



LIBRARY

OF THE

Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Case, 5CC  
Shelf, 2601  
Book, \_\_\_\_\_

A DONATION

FROM

*Rev. R. R. Rodgers D. D.*

Received

*Nov. 1874*

Ronald K. Rodgers



*John Rodgers*

# S E R M O N S

BY

THOMAS BISSET, D. D.

MINISTER OF LOGIERAIT.

---

EDINBURGH:

Printed for J. DICKSON, and W. CREECH, *Edinburgh;*  
and T. CADELL, *London.*

---

M D C C L X X Y V I I I .

~~SECRET~~

# C O N T E N T S.

---

## S E R M O N I.

	Page
The Necessity and Advantage of early Religion.	1

ECCL. xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

## S E R M O N II.

On the same Text.	25
-------------------	----

## S E R M O N III.

On the same Text	43
------------------	----

## S E R M O N IV.

On the same Text.	61
-------------------	----

## S E R M O N V.

The Importance of Salvation, and the Danger  
of neglecting it. 88

HEB. ii. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great  
salvation.*

## S E R M O N VI.

On the same Text. 110

## S E R M O N VII.

The Conduct of Christ, an Example to Chri-  
stians. 130

PHIL. ii. 5.

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ  
Jesus.*

## S E R M O N VIII.

On the same Text. 158

## S E R M O N IX.

On the same Text. 178

## S E R M O N X.

On the same Text. 199

C O N T E N T S.

v

S E R M O N XI.

On a good Example. 221

MATT. v. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

S E R M O N XII.

On the same Text. 246

S E R M O N XIII.

Of Nonconformity to the World. 270

ROM. xii. 2.

*And be not conformed to this world.*

S E R M O N XIV.

On the same Text. 289

S E R M O N XV.

On the same Text. 308

S E R M O N XVI.

The Excellency of Religion. 332

PROV. xii. 26.

*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

## C O N T E N T S:

## S E R M O N XVII.

On the same Text. 352

## S E R M O N XVIII.

The Folly of spiritual Sloth. 380

I THESS. v. 6.

*Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but, let us watch and be sober.*

## S E R M O N XIX.

On the same Text. 401

## S E R M O N XX.

On the same Text. 427

\* \* This Publication was, in some measure, not voluntary. The Sermons had been borrowed and transcribed by a Clergyman now deceased. After his death, his relations published them in a mutilated form. The Author, in justice to himself, altered and corrected his manuscripts, and sends them abroad in the form in which they now appear. Several of the Sermons, now published, were not in the mutilated edition.

# S E R M O N I.

The NECESSITY and ADVANTAGE of EARLY RELIGION.

---

ECCLESIASTES XII. I.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

UPON my reading these words, you are before hand with me, in observing the necessity of entering early upon the service of God. It is unnecessary to inform you, that your happiness, in a great measure, depends upon the resolutions you form, before you have come forward in the world. For, it is probable, that your character in youth, may be your character in old age. If you have taken

SERM.  
I.

A

your

SERM.

I.

your first aim at decency, integrity, and devotion, what progress may you not make in the course of a long life? On the other hand, if you have engaged in infidelity, fraud, or licentiousness, or in any other vices, which mislead the judgement, or corrupt the heart; what prospect can you have of leaving your evil courses when you shall be more advanced in years? You can have no well-grounded hope of such a change, at a period, when the parting with folly would be like the tearing of your flesh, or the burning of your eye.

When a young man launches into the world, godliness, in a dress the most engaging to the heart, though not the most glaring to the eye, offers to steer his course to the tabernacle of God, and to the country of blessed spirits. She keeps far from the rocks and quicksands upon which rash and intemperate youth is apt to suffer shipwreck. On the other hand, ungodliness appeareth with a painted face, an affected smile, deceiving words, and an enticing dress. She seduces young men by the assistance of pleasure, which bewitcheth their tender hearts, too easily allured by the charms of that forceress.

Sensible

Sensible of the danger to which heedlessness SERM.  
exposes a young man, Solomon warmly ad- I.  
dresses him in these words: “ Rejoice, O young  
“ man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer  
“ thee in the days of thy youth ; and walk in  
“ the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of  
“ thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these  
“ God will bring thee into judgement.” From  
this reflection he proceeds to direct a young  
man to religion, which is the only unerring  
guide ; a guide whose eye is clear, whose hand  
is strong, whose foot is firm, whose heart is  
trusty. “ Remember now thy Creator, in the  
“ days of thy youth.” Youth is the spring  
of life, the season for sowing the seeds of good-  
ness. In that season, they strike their roots  
deep ; the green plants cover the ground ; the  
moisture of the clouds, and the influence of  
heaven brings them forward ; they produce  
precious fruit, the fruit of the Tree of life,  
which endureth for ever.

From this precept, the wise man passes to  
the danger of delaying our improvement to a  
distant time. In old age, the weakness of our  
bodies, the falling off of our minds, and the  
pressure of many diseases, give a bad prospect  
of

SERM. of that compleat reformation we must bring  
 I. to the service of God.

I presume to address you on this subject, in which old and young have an interest: The young have to begin the world in remembering their Creator, the old have to end their days with the same constancy that they had from the beginning. I address, in a particular manner, you my young friends, who are in that situation, that the choice you make, is to determine whether you shall be happy or miserable.

Following the idea of our text, we propose to divide this subject into two branches.

I. WE are to shew the reasons we have for dedicating our youth to the service of God.

II. WE are to consider the danger of delaying our reformation till we be overtaken by old age.

IN entering upon the first of these, give me leave to direct your thoughts to the power of every sort of habits. This power is acknowledged by every body, and there is not a man, who, either from his feeling, or his information,  
 is

is not persuaded of its prevalency. Though ha-  
bit beflow at first, it soon overtakes the nimble-  
footed. The force of a giant prevails against it,  
as little as the weakness of a child. It grapples  
with a man, it throws him on the ground, it  
lays a weight upon him, and he is kept in  
closer confinement than if he had been bound  
with fetters of iron. Vice, habitual vice ty-  
rannizes over old and young, whatever ori-  
ginal dispositions they may have had.

SERM.

I.

Indeed, we must confess, that some men  
have, from nature, worse tempers than others  
have. What happens among lower creatures,  
happens in part to mankind. One wolf thirsts  
for blood more than another; one serpent is  
more venomous than another of the same kind.  
There is the same variety among men. One  
is naturally kind, another is harsh. This man  
has a turn for humility; that, for haughti-  
ness.

Though this be allowed, yet we may affirm  
that more depends upon our education and  
company, than upon our original dispositions.  
To convince us of this, we observe, that there  
are vices which continue in the same family  
from generation to generation. The father,  
son,

SERM. son, and grandson, are known for the same  
 I. sort of worthlessness. They may differ in  
 some things, but there is a family likeness by  
 which we may discover their relation. They  
 have been born with the same dispositions  
 which their neighbours have; but they have  
 seen vice, they have seen it often. It was  
 practised by their parents, and by their bro-  
 thers and sisters. It became familiar with them  
 from their cradle. How could they escape  
 with so many bad examples before them? The  
 son was taught by his father, the grandson by  
 the son; and the entail of this inheritance  
 passes from heir to heir for many generations.  
 And though any of us hath from nature bad  
 dispositions, he may correct them by early  
 care.

Add to this, that the best heart is most cor-  
 rupted by neglect; as, by wrong cultivation,  
 the richest soil produces the heaviest crop of  
 weeds. The plains of Babylon, or the fields  
 fattened by the river of Egypt, would only  
 produce bulrushes, if they were not checked  
 by the hand of the labourer. The warm sun  
 which nourisheth wine and oil in the vine-  
 yards and olive gardens, cherisheth hemlock

in neglected fields. The balsam tree grows on the plantations; the poison tree on the waste ground. Sheep and oxen are on the farms; the wild beasts roar, and the serpents hiss in the wilderness.

