knowledge, may be feebly illustrated by a well known fact of modern science. It was not until the minds of men had been searching after principles for more than fifty-six centuries, that (what the world would call) an accident discovered to Newton the cardinal law of gravitation; and in a moment, as it were, his keen sagacity saw the method by which the Almighty condescends to hold the universe together. All his subsequent developings of the system were merely a detail of steps to an ascertained conclusion; he had, what had baffled mankind since creation, *the true theory;* he walked behind the vail with the God of Nature, and saw the application of his power. In a word, his reasoning was from cause to effect, instead of wandering amidst a maze of effects to find a clue for the discovery of a cause. Thus does the babe, which its heavenly Father takes to his own bosom out of its first sleep on the

bosom of its mother, learn more in one half hour of heaven than all that science has recorded in the libraries of earth.

We have spoken of physical truth; but it must not be forgotten, that as moral truth is incomparably more valuable, so it is incomparably more difficult to discover with our present opportunities. We know nothing certainly, but what has been revealed. We cannot even define what *right* is. Until we learn from Himself, that the will of our common infinite Parent is the law of our brotherhood, and what his will is, all our relations are undefined, and duty seems to conflict with duty. But how easy will the philosophy of morals become, when purified from sin and self, and their progeny of errors, we look out from the perfection of God, "whose are all things," upon the consequences of his holy, harmonious attributes?

A change in the Teacher. All knowledge, indeed, is derived from God, and, to a certain extent, the Holy Ghost enlightens the devout soul; but God, even the Holy Ghost, works by the human reason; the reason of others teaching our reason to teach ourselves. The Scriptures, inspired as they are, were written by holy men; and only so much light, as could be condensed within the narrow circumference of their faculties, can reach our

own with illuminating power. "The foolishness of preaching," the examples of pious life, the counsels of faithful friendship, the histories and lessons of the past and present, belong to this instrumentality.

Knowledge so derived must necessarily be defective, because partaking of the defect in its medium. But in heaven, God will be immediately our Teacher. By ways of instruction far above our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth, he will communicate ideas to his adoring and happy pupil. Nay, as He is essentially truth and knowledge, wherever he shines, truth and knowledge must be also; and, thus, when, by an inscrutable mystery, he communicates Himself to the soul and pervades it with Himself, shall his ideas become the ideas of his saints, so far as their capacity, perpetually enlarging, will admit. I know not how this can be; but it is not more difficult to understand, than how we shall see God as he is, and, therefore, be like him, participating in his truth as in his holiness, and, therefore, perfect in both.

Christians, how this thought humbles us in our present ignorance, but uplifts us with the hope of our eternal knowledge! What, except love, so ravishing as truth? How are we pained now by uncertainty, and doubt, and forgetfulness! How sadly we grow weary in our researches, and compare the

vastness of possible science with the brevity of life! How difficult in our corruption and weakness, to read the true meaning of what imperfect men have intensely striven to communicate by our poor language! What joy do we feel, when any genuine fact in natural or moral things is made certain! What must be the strength of that virtue, which is able to perceive, to comprehend, and to feel all the motives of right! In heaven there will be no more ignorance. There we shall be strengthened to look upon God. God will be the volume of our study. God will guide us into all truth. We shall know God, and "Him to know aright is life eternal." "There is no night in heaven."

THIRDLY: THERE IS NO SORROW IN HEAVEN.

Here sorrow is inevitable, for we are sinners, and,

> "'Tis the eternal law, that where guilt is,
> Sorrow must answer it."

Even though the sin be pardoned, and the guilt taken away by the blood of Christ, the natural effects of sin remain. God does not change them, but sanctifies them, as they are, for the good of his people, in a discipline of purification. The happiness, which comes to the believer more directly from God, is interrupted and impaired by the sinfulness of the heart which receives it; and,

according to our previous argument, the happiness, which we draw from Him through his creatures, partakes of their imperfection. The sorest sufferings of the soul are those of wounded, bereaved, disappointed, or betrayed affection. The links which bind us to the children of death and sin, must conduct to our hearts pain and disquietudes.