SERM.  
I.

As the fields require culture, the mind of man requires it. Without it bad habits are formed; and, if this happens in youth, they continue for the whole period of our lives: “And the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

Our first impressions are the strongest, and continue for the longest time. We seldom forget what we learned when we were young, or lose relish for what we were fond of. The place of our birth is visited with pleasure, and we are much delighted in meeting the companions of our youth. Our hearts warm when we see the witnesses or partners of the tasks, amusements, or the fancied hardships that then engaged us. Our passions were keen, and our spirits light. We had no drowsy desire, no languid resolution; but whatever we wished for, we did it with all our hearts: Difficulties did not lessen our courage, or slacken our pace; they increased our eagerness, they doubled our diligence.

Upon

SERM.

I.  


Upon this account, we have most success in our worldly calling, when our years are few, our minds soft, and our passions warm. After the bloom of youth is past, it is with a bad grace we set about a thing for the first time. A stiffness is contracted after the age of thirty or forty years, which is seldom got the better of. But if we set our hearts on any thing, while we are young, we are surprized at our own progress. Difficulties vanish, dangers become familiar: The scholar becomes learned, the artist skilful, the counsellor wise, the soldier hardy. The persevering vigour of young men will storm a fortress placed on a rock: death only can make the sword drop from their hands; for they travel to honour through hardships.

This rule is also applicable to the discipline of religion and morals. If you have set out well, and have persisted in your resolutions for a term of years, you must have gained such a habit, as will continue, and be growing stronger to the end. Exercise your youth in prayer; and the purest devotion must be easy and familiar to you. The soul grows in grace by the habit of praying, as the body  
becomes

becomes strong by the use of daily bread. SERM.  
Be charitable in the beginning of your days, I.  
and, by the perseverance of a few years, your heart will be tender, and your actions benevolent. If you act fairly for ten years, you find little difficulty in doing so for thirty years longer. Not even temptations, or strong passions, can make the man yield to deceit, or false-dealing, who has had God for his portion from the days of his youth. On the other hand, if you have taken the advantage of one man, you have an inclination to venture a second time; your success continuing, you draw for a third and a fourth prize; till, by these repeated trials, you despise conscience, and all its scruples. Every thing that is bad, becomes habitual from small beginnings. The seed is small, but, in a few years, the roots are fastened in the earth, the branches spread in the air; Goliath or Samson could not pull it out of the ground.

When a young man first enters upon a wrong course, he does not see where his career is to end. It is with a fearful heart, and a trembling hand, that we encounter with vice, in the days of our youth. The ballfulness

SERM. natural to young people remains for a time,  
 I. and strongly pleads for the rights of a good  
 conscience. But the passions of a young man  
 growing strong, temptations multiplying, his  
 shame giving way, he ventures upon vice, but  
 he does it with hesitation. He starts back,  
 he moves forward; he is confident and fear-  
 ful by turns. He begins a wicked action,  
 he stops short; he makes another attempt, his  
 heart fails him; blushes cover his face, con-  
 fusion is in his eye; conscience pleads for  
 virtue, and, for some time, she pleads with  
 success. He stands on the brink of the great  
 gulph; smiling vices and painted pleasures  
 stretch out their hands to entice him to pass  
 over the stream. Innocence is behind him,  
 guilt before him; his head becomes giddy;  
 passion blinds his eyes; he plunges into the  
 torrent, passes over to the quarters of wick-  
 edness: He has neither strength nor inclina-  
 tion for returning to the other side.

When the young sinner looks back to the  
 days of his innocence, when he had a clear con-  
 science, he has many an uneasy pang, many  
 hours of remorse. But even this remorse soon  
 comes to an end; a hardened conscience suc-  
 ceeds;

ceeds; he holds a firm forehead on the basest SERM.  
actions; and, without seeking the cover of 1.  
concealment, or the defence of a bold denial,   
he glories in his shame; and, with religion,  
gives up with all regard for his character.  
The vices of youth continue and gain additional strength, till, by the force of habit, he becomes the slave of the vilest masters, a slave who refuses to be ransomed. The fear of God, the favour of man, peace in sickness, peace at death, and the happiness of another life, are entirely disregarded by this infatuated slave. The disease becomes desperate, the nerves lose their strength, the whole body is palsied. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.” This is a miserable man, miserable though he be clothed in purple, and though thousands tremble at his nod.

There is no way of preventing this apostasy, except by remembering our Creator in the days of our youth. The opening of our reason, and the first exercise of our speech should be directed to this end. This will give us joy

SERM. in health, patience in sickness, submission in poverty; and we shall die the death of the righteous. As this is a thing of great consequence, I beg your indulgence, while I enter more minutely into the advantages of early godliness.

I. WE have to observe, that early piety guards us from the errors and imprudence of youth.

A young man, entering upon the stage, is a most thoughtless creature. He doth not know what part he hath to act, or what difficulties may come in the way, and he makes no preparation for them. If we had not frequent opportunity of observing the heedlessness of youth; or, if we did not remember what we ourselves were at that age, we could not believe that such trifling, and such toys, could engage a reasonable creature. In our early days, the openness of our hearts, the unsuspecting turn of our minds, the lightness of our spirits, the unsteadiness and wildness of our projects, and our want of experience, subject us to great imprudence, and to dangerous errors. How many disappointments, how

much

much vexation, how many quarrels and broils, what deadly feuds, what bloodshed, spring from the imprudence of young men? The effects of it are not confined to their own time; their children, and their childrens children feel them. “The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the childrens teeth are set on edge.”

SERM.

I.

But religion gives a young man a degree of caution, which is of great advantage, even in the affairs of this life. Young people push on, with ardour, toward the object of their desire: Their impatience, and the vivacity of their tempers, make them leave prudence at a great distance. Imagination takes the lead; they believe things without examination; they judge of men without knowing them: They condemn measures without enquiry; they contract friendship, conceive antipathies, without cause; and they kindle into wrath, without provocation. The resolution of the present moment is pursued with heat and violence, which prove that they are men without wisdom, acting in the dark. From this rage of passions, from the uncontrollable pursuit of trifles, every second step may be a false one,

SERM. one, if they have not a guide of clearer sight  
 I. than their wild imagination, or their fiery  
 temper.

At this time religion offers its hand to a young man. Though the road be steep, the head giddy, and the eyes glimmering; yet religion clears his head, gives steadiness to his feet, and light to his eyes. "The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide." In these trials he will be supported, and, in this confidence, he gives God the praise which is due for his affectionate protection. In this spirit are the words of the Psalmist; "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Religious young people curb their thoughts and actions, by considering that the eye of God is upon them. This reflection checks the folly, imprudence, and extravagance of youth. As the Lord searcheth their hearts, and numbereth their steps, they are taught to avoid every rash and ill-advised design. The language of a religious young creature is, "Thou knowest my down-fitting, and  
 " mine.

“ mine up-rising ; thou understandest my SERM.  
“ thoughts afar off. Thou compassedst my path, I.  
“ and art acquainted with all my ways.”

This is an awful thought, and must restrain a young man, though folly, imprudence, and weakness, be every hour laying snares for him.

Gaiety and light spirits attend health, vigour, and the season of joy. When they are within bounds, they give grace and loveliness to youth. It is pleasant to observe the overflowing cheerfulness that proceedeth from a good heart, and honest intentions. Such a lovely young man has no gloomy design, no plot of cunning, to sour his temper, or furrow his brow. The formal composure, that proceedeth from the low spirits, and the weak body of an old man, looketh awkwardly on the face of a young man. An innocent gaiety encourageth that openness of heart, which seldom fails to attend upon a man of downright designs.

If this gaiety improveth youth, there is a thing of the same kind that corrupteth it. The love of laughter may lead it to sport with serious things. Godliness may be the object of its sneer. The young man points at it with his

SERM. his finger, and exposes it to the companion of  
 I. his own years. Between them they make a  
 common cause of it. Religion is ridiculed by  
 one, it is ridiculed by all. He is thought to  
 be an extraordinary young man, who is most  
 successful in this attempt. His words are  
 quoted in every circle; they are sent round a  
 city; they are sent from kingdom to kingdom,  
 “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness  
 “in them that perish.” One poisons another:  
 hundreds swallow that poison, and every body  
 who swallows it, brings death and destruction  
 upon himself. Where can we find an antidote?  
 In turning to God who can relieve us, though  
 the body be swollen, the face bloated, and the  
 blood curdled, by the sting of the serpent, or  
 the teeth of the dragon. May God turn the  
 heart of that young man! May that company  
 of young men escape from the wrath that is  
 to come!

Keep at a distance, my young friend, from  
 this infectious imprudence. You are to aim  
 at the decency and devotion of a sincere Chri-  
 stian, at the very time you are to have the  
 cheerfulness and candour natural to your age.  
 Young man, remember thy Creator, and thou

soon

soon shalt acquire a character of sweetness, and of serenity; of chearfulness, and caution; a character so amiable in itself, so very amiable when it is seen in the possession of one of thy age.

SERM.  
I.  
~

An old man may be prudent without the shadow of virtue. He is made cautious by the coldness of his passions, or by attention to his interest; by his not being easily imposed on by a showy outside, by his long experience of good and evil, and by the many instances he has seen of false friendship and broken promises. With this man, caution is distrust; prudence, jealousy; reserve, cold-heartedness. But when a young man has prudence, he derives it, for the most part, from good principles. I say, for the most part, as it is seen that some young people are cautious, in order to forward a bad design. Such a close-minded young man promises to be a dangerous, evil-hearted old man, who is born for building up his own fortune upon the credulity or ignorance of the undesigning part of mankind. I do not therefore speak of that prudence which arises from distrust reserve, or selfishness, but of that which pro-

C

scedetis

SERM.

I.

ceedeth from restrained passions, charitable opinions, and benevolent intentions. Let nothing be borrowed from hypocrisy. The very openness of a good man does not discover any thought or action that can expose him to loss, or reproach. The bad-hearted may, indeed, lay a snare for him, as he does for every body. The servant of the Lord, however, is more out of the road of these attacks than other men are. He keeps at a distance from the society of the wicked; and, as he does not enter that company, he is in little danger of suffering by them. Whatever inclination the deceiver may have to make prey of him, he has it seldom in his power. They do not associate. How could they associate? Simplicity of manners is not suited to art, nor falsity of professions to the sincerity of him “that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.” The cheerfulness of an unsuspecting heart, is not like the mirth of the man who is the slave of sin. How can these men meet, who have no similitude of manners; whose pursuits are so different; whose conversation is so opposite?

Though

Though a young man has the prudence SERM.  
we have described, he may have all the vanity I.  
of youth. Religion has not a face of auster-  
ity, nor mortified airs, nor a dejected look ;  
nor is it clothed in sackcloth and ashes. By  
giving it this gloomy look, we do great pre-  
judice to young people. Their spirits are  
volatile, and they hate every thing that is  
dreary or unpleasent. If the dress be not  
gay, the face smiling, the manner insinu-  
ating, they turn, with disgust, to another  
side. When we knit our brow, and have  
the look of severity and melancholy, spright-  
ly youth flies off. It avoids gloom, as it  
does the disease which takes the bloom from  
the cheeks, and leaves wrinkles and scars up-  
on the forehead.

True religion captivates the heart, by its  
cheerfulness, its softness ; its easy, open and  
engaging manners. There is no occasion for  
crossing the sweetness of the dispositions of a  
young person, or the gaiety of his humour,  
by insisting on his having a clouded eye.  
The young servant of the Lord may be  
cheerful, will be cheerful. As he hath been  
faithful in his service, this gives serenity to  
his

SERM. his looks, kindness to his temper, and innocence to his actions. But these noble dispositions, instead of misleading him, keep him from ill-adviced measures, from rash counsels, from capricious projects, and direct him to the most guarded prudence upon every emergency. The cloud is taken from his eyes; he sees every object with the eye of reason, and not of passion. For passions, if indulged, make a man fall into a snare, and create him enemies, by whom he must be ruined, for time, and for eternity.

This leads me to another branch of discourse, which I reserve for a future occasion.

SERMON

## S E R M O N II.

### 'The NECESSITY and ADVANTAGE of EARLY RELIGION.

---

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

**H**AVING exhorted the young to avoid evil habits, and having shewn that the service of God saves them from the errors and imprudence to which they are exposed; we proceed to observe,

2. That religion guards them from the sins that do most easily beset them. How wild and unmanageable is a young man, if he throw away the reins, and drive on as  
his

SERM.  
II.  
~

SERM.

II.



his passions direct him? The wild beast is not chained, but is allowed to range at large, to tear and to destroy without distinction, as his rage and the thirst for blood move him.

Now, it is a godly life only, that promises to keep in subjection the passions of a young man. The godly and the ungodly have appetites equally strong; but principles restrain the one, the other has nothing to restrain him, being without check or controul. His passions are his counsellors; they are hasty and obstinate; and, in following their advice, he ruins soul and body. Let me add, that reason is as weak as his passions are strong. Reason yields, passion mounts its throne: it issues its orders with authority; the slave trembles and obeys: the voice of virtue is not heard. How could it be heard for the noise and bluster of such rough commanders? The tyrant is not more impatient of contradiction. The young man does not mutter; he dares not do it. Unrestrained authority, and passive obedience, are the principles of that wretched government. The rod is held to the back, and the axe to the neck of that wretched slave.

In this uproar of passions, happy is the man who can turn to the gospel, to convince him that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” In this persuasion, the young man learns to mortify the body, “to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.” This consideration will check his passions in the midst of their career, and no other motive can check them. A flowery description of the beauty of virtue, or of the deformity of vice, may tickle the ear; but a man never conquers his appetites by means so ineffectual. The arrow is without a point, the spear without a head, the sword without temper, the shield and the helmet hath no defence against an enemy of such vigour. But, if we place ourselves in the presence of our Maker, though the enemy be strong, and the attack violent, we can beat him back, and attack him in his own quarters. “Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand.” Every good young man has found, in difficult trials, that they who fear  
God.

SERM.

II.



SERM.  
II.  


God have many precious resources, and great hopes of success.

This observation is illustrated in the history of Joseph, when he served in the house of Potiphar. This amiable young man was exposed to a temptation which might have been dangerous to a man of his years; doubly dangerous to one who had been driven from his father's house by a conspiracy of his brothers; who was at that time a slave, and had reason to dread the designs of a worthless woman, when her love should be changed into hatred. Add to this, that no disgrace could have fallen upon his kindred; for his father's house was unknown in that land. Nor could it have fallen heavily on himself; for, as he was a slave, no body could have been surprized, that he had the worthless principles and loose morals of a slave. If this discovery should not take place, wealth and honour might have been the consequence of his giving way to the enticement. What, in these trying circumstances, restrained him? It was religion. "How, (says he,) can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" These noble



noble words were in the mouth of a young man, the mouth of a slave. What lesson of self-command does he give every young person? How does he instruct him, to turn to God, when he is assaulted by a powerful temptation?