But in heaven we shall dwell in the light of God. Some memory of our relations here may follow us; but the relations themselves shall have passed away with former things. There will be only one tie, sonship to God, and, in Him, brotherhood with the holy children of his Presence. We shall be holy, they will be holy, as God our Father is holy. We shall be perfect, they will be perfect, as God our Father is perfect. We shall be immortal, they will be immortal, as God our Father is immortal. There can be no excess, no misplacement, no betrayal of affection, when we shall love God, and He shed into our souls and the souls of all the innumerable family his own divine love, infinitely transcending our experience of it here. How can there be sorrow, when there is neither sin to cause it, nor ignorance to occasion it; but, in their place, the Holy Presence of God, who is purity, and truth, and love? How can there be sorrow, when there is no want, no treachery, no pain, no death? The

Lord God, with his own hand, will wipe away the last tear from the eyes of the redeemed, as they leave earth behind them to rest in his embrace forever.

That our text means this, the prophet assures us, when he says, "The sun shall no more be thy light by day (the sun so often clouded by storms); neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee (the moon that waxes and wanes, and sometimes hides herself altogether); but the LORD shall be thine everlasting Light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, nor thy moon withdraw herself; for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Is. lx. 19, 20).

Beloved brethren, what a vision is this! No sorrow, no pain, no sad memory, no bleeding trust, no sick bed, no grave! How should we hasten to place our affections there, away from this world of tribulation, trial and decay! How patiently, as we look by faith on the things that are not seen, should we bear these light afflictions, which here are but for a moment, but there, if we be faithful in learning their holy lessons, "shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" The sorrow may be sharp, for our sins have been many, and their stains are deep; but it shall endure only

for a night; the joy cometh in the morning of an eternal day, and "there shall be no night there."

FOURTHLY: THERE IS NO FEAR IN HEAVEN.

"The gates of the city shall not be shut at all by day; for there is no night there," as we are told in the 25th verse of the last chapter. Among the most melancholy proofs of the fall are the defences, which men are obliged to make against the evil violence of their fellow men. The walled city declares man to be in fear of man. He fears open violence often by day; he is especially watchful against its stealthy approach by night. Alas! there is one citadel we can never guard closely enough against one enemy, the heart against sin. Even as we hope for our eternal rest, we are to fear lest though "the promise be left us," the enemy should surprise us and we "come short of it."

But in heaven there is no fear. There are no traitors within, and no enemy dare approach it from without. The thunder of war will be never heard about it by day, nor need the gate be shut by night. Without and far remote will be all our foes, and our hearts will be sanctified to be our safe friends within. The glorified spirit, conscious of present blessedness, will have no dread of any change, for there will be none, but "from glory to glory." Evil entered the first paradise, and no flaming cherubim

guarded it until the fallen sinners were driven out. But the glory of God is the light of heaven, and its eternal defence. The blood of the Lamb was sprinkled upon its door-posts by his own hand, as he passed through them from his cross, conqueror over him that had the power of death, to his throne; death can never reach any of its sinless inhabitants; and, as they turn to worship before that throne and Him who was slain that sitteth thereon, they see the rainbow of the covenant about his glorious head, and know that storm or wrath can never return (Rev. iv. 3).

O God, keep thy trembling children till they pass through this dark and dangerous way! If thou be with us, we shall fear no evil. Then take us to the safety of thy Presence, for "there is no night there."

FIFTHLY: THERE SHALL BE NO WEARINESS IN HEAVEN.

Here our infirm bodies, our infirm minds, our infirm hearts, are often weary: weary with labour, weary with doubt, weary with trial. The night falls welcome around us, that we may sleep, and forget, and be refreshed. Our very joys weary us, and extreme delight affects us like sorrow. Night succeeds day, until we sink at last into the quiet grave. Even innocent man needed rest, for God made the night that he might repose.