Every young man ought to direct himself by a sentiment of the same kind. If we do justice to this principle, we shall escape, though wickedness lay all her snares for us. In youth, heat of temper causes resentment, and resentment does not rest, till she has a blow struck at the head of the enemy. The wolf is let loose, he thirsts for blood; and if a chain be not put about his neck, there shall be no end of his ravaging. Revenge ravages like a wolf, or stings like a serpent. Upon these occasions, religion assists a young person to tame an ungovernable temper; to forgive, that he may be forgiven. The man of the world, the son of pride, the son of wrath, finds bad usage in the look of plain-dealing, in the smile of innocence, or in the liberal interpretation of charity. A pleasant look may pass for an insult, a pleasant word may be constructed into an affront.

SERM.

II.

front. Children are made orphans, wives are made widows; mothers, childless; to satisfy the wrath of the young man, who attends to the opinions of the world, though it be at the expence of polluting his conscience with shedding of blood, and of forfeiting, for ever, the favour of the Almighty. The friends who loved each other, upon a hasty or misconstrued word, are pushed by the impetuosity of youth, and by the opinions of the world, to sheathe their swords in one another's bowels. This would not have happened, could not, if the young man had remembered his Creator, and not yielded to the savage customs of unfeeling men. A man trained in this school is not apt to take offence, does not pursue his quarrels to blood; he does not stand on forms or idle ceremonies; is not ashamed to make the first concession, but strains every nerve to make up peace with his brother.

The advantages of piety are not confined to the strong passions, but extend to every branch of human life. The body is the absolute master of the young man without understanding; the gratifying his appetites

is

is his chief good. The beasts of the field know no happiness besides filling their belly. A sensual man is their companion: it would be happy for him, if his end were to be like their end; if he were to lie down, never to rise from the place where he had fallen. Thou heedless young man, who hast no thought beyond what thou shalt eat and drink; have not the lower creatures these desires as perfectly as thou hast? They go to pasture, and when full they lie down to rest; they rise again when hungry, and begin to feed a second time. Sensual young man, is not this thy history? Why dost thou prefer thyself to the beasts that perish? Dost thou value thyself upon thy reason? Thou drownest reason in wine, and thy conscience is buried in the rubbish of the vilest appetites. To such men the apostle alludes, when he says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

SERM.

II.



We

SERM.

II.

We may add to the management of our passions, that early piety convinces us of the real value of things, and teaches us to look calmly at death. The brisk spirits of volatile youth cannot easily be fixed on so serious a subject. How can he who hath no concern about to-morrow, look foreward to eternity? When vanity blows him up with an empty opinion of his person, understanding, birth, or fortune, is he apt to think that this beloved body shall, in a few years, be the food of worms, in the land of forgetfulness? When the words of a young person are repeated, his loveliness admired, his wishes anticipated; when he is respected by strangers, adored by his countrymen, will his pride allow him to think of the time when he shall ly by the side of the beggar? In this hour of thoughtlessness, religion comes to his aid. He considers youth as a painted flower, or a light blossom, which is at the mercy of every breath of wind: And, in this persuasion, he waits with patience till his change come. Though the man of the world be dismayed at the approach of death, the servant of God is calm

calm and collected, as he knows he must put off the body, before he enter into the kingdom of heaven, the blessed abode of the faints made perfect. Having this prize in view, he can part with youth, part with health, with great expectations, with riches, with honour, with kind friends, and affectionate children, with every thing that captivates the heart: He can part with them, whenever it may be the will of his Father, to call him to the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

SERM.

II.



3. WE observe, That if godliness saves us from the vices of youth, it also brings to perfection every good disposition of which that amiable age is capable. If youth, on the one hand, be exposed to great weakness, it leads to great goodness on the other. It is not so lovely in its smiles, as in the virtues with which it is adorned. The warmth and sincerity of good principled young men, the softness and delicacy of their sentiments, the openness and complacency of their manners, and a heart that places confidence in the good, and is not disposed

SERM.

II.

disposed to judge harshly of the wicked; that heart, and these sentiments, incline them to friendship, to the most steady and disinterested sort of it. They are without suspicion, without design, without distant or narrow views. A young man does not smile to deceive the credulous, and to put him off his guard. These are the arts of him, whose youth has been corrupted, whose old age has become callous in iniquity.

An unperverted youth does not lead to dark designs, it leads to every thing that is lovely. The tear of sweet sympathy falls at the sight of distress; but it is not the sympathy of words alone, which rather insults the miserable, than relieves them. The words, the good young man uses, are few, but they are of chosen kindness. He has an open hand, and a generous heart, more generous than falls to the share of old age, unless it has been formed upon a well-spent youth. The aged are lovers of the world, but there is not a covetous person among a hundred young men. Covetousness is not the disease of the age of twenty; it is the disease of the age of seventy or eighty



eighty years. Though a man has not eyes to see, nor ears to hear, the feeling of his hand, nor the taste of his mouth, he idolizes money till the time that death forces him to let go his hold.

With the generous temper of youth, give me leave to mention a steadiness in engagements, which does honour to its principles. It has not acquired the art of covering deceit, by fair speeches, or by specious arguments. A young man has not come that length in wickedness, that he can have recourse to the subtilities and distinctions of false learning, in defence of a breach of promise, or of any vicious practice. An old man, hackneyed in the ways of the world, can defend a bad cause, or a corrupt design, with the same zeal, that he fights for his children, or the cities of his fathers. A young man travels on the plain road; his conscience has not been defiled by interest, cunning, or by any of those arts, by which men study to serve the vilest principles of conduct.

With such a character, a young man engages our heart. He has every thing that

is

SERM.

II.



is lovely. He is clothed with the ornaments of modesty, and of a meek spirit: He defends his own opinion with distrust, and with deference to the experience of his parents, his guardians, his teachers; and of every body who has improved the opportunities which a long life has presented. His manners are tractable, his behaviour gentle: he promotes the good of the family, the society, and country, to which he belongs.

A religious young man has these amiable dispositions; but, if he be corrupted, he soon becomes as profligate, as rotten-hearted, as any old practitioner in worthlessness. My young friends, we have placed before you the lovely and deformed parts of your character. What a pity is it, that you should not improve these noble qualifications. If you refuse to be directed by the fear of God, the violence of your passions, the cares of the world, the contagion of bad company, and the enticement of powerful temptations, will destroy the natural goodness of your hearts: the good genius of youth will take its flight; an evil spirit

spirit will enter, to blind the understanding, mislead the will; to make you obey Satan, to make your loss heavy, and to cause your death not to be lamented. The longer you have to live, you will appear more covetous, peevish, distrustful, and be distrusted. You will not love the wisdom from above, which is pure and peaceable; but the worldly wisdom, which will make you double-minded, fond of overstretched refinements, averse from plain-dealing, and the slave of money. You will value yourselves upon the evasions of a sly, corrupted old age, more than upon the undesigned plainness of an unperverted youth. You entered into life with fair prospects. You might have been happy in yourselves, a blessing to your family, an honour to the church of God, and the ornament of your country.

The way to prevent this apostasy is, to remember your Creator in the days of youth. By this method, you will bring to maturity the finest dispositions of which the most benevolent spirits are capable. As you are already lovely to the eye, the

warmth of your affections, and the honesty of your hearts, will make you accepted of God, beloved of men.

4. To this consideration allow me to add, That an early piety makes a man discharge every duty of life, with honour to himself, with advantage to all who are connected with him, either by friendship or relation. The amusements of our childhood, and the studies of our youth, have a look towards the serious employments of manhood. Before that time, we appear as strangers in the world; our dispositions either are entirely unknown, or they are only known to a few. A sure judgement is not to be formed of a young man, till he has been loosed from a dependence upon parents and guardians. There is no determining how a man is to act who has a prompter at his ear. After we take away the prompter, we see what he is, when left to himself. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Therefore

Therefore, that is the best education, which is to give dignity and importance to the advanced periods of our lives. Now, this is done most successfully, when a man always acts under a sense of his being accountable to him, “who will render to every man according to his deeds.” He soon finds the advantage of a religious education. If he be trained to that sobriety, modesty, open dealing, and devotion, which the gospel recommends, he has a fine prospect of happiness in every station and relation. Place him in the most trying circumstances, you never find him disconcerted; for, in every condition, and in every connection, he behaves with ease, integrity, affability, and success. He is a warm-hearted affectionate father; the love of his Father in heaven refines parental tenderness, and gives his heart a feeling which others are strangers to. It is a strong motive for performing his duty, that he knows he has to answer for the advice and example he gives his children. He is a dutiful son, as he knows that he cannot have the countenance of his God, if he honour not his father

SERM.

II.



father and his mother ; if he bear not their weakness, relieve not their wants ; sympathize not with their sorrow, give them no help in their sickness. He is a kind brother, without jealousy or selfishness. These brothers have been trained for good offices ; they have no different interest. If they be dear to one another by their relation, they are much dearer by the many endearments of an innocent childhood, and an undefin- ing youth. Tenderness is in every corner of that house ; bitterness and strife are ban- ished from it. The ruler of the family watches over his little flock, his dear charge ; and is at once their father, counsellor, and friend. The happiness of that house is not confined to parents and children ; the ser- vants come in for a share of this blessing. A good man considers them as his brothers, and fellow Christians : his behaviour to them is feeling and affectionate, without pride, insult, or reproachful language : he lightens their dependence, by affability and gentle treatment. Harshness and oppression enter not the walls of a true Christian. As a master, he is not overbearing ; as a ser- vant,

vant, he is faithful ; as a husband, he is tender ; as a ruler, mild ; and as a subject, orderly. Happy is the family that hath a godly man at the head of it. Peace and love unite all the branches of it, and happiness resides in every chamber.

On the other hand, if your youth hath been spent in “ rioting and drunkenness, “ in chambering and wantonness, in strife “ and envying,” there are very poor hopes of your appearing in the world to advantage. You can neither do honour to your relations, nor good to your country. Dispeace will be in your families : You will not see the mild smile of love, but the lowering frown of hatred. You will begin the day and end it in jars, and broils, and quarrels. The father blusters to his son ; the son gives harsh language to his father : The father has a rankled heart, and furlly countenance ; the son, disobedience and defiance. The father hears of the misfortune of his son with fullen indifference, the son rejoices at the death of his father, and is not at pains to conceal his joy upon that event. The father hath not the look of a father, nor the

SERM.  
II.  


the son of a son. May God, in his love, preserve us from the misery of that unhappy family!

In order to avoid such compleat wretchedness, dedicate your first days to the service of God. In that event, you shall have that peace under your own roof, that evenness in your own temper, and that kind attention from your relatives, which is to give you satisfaction in health and sickness.

Though the righteous and the wicked were never to awaken to happiness or misery, after they had laid down their heads in the grave; yet they ought to be godly, in order to have peace and family happiness. This is before all the trappings of riches, and all the pursuits of ambition. "Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith." If there be good principles, men may be happy though they be poor. The eyes and the hearts of all are together: they are cemented by the law of God, and by the kind affections of domestic peace; the first worldly blessing that God bestows upon the sons  
and

and daughters of men. A good conscience supports them, and enables them to fulfil the duties of every station. Let us therefore, remember our Creator in the days of our youth, and we shall be happy in ourselves, and be a blessing to our fathers, and to our children.

SERM.  
II.  
~

5. WE may add, that a well-spent youth supports us under the hardships of old age.

Amidst the gaiety of youth, when we enjoy health, when our friends honour us, when our enemies give way to us, when we are carressed by all who come near us; and when every desire of our heart is gratified; when we are in this envied state, we may have a shadow of happiness, though we have not God in all our thoughts. A melancholy reverse of condition attends the old age, that followeth a corrupted youth. Depraved old men have not health, vigour, or cheerful spirits, to conceal their wickedness, and to lay their consciences asleep. But, if they have employed the best part of their lives in the service of God, they shall have joy in old age, though surrounded

ed

SERM.

II.



ed by many grievous calamities. Though the disease be so violent, that human patience would be worn out by it; though the body be weak, and the spirits oppressed, the remembrance of a well-spent youth will give old age joy amidst its sufferings, and its debility. Though their children be torn from them, when their fond hopes were at the height, yet the looking back to the days that are past, will yield them comfort, and wipe the tear from the eye of grief. Amidst the piercing sorrow for departed children, a sorrow which wrings the soul, it is a pleasant thought that we have brought up our families in the fear of God, have made them companions of the wise and good, and have cherished in their tender minds, devout sentiments, charitable opinions, and benevolent actions. When we are near the end of our journey, how transporting is the thought, that we have been guides to our sons and daughters to the kingdom of heaven. We did not think that the duty of fathers was fulfilled by providing food and raiment for them, and leaving them an inheritance. What joy to a dying man to have

to reflect on the good he has done in his generation. This is the cause of that noble declaration of Joshua, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." The aged servant of God departs in peace. The father was the light of the former generation, the son is the light of this. The virtues of the old are revived in the rising race; and every body has to observe, Does not the manner of the son put you in mind of the manner of the father? Happy father! happy son!

Early piety is the best preparative for death. No earthly attainment can raise the falling spirits of a decrepid old man, who is near the term of his dissolution. Gold and silver lose their lustre, the fields their verdure, and the hall its ornaments. The natural reflection of an old man is, "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?"

When death advances, guarded by his band of diseases, the shining toys and gaudy  
F amusements

SERM.

II.

amusements of life, are in no hazard of deceiving us. We doated on them when we were in health. Our happiness consisted in having our cattle multiplied on the hills, our corn increased on the plain, in having many measures of wine and oil, in having our houses adorned, in being clothed in purple and fine linen. "We have made fine gold our hope; and have said to the fine gold, Thou art our confidence." Three days of sickness will change the face of things, and discover the vanity of our worldly pursuits. At an hour of death, the joys of conscience alone can give us relief. Let death come early or late, a good man is at his ease. Being broken with age, bowed down by sickness, or tormented with pain, his hearing and his sight failing him, while he lies panting for breath; what can cheer his mind, but the looking back to the exercises of devotion, and the works of charity. "His prayers and his alms are come for a memorial before God."

These are the advantages of early piety. May you act the part which must give you joy, in youth, in old age, in health, in sickness, in life, in death, and after death.

SERMON

# S E R M O N III.

## The NECESSITY and ADVANTAGES of EARLY RELIGION.

---

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

**W**HATEVER be our way of life, we SERM.  
III. propose to enjoy peace in old age, after the bustle is at an end, which ariseth from the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, or ambition. Though we be long tossed on a boisterous sea, we expect at last to enter a safe harbour. The young man goeth to war, that, after many years of fatigue, he may have rest for his aged head, and for his body covered

SERM. covered with scars. He travels to the end  
 III. of the earth, that he may live at his ease  
 when he shall be weak and worn out; that  
 his gray hairs be not exposed to the storm,  
 or driven upon the rocks. Let an old man  
 keep from the scorching sun, the piercing  
 cold, the toils of war, the labours of peace.  
 Let him be stretched under his own vine  
 or fig-tree, and eat of the fruit of the di-  
 ligence of his youth.

In youth, we have to act in such a  
 manner, that we may reasonably hope for  
 peace during the last period of our lives.  
 It is only a godly life that gives us this com-  
 fortable expectation. Though we have pain  
 and sickness, poverty and reproach, we  
 have a good conscience to support our tot-  
 tering steps, and to guide us, when our  
 hands are weak, our eyes dim, and our  
 feet stumble. The wise man directs us to  
 this reflection in our text; and leads us,

I. To dedicate our youth to religion.

II. To observe the hazard of delaying to  
 old age the reformation of our lives.

Having finished the first, we proceed to  
 the second.