But in heaven there is no weariness. The mind is never weary with thoughts of God; the heart is never weary of loving God; the soul is never weary of serving and praising God. The body, after the resurrection will partake of the soul's purity; and voices, unceasing with melody, will forever rejoice before God; and hands, unceasing in zeal, forever do the holy will of God; and eyes, unceasing in their regard, forever gaze upon the glory of God. There is no weariness in heaven, because God is the life, the strength, the food, the atmosphere, the pervading joy of all the shining ones. "There shall be no night there."

O what a contrast to our present weakness! How feebly, believers, do your faculties second your best zeal! How are our labours interrupted by the necessity of rest! Now, at the close of the Sabbath, though our work has been only praise, we feel our flesh failing, and our souls sympathizing with it; and the sleep that ends our sweet enjoyments will be not ungrateful. What happiness will it be when the Sabbath is eternal, the worship perpetual, and the glory unshadowed forever!

Night is around us now; but

THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE.

SERMON XIV.

LONGING FOR REST.

(A MEDITATION.)

LONGING FOR REST.

Psalm lv. 6. And I said, Oh! that I had wings like a dove! For then would I flee away and be at rest.

This is the mournful wish of one whom the world would have called fortunate and great; fortunate, in rising from a sheepfold to a throne; great, in the strength of his kingdom, the vigour of his policy, and the success of his arms. But did he think himself fortunate? he sighs to be again in the wilderness, far off from the haunts of men; or great? he envies the freedom of a timid bird.

The monarch of Israel has shut himself within a chamber of his palace, to pour out before God the troubles, that are breaking his spirit; and, opening his dark saying upon the harp, he looks forth, as was his wont, towards the east. There is a storm rising, "a windy storm and tempest." It has startled a gentle dove, and swift upon wings silvery as snow (Ps. lxviii. 13), thrown into bright relief by the cloud behind her, she shoots past, far, far away to the quiet shade, where she has built her nest in

the cleft of the rock. "O that I could so fly away," exclaims the royal mourner, "upon a wing as light, with a temper as harmless, to a rest as safe!"

The world look up admiringly and wishfully at power, and riches, and splendour, and have made a silly proverb, "As happy as a king;" yet a great master of the human heart, unconsciously translating what another had written two thousand years before,* makes a king say, as he lies down upon his sleepless pillow,

"Happy lowly clown!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!"

David had a rich kingdom, children whom he fondly loved, friends whom he counselled with in entire trustfulness; and his chosen friend, his closest counsellor, joined with his darling son, the beautiful Absalom, in a murderous plot against his kingdom and life; nor was he ever out of trouble from his anointing to his death.

Would he have been a better or a happier man as a shepherd? The frequent delight with which he turns to rural and pastoral scenes, shows that he thought so; his flock would have been more easily guided than stiff-necked Israel; the pastures of the wilderness more peaceful than the camp or turbulent city;

* Euripides, Hecuba, 621–6.

and the lion or the bear, or the human prowler about his sheepfold, enemies less malignant and dangerous than an apostate friend or a thankless child. But, so far as we can judge from his history, particularly in his more prosperous days, we should think not. David was not fitted for inaction. The determined courage with which, when a stripling and for the first time among armed men, he undertook to fight Goliath, would never have brooked a quiet, secluded life. His poetical temperament, keen sensibilities, quick impulses and strong passions, made a heavier burden and constant occupation necessary to keep down his insurgent spirit; so that the circumstances of his crown may rather have restrained, than called forth, the evil of his character. He was far from being a perfect man as king; but he might have been a worse one as a shepherd, where appetites, which grow rampant in idleness, would have been opposed only by slight responsibilities and petty interests.