The danger of delay appears from the following particulars.

1. Habits of vice, contracted from youth to age, are so strong, that it is very difficult to get the better of them.

In entering upon the former part, we had occasion of observing, that the power of bad habits is alarming to a young man. We now observe, that it is much more dangerous to an old man, as it has continued for many years, is more inveterate, gives weak hopes of reformation, and raises great fear of total apostasy.

We do not say, that a man may not repent at the last: all our addresses and exhortations go upon the supposition of repentance. Tenderness for poor creatures in deep distress, make these exhortations proper. It would be excessively unfeeling to deny comfort to great affliction, or to bring despair to the bed of a crazed old man, broken with many diseases. And, though neither reason nor scripture give great encouragement for expecting the conversion of a very aged transgressor; yet still, humanity obliges us to exhort him, as he hath brought his wickedness



SERM.

III.



edness that length, that he hath no view of making his peace with God, except what a death-bed repentance affords him.

Though this be granted in compassion to his condition ; yet he must be put in mind, that the habit which has been so long growing to a head, makes his condition to be very melancholy : for, what can be more melancholy, than “ that every imagination “ of the thought of his heart was only evil “ continually ? ” The disease has taken so deep root, and is so twisted into his soul, that no art can eradicate it, no medicine can cure it. The man was blind from his birth ; how is he to recover his sight ? The sun does not enter those eyes which had been covered with specks for sixty years. A lingering disease continues till death has put the finishing hand to the work of years.

What happens to the body, happens to the soul. Habit destroys its vigour, and makes it the servant of wickedness, a slave that is not to be emancipated, a slave for life, a slave after death. The habitual sinner opens his eyes in slavery, closes them in slavery. “ Know ye not, that to whom

“ ye

“ ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his  
“ servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience  
“ unto righteousness.” The prophet expresses, in the strongest language, the difficulty of getting the better of wicked habits: “ Can the Ethiopian change his skin,  
“ or the leopard his spots? then may ye  
“ also do good, that are accustomed to do  
“ evil.”

He is very ignorant of human weakness, who looks upon this as a slight evil. The wound is deep, it has been long festering: The arrow is fastened in the side; if it remains there, or be cut out, death is to be looked for. He cannot be in earnest, who expects, with ease, to part with a vice with which he has been familiar for many years. The road is smooth in travelling forward; but it is steep and rugged, when we want to turn back. How shall a vicious old man find the way back? The yoke hath been a long time about his neck: it is a yoke of iron; how can he break it? He may indeed propose to amend after a certain term; but will he be able to do it? The aged oak  
has

SERM.

III.

has acquired a size and hardness which are beyond the weak efforts of his hands. He may strain his own joints, but the oak stands firm, and shall stand firm, defying his force.

Does a day pass in which we do not see the ascendancy of bad habits? The swearer, with every opening of his mouth, takes the name of God in vain. Custom has mastered him to that degree, that he cannot speak six sentences, at a time, without hideous oaths and imprecations: his tongue falters, if he attempt to speak in another dialect: Cursing is his eloquence; blasphemy his choice figure of speech. He begins to utter the language of Satan, as soon as he can pronounce the words, and his master could not revile the Lord more fluently. He swears in the sight of the grave. Though his voice be so weak, that he can scarcely be heard, yet, in broken words, and with panting breath, he goes on to defy the most High.

The same things happens to him who has acquired a habit of double-dealing. Does an old deceiver become a man of a  
plain

plain life? His hand shakes, his eye becomes dim, and his ear deaf, in laying plots for over-reaching the simple, in contriving and executing designs of fraud. Though he be sick unto death, and though he see the hand of God raised to execute judgement, yet, in defiance of death and judgement, he lays his snares for friends and enemies. He would cheat, though he saw he was to shut against himself the gates of heaven; and though the bottomless pit were ready to receive him.

The same observation is applicable to him, who has long been the slave of impure passions. Though the *wild* time of life be past, the habit remains: the man retains the vices of the boy; the old, those of the young. A profligate youth, makes a profligate old age. There is vice always beginning, always increasing; impurity becomes more impure; sensuality more sensual: Sin becomes exceeding sinful; principle is destroyed. An old man of this description is a poor sight. His roving eye, and irregular looks, discover how rotten his heart is: his manner is immodest, his

G

tongue

SERM.  
III.

tongue is wild; he puts modesty to the blush; virtue hangs down her head. A worthless old man is the most shocking of all spectacles: he staggers into the grave with habits which make him wretched in this life, and in that which is to come. Instead of breaking his chains, he rivets them: he cannot move a hand; he cannot stir a foot: the prisoner in a dungeon is much more free. Is it not the height of folly to delay so long, that it must be a miracle if he repent?

To make his situation the worse, he has gone on so far, that he has little reason to hope for the assistance of his conscience. The young sinner, indeed, feels great uneasiness this way. Conscience is a troublesome visitor to a young man. Remorse is keen while it lasts, so keen that many arts are found out for stifling it; and these arts are pursued with such success, that, by degrees, men get entirely the better of it. This year it is not so distressing as it was the last; and it will be less so the next than it is this: It will not be half so severe at the age of forty, as it was at that of twenty:

It

It will be as nothing at seventy. An old transgressor laughs at conscience; and thinks the young creature an absolute simpleton who is disturbed by it. He never is interrupted by it, unless in the time of sickness, or of other misfortunes. He becomes so hardened, that he is past feeling. Conscience, which should open his heart, or open his hand, is laid asleep; or, by dexterous management, is made a party against godliness. The young tyrant feels the lash of conscience, the old tyrant wades in blood; and is never disturbed by the reflection of his own mind. Habit has got him at under, and will keep him at under.

We have also to consider, that the longer we continue in wickedness, the harder must our work be, when we seriously attempt to repent. This day our reformation may be set about with little trouble; to-morrow it may be somewhat more difficult than it is this day; and, in thirty or forty years, the trouble may be doubled or trebled. Now, if we could not repent, when our tempers were pliable; what hope can we have, when every sin is stiffened by the long

SERM.  
III.



long contracted prejudice of an unprincipled old age. There is nothing more disgusting than a corrupted old man. Without strength of passions, he is debauched; without powerful temptations, he is profligate; without a warm temper, he is imprudent. When he was young, he joined in the sneer of infidelity; because laughter was agreeable to his thoughtless humour: When he is old, he joins in it without cheerfulness, or an open countenance. Being a volunteer in the service, he obeys the devil for nothing; and it is his study to train the young in his own school. A wicked old man does more harm than twenty young ones can do. The youth of a city is corrupted by a few of these veteran sinners. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." The old sinner gathers the experience of eighty years, in order to make vice the more enticing: he has the deceit of many

many false men, in order to make dishonesty  
lovely. "He eats the bread of wickedness,  
"and drinks the wine of violence." He  
ridicules the providence of God, his reve-  
lation, and his ordinances. He blasphemes  
when he has health, he blasphemes when  
he is sick; and with his last breath he cur-  
ses God, and dies. Why then should we  
delay till we be overtaken by the obstinacy  
of old age, and be hardened through the  
deceitfulness of sin?

We may find plausible pretexts for this  
procrastinating humour, but let us not give  
way to them. We say, that we cannot be  
holy, when the passions are so strong, when  
reason is so weak; and when the world is  
full of those who undermine the principles,  
and seduce the heart; but that we shall act  
otherwise, when we shall become advanced  
in years. This, however, is a dangerous  
mistake. Some of the worst passions never  
acquire great strength, till the man be very  
old. How seldom does a covetous, deceit-  
ful, oppressive, or revengeful man, become  
generous, open-hearted, sympathizing, or  
forgiving, at the age of seventy or eighty  
years?

SERM.

III.



SERM.

III.



years? We have no experience of so late a change; and it is not uncharitable to say, it does not happen in one of a hundred cases. Why should we venture our happiness, where there are a hundred chances against us, for every one that is for us?

2. If it be dangerous to delay reformation, on account of the power of bad habits; it is dangerous on account of the natural infirmities of old age.

The service of God, taken in all its parts, requires the vigour of our best days. We are only qualified for it, when our bodies are firm, and free from disease: but health and vigour are, in the course of things, denied the aged; weakness and disease make up their portion. How many names have these diseases? How do they reduce the strength of the body? how great a cloud do they bring over the faculties of the soul? And, a state of weakness is ill calculated for the watchfulness, the stretch of thought, and the earnestness, which every part of religion, particularly repentance requires. In old age we not only are exposed to great weakness,

weakness, but are often broken by a lingering distemper, which hovers about us for many years. During these tedious years, we are scarcely able to prop up our staggering body, our feet tremble under us, our steps are short and unsure; our feeble knees bend, at every motion we gasp for breath; and the walking of a few paces discompose us more than the running of a race does a young man; and is like crossing the mountains of Horeb or Ararat. What fatigue are we then fit for? What enemy dare we look in the face? Is it not folly in the extreme to put off to this evil day, when we shall say, I have no pleasure in them? Other men have felt great weakness in the decline of life; what security have you or I, that we are not to feel it? We may trust to have our share of the miseries of life. Who knows how heavy the burden is which he must bear sooner or later? Who can calculate the infirmities of old age? And when we are tormented by pain, or faint with sickness, have we leisure, or presence of mind, for adjusting the long and perplexed account of the actions done in the body?

Alas!

SERM. Alas! violent distress is of itself a heavy  
 III. burden, though it be not weighed down  
 by a disturbed conscience.

If it should happen that we are to enjoy vigour and activity, at an age when others usually have to suffer much distress, the apology that served in our youth, will serve us when we are to be well stricken in years. The strength of our bodies would make us remove the evil day at a great distance. As our limbs are firm, our sight and hearing acute, we think ourselves very young men at seventy; and do not propose to remember God, till a crazed body and a broken heart have convinced us that our glass is almost run, and that we have to go hence, and be no more.

A strong man does not think of death. yet how many strong men fall down without warning? They fall down in the twinkling of an eye: they drop in the streets, or in the midst of cheerful company. They have not power to raise their heads, or to recommend their souls to God. The summons is peremptory; they have to answer in a single second of time; there is no re-  
 spite

spite here: the house of feasting, in an instant, becomes the house of mourning. This moment there is great joy; the next there is to be bitter lamentations for the dead. "The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." The chronicles of death are filled with instances of these sudden events. How many unexpected things have we seen, how many have we heard of? In the last stage of life men are more exposed than at any other time: And this shows the folly of making a vigorous old age an excuse for delaying to remember God.

And if, sometimes, men in their decline enjoy firm health, yet the wicked have no good reason to expect that this will be their privilege. The man who has the command of himself, hath good ground of hope, that, as his youth hath been free from vice, his old age may have rest from violent diseases. But the slave of his passions hath long been laying up materials for corruption. The seeds are sown in youth, they grow up to

SERM.  
III.

maturity as our years advance. At the age of fifty a wicked man is as much broken as a servant of the Lord is at seventy. Therefore, though there were no day of reckoning, a man ought to be virtuous, for the ease and comfort he hath to expect even in this life.

But, though a man should have a sound body to the last, with what confidence can he look for a sound mind? Is it not known that the most vigorous understanding, and the brightest spirits, fall off at the earliest period, and in the most compleat manner. The wisest becomes the most foolish; the most learned, the most ignorant. His memory fades, his imagination becomes wild, his judgement childish; and all the powers of his mind are entirely worn out, by being so long, and so severely exercised. How seldom has a man of eighty years of age, the regular memory, sound judgement, and correctest imagination of a person of forty years? What a falling off do we observe in the narrow circle of our own acquaintance? Why should we, then, trust the one thing needful to him who is only a shadow of  
what

what he once was? We have occasion for memory to recal past sins, and to resume neglected duties; for a sound fancy, that we may not be led astray by the false appearance of things; and for a clear judgement, in order to observe distinctly the present and future consequences of every thing we set seriously about. A man with impaired faculties may imagine he has repented, though he be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. As he has lost the vigour of his mind, he may mourn for small faults, and neglect great duties; strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. He cannot offer his Maker the sacrifice of a reasonable service. As he was not holy when he was young, he cannot hope to be holy amidst all the infirmities of body and mind which surround him in the dark, uncomfortable days of old age. He may acquire something which he may believe to be religion, some idle thing in which he trusts, and from which he may expect that his days may be closed in peace. He may have bendings of the body, and the magic charms of superstition; he may keep certain days, visit certain

SERM.

III.



**SERM.** tain places, mutter certain words, turn to  
**III.** the right or to the left; he may make broad  
 the phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of  
 his garments, but he does not worship God  
 in spirit and truth. Though he break the  
 commandments, he values himself upon  
 saying, Lord, Lord: and he believes him-  
 self to be the child of God, though his lips  
 declare him to be the child of Satan.

Therefore, as old age in its dotage may  
 trust in a form of godliness, and deny its  
 power, it is very improper to delay to that  
 time. This leads to a clear conclusion, that  
 youth, and not old age, is the time for re-  
 membering our Creator.

# S E R M O N IV.

## The NECESSITY and ADVANTAGES of EARLY RELIGION.

---

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

**W**E proceed to observe,

3. THAT it is hazardous to trust to old age, because the time may be too short for performing all the duties which are required of us.

The length of our lives is one of the most uncertain events of the providence of God. I mean, it is uncertain in regard to our knowledge

SERM.  
IV.



SERM.

IV.



knowledge of it, though our term be fixed by the appointment of the Almighty, who numbers our days, and without whom an hair of our heads cannot fall to the ground. But man is entirely in the dark; "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only." Many have seen the year begin, who shall not see it end; many, the rising of the sun, who shall not see it set. Even in the gay, the giddy days of our youth, how near may the king of terrors be to us? Perhaps he is this moment making ready to strike, and the dart, though unseen, may be near your head or mine. Many are the accidents, many the diseases which surround us! Little do we think of what is before us. The mine is charged, the train is laid, the match lighted; we walk above it without concern; and there shall be no warning, till the explosion be heard. In this state of uncertainty, where can we find a pretence for delay? Trust not in to-morrow, for you may never see it; but use the present day properly, for that is the only day you are masters of.

There

There may, however, be a sort of apology for a young man; for, at the worst, he has a fair prospect of living many years. If he should have a view of escaping, yet it is not in nature for an old man to escape much longer. Every thing has its season for flourishing, its season for decaying. Trees flourish in spring, corn grows, but, after a certain time, the trees shed their leaves, the corn rots on the ground. Old age is the winter of life, when the storms come, and every green thing withers, and there is an universal devastation. Indeed, there may be a storm in summer, but in winter there is one storm after another, from first to last. If we have reached the age of seventy or eighty years, we find that few and evil are the remaining days of our pilgrimage. And, if we put off to that period, we shall, probably find that we have not time for finishing the one half of our duty.

The turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, must not be done in a hurry. A general sorrow does not constitute a penitent: We must recollect our sins one by one, and give proof of our sincerity

SERM.  
IV.

cerity by our perseverance. A day, a week, a month, does not afford sufficient evidence of sincere reformation; no, not even a year, or two, or three years. Bad habits must be got under in as slow a manner as they had been acquired; or, to speak more properly, the unlearning a wicked custom takes a longer time, on account of our natural bias towards vice. Have we injured any body? We must make full reparation. Have we over-reached him? We must make restitution of the last farthing. Have we hurt the character of our neighbour? We must not rest, till we have made more people acquainted with his justification, than we made acquainted with the accusation. Have we oppressed the weak, or increased the poverty of the poor? It must take a time before we acquire a soft heart, and feeling temper: the heart and temper, without which, God will not give an answer to our prayers. If we used to ridicule the gospel; it is not in a few days that we can form ourselves for habitual devotion, and do full justice to that revelation which we have so long despised, and against which we have taken every unfair advantage.