Would he have found rest had he fled again to the wilderness? Is there no trouble in shepherd's tents, no quarrel as agitating to their unenlarged minds and narrow spheres, as conspiracies and wars to statesmen and princes? Care-browed man smiles at a child's grief over a broken toy; yet is that anguish as keen as the little one

can feel. It matters not what the grief be, if it fill the heart. Or is man free from himself when alone in the wilderness? Can he leave thought, hope, memory, affection and conscience, behind him, and so create a vacuum, where he can know nothing but a mere dull, cold sense of existence? No, my brethren, wherever man is, there is sin; and sin and peace never dwell together. The plague is in his own soul. He carries trouble with him, as he carries himself. Besides, there is a longing for one's kind, which will not permit us to rest away from the very instruments and occasions of our disquietudes; but would soon drive the voluntary exile back to a world, whose treacheries and wrongs he had thought to escape.

But why speak only of the king or the shepherd? Is there one among us, at least one, that has passed the heyday of youth, whose soul does not often echo the wish, "O that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!"

It is not peculiar to any individual or any circumstances. It belongs to humanity, to the world. We may amuse, may excite, perhaps, for a while, stupify, the heart which makes us human; but it is never at rest, never at peace, never healthfully tranquil. Man has never lost the consciousness of banishment from Eden. He, who was created

among flowers, can never rest among thorns. There is a never-ceasing voice, which God has put within him, like a conscience, 'This is not rest! This is not rest!' It is heaven calling us home, bidding us look up and hope for things above, until the hope shall so purify our natures, gross with sin, that, like Jesus our Forerunner, we shall be able to attain the second Paradise, and walk once more with God in holy peace. Are they, who live without God in the world, thrusting religion aside because she has too sad a face, at rest? Is there not a craving for something more, a crying of, 'Give! Give! Give!' within them, that grows louder and more importunate, as they attempt to satisfy it with any thing of earth?

God alone is peace. There is no peace, but the peace of God. We must enter into God, and dwell among his holy attributes, if we would be at rest. In that far height, the storms which desolate earth, never blow. The clouds, which shadow earth, are far beneath it. The passions, which agitate earth, can never ascend to it. There all is calm, bright and pure. We need pardon, before we can enter that justice; sanctification, before we can live in that holiness; a truth-loving mind, to enjoy that wisdom, and a Christ-like love for God and man and unfallen angels, to assimilate

with that goodness and mercy. Yet all these does Christ promise to his disciples, when he says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid." He came to preach peace on earth. He died to purchase peace for men. He lives again, "the Prince of Peace," to send down a foretaste of everlasting peace for every soul, that relies by faith upon his atonement for pardon, and upon his Spirit for a heart and mind and strength to do well. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked;" and we are all wicked in his sight, until we are "washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." To this peace the Gospel invites us all. It waits our asking. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," calls the blessed Master. Why seek rest among the vanities of the creature, when it is offered to us by Christ, in God?

But is the Christian at once received into perfect rest? Is the wish never heard in his heart, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!"

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God;" but the rest is not yet. So long as the Christian

is in the corrupt body, and exposed to the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, so long as any "sin remaineth in him," he cannot have rest. He may have moments of peace, and even joy, while on earth, because even here he has "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" and, says the apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven." Still he has not perfect rest, far from it. His blessed and holy Master had not rest here, for he was passing through our sorrows, and battling with our temptations. How may his yet sinful and infirm follower hope for it?

The Christian is human; the world is full of sorrow; afflictions throng about himself; he sees others suffering, and he must feel. The nicer religion has made his sensibilities, the more keenly he must feel. Jesus, weeping beside the grave of his friend, tells us this is not our rest.

The Christian is changed in heart; he longs to be holy; but, even while he would do good, evil is present with him; for there is "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death." He sees sin around him, and, if his love for God be strong, "rivers of water run down his eyes because that men keep not God's law." This is not his rest, "it is polluted."

There is no peace for him, but where there is no sin. He attempts to pray, to praise, to serve God; but it is with such mistakes, such weakness, such mingling of improper motives, that he mourns over his best righteousness. He can have no rest until he is perfectly holy.

He loves his God above all; and he counts all things but loss that he may know him, be with him, enjoy him, and live under the light of his unveiled face. Here he is in shadows, sometimes in darkness; and, even when the light shines brightly, his eyes are so dim and bleared by sin and tears, that it dazzles and blinds him. He never can be at rest until he is in heaven, where he shall be like Christ, because he "shall see him as he is."

But is it right for him *to desire*, that he may "fly away and be at rest?" Right to desire rest? Certainly. Is it not promised? Is not the hope of heaven the great privilege of the Gospel? Are we not "saved by hope?" Our "hearts purified by hope?" Our courage sustained by "hope, which maketh not ashamed?" Is not hope "the anchor of the soul," making it strong and steadfast? Can we believe Christ or follow him, without this "lively hope?" Is it not the very sign of the Christian, the seal and earnest of the Spirit? (Eph. i. 13, 14.) Yet there cannot be hope without desire; and just as hope is

strong, the desire will be. Jesus desired to depart, when he said, "Now, Father, I come to thee;" and his great apostle desired to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" and so we are to "keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the coming of Jesus Christ." Truly we were of all men most miserable, if, when borne down by care or sorrow, persecuted and misjudged, pursued by temptation every where, even to the house of God and our closets, and clogged by the flesh about us aiding the temptation from without, we might not desire rest. No, my beloved brethren, the new-born babe "desires the simple milk of the word," and, as he drinks it in, it is in him like a fountain of desires "springing up to everlasting life."

Yet this desire for rest must be regulated. We are to desire rest only *where* God promises it: the beginning and the increase of it in Christ on earth, the consummation of it with Christ in heaven. We have no right to fly to the wilderness, and leave duty behind us. We have no right to crave ease and freedom from that trouble, which, in this world, always accompanies doing good. That is the recreancy of unbelief, or the sloth of the sluggard. The troubles God sends upon us, the temptations we meet, the bereavements we suffer, are as truly blessings as his gifts and consolations, if we use

them aright. To shun them, would be to shun God's grace. We are not to judge what circumstances are best for us. God changed David from a shepherd to a king; and David had no right to desire a shepherd's seclusion again, any more than, when he was a shepherd, he had a right to desire a throne. There are troubles in obscurity, and troubles in eminence. There are troubles every where. God puts us in just the troubles we need (1 Pet. i. 6). As well might the husbandman refuse rain, because the cloud that sheds it hides the sun, as the Christian refuse trial, because it makes him sad.

We must desire the perfect rest only *when* God is willing to give it. It is a sort of suicide to long for death. The refiner knows best when to take the gold from the furnace; and none would wish to retain any dross that would make us unfit to shine in the Redeemer's crown. It is a blessed thing that we are to die. It is a blessed thing to be willing to die. It is a blessed thing to desire heaven after death. But to be impatient for death, is not the spirit of a faithful servant. He may "desire his shadow" (Job vii. 2); but he shrinks not from his work until the evening is come and the time for rest. "We shall have eternity to rest in," said an indefatigable philosopher. Let it be the Chris-

tian's only anxiety to increase the reward of his rest through grace.

My brethren, learn a parable of the dove. It is a sweet bird to the Christian's associations. It was the dove, that flew with the green leaf of the olive branch to Noah, the venerable type of Christ. It is "as doves flying to their windows," the prophet prefigures the church. To be "harmless as doves," was our blessed Master's command; and, "hovering in a bodily shape like a dove," the Holy Spirit descended upon the meek and innocent Jesus, to sanctify him for his work. O for wings like a dove, to fly away and be at rest! Is this our prayer? The Holy Spirit can answer it, by making us gentle and harmless, and swift in our desires for God. And where shall we fly, but to the ark of the covenant? at whose open window, Jesus, our Noah (Rest), stands ready to take within a safe shelter all who bear the word of promise in their mouths. All the world beside is a waste of waters, troubled and dark.

O for thy wings, thou Heavenly Dove! O for the rest in the bosom of Jesus! Amen.