It

It is unnecessary to inform you, that it requires time and care to carry into execution all these important designs. To have success in them, we must be assisted by our own experience, by that of others, and by all the knowledge we acquire by examining the word of God. Do we seriously think, that the short, the uncertain days of a feeble old age, are sufficient for this great undertaking? How can we be of this mind, if we pretend to act as reasonable creatures? And, if we give way to this delusion, we shall, on every pretext, delay, day after day: and, when we shall resolve to repent in earnest, so many difficulties will crowd about us, that we shall give up with religion, as with a thing not to be attained by an old man. A sudden despair makes our countenance to fall, and checks every resolution of amendment: The soul lothes at life, and, weary of its own miserable existence, concludes, that "God hath forgotten to be gracious; that he hath in anger shut up his tender mercies." It is thy misery, old man, that if thou ever shalt have a sense of thy sins, such horrors will

SERM. encompasses thee, that thou shalt, probably,  
 IV. despair of seeing the face of the Lord in  
 mercy.

If old age should not despair, there is a hazard, on the other side, of its presuming upon mercy; of laying asleep an offended conscience, by a partial, instead of a full change of life. At any rate, it may be too late for expecting that we can, successfully, go through the reformation of every part of our conduct. Death may surprize us, before we shall have made any progress; and we may have to leave the world with a long unsettled account, and have to appear before the judgement-seat of God, with a heavy burden of sins not repented of.

Have we any certainty for such a lease of life, as will give full time for our acquiring a saving faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life? In the florid days of youth, the hand of death may strike us, and our beauty and strength may fade, as the rose of Sharon withers in spring, when the root which nourishes it is torn up. The tears of a wife, the tears of parents, the tears of children, cannot save us for an  
 hour,

hour. Death, equally, enters the palaces SERM.  
of kings, and the cottages of labourers. IV.

Melancholy is the prospect which a long life affords. My aged friend, how many changes hast thou observed! Cast thy eyes round this house, where thy father and thy brothers used to come. How few canst thou number of the companions of thy youth? Thou hast reached fourscore years. Where is thy brother? where the friend of thy bosom? where is he whom thy soul loved? They are departed, all are departed. They are forgotten, thou too shalt soon be forgotten. One of a hundred does not live to this term. What folly is it to trust to an age which one of a hundred does not reach?

You propose to repent when you shall become old. What, if you never shall be old? What will happen in that case? You propose to serve God, in thirty or forty years time. But what security have you for a single year, or a single week? Trust not in the years to come. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Have no confidence in old age; lean not on a broken reed. There are ten chances

SERM.  
IV.



to one that you never shall reach seventy ; and a hundred to one that you shall not pass eighty. Ten young men walk the streets for one old man ; and that solitary old man may get a call this very day : “ Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.” If you or I should get this call, weeping and wailing would be our portion, if we had not remembered the things belonging to our peace. The lesson to be learned from all this, is that which the Psalmist gives in these words : “ I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.”

If a messenger from heaven were to pronounce that you are certainly to be old ; yet how foolish would it be to trust to an uncertain repentance at that time. When an ordinary life-time were spent, how delightful for us to lengthen our reprieve for several years longer. We say, that a man of seventy is an old man ; that one of eighty is very old ; but we would firmly expect to exceed the life of both. The old man would amuse himself with a thousand delusive hopes : He would bring an excuse for his

neglect

neglect from the ends of the earth. He had heard of persons who had lived above a hundred years; and though the story should have been founded on fiction, he would have trusted in it, as if it had been the voice of an oracle. Men pass through life, as if they had been enchanted: they form projects in the clouds, and they bring them down to their own dwelling-places. Though only one of a thousand escapes from this wreck, every body expects that the plank upon which he has taken hold, is to carry him safe to land, at a hundred leagues distance. Unsubstantial notions turn our heads; we grasp at shadows, and build our happiness upon a dream. "We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten: and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years; yet is their strength, labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

If we begin to form excuses, we shall form them to the end. In childhood we delay to youth; youth looks to manhood; manhood, to old age; old age, to a death-bed repentance: And the last error is the most

SERM.

IV.



SERM.

IV.



most mischievous, as it is not to be remedied. The old spirit of delay finds its way to a death-bed: With how many evasions, with how many idle excuses is not this spirit attended? How easily do we forget our duty in the midst of such embarrassments?

If we put off to a death-bed, we may be in such circumstances, that it may be impracticable to repent. The agony of our last sickness may be so excruciating, that all calmness and recollection shall be entirely banished. The distress too, of parting with kind friends, or helpless children, and of leaving our affairs in disorder, may so engage us, that we cannot bestow attention upon settling the affairs of our souls. The tear of real sorrow, or the whine of counterfeited sympathy, may reach the eye or the ear of the dying man; may disturb his serious thoughts, and turn all his attention to the things of this world. May not the palsy, which takes feeling from our joints, take reason from our souls. The fever, which is the harbinger of death, makes a man see strange sights, and hear strange voices. He has disjointed dreams when he is asleep; he roves when he is awake. He  
does

does not know his son, he does not know his brother: His friends are strangers to him: His wife and his children are indifferent to him. Where is his reason? His reason is in ruins. He is much to be pitied. The warm tear falls from the eye of compassion, upon the grave of this son of affliction. Can any man be more unfit for searching his heart, and amending his life, than this person is?

If our disease be not so violent, yet, by its continuance, we may come to the last degree of weakness; so that we cannot speak or hear, or see. We cannot move our eye, we could not draw our hand out of the fire, we could not, at once, swallow a mouthful of water without suffocation. It is only by the interrupted beating of the pulse, or by our faint breathing, or the weak heat of our bodies, that we are to be distinguished from those who have given up the ghost. How melancholy is this condition, and how ill fitted for making a man die in the Lord, and with joy give an account of his stewardship! Now, the delaying to old age, is, probably, delaying till we be in so distressing

ing

SERM.

IV.



SERM. ing circumstances. How can a man re-  
 IV. member his Creator when he does not know  
 himself?

Upon these principles, do not trust to old age; but set apart, for the service of God, the vigour of youth, the firmness of health, the strength of reason, the purity of conscience. If you have done his will, when you were young, he will not forsake you, when you shall have become old. Though your body be frail, even though your reason leave you, you shall be happy, as you were faithful stewards when you had a sound understanding, and an unblemished conscience.

Having in this and the former discourses endeavoured to engage you to an early piety, and to deter you from delaying to old age, I beg your patience a little longer, while I make application of this subject to three sorts of people.

1. I address my discourse to those persons who have remembered their Creator in the days of their youth.

My

My young friends, there is a great pleasure in speaking to you, as you are the most lovely of the servants of God. You have sweet dispositions, and ingenuous hearts, which dispose you to make the best use of every exhortation. "The love of God is shed abroad in your hearts;" and this has added beauty to your youth, and will add constancy to your old age. We congratulate you upon all the satisfactions which a tender conscience bestows upon you. We congratulate you upon the happiness which a pious education, and a regular life, have afforded you. Your present condition is comfortable; your future views are exalted. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is your God; and you "have chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from you." While others of your age have their minds fixed on riches, pleasure, or praise; while they humour their passions, or gratify their ambition, your treasure is in heaven; you have the praise of God, and of a clear conscience.

The world may hate you, and rail at you; you may be avoided by persons of your age,

K

who

SERM.  
IV.

who walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and sit in the chair of the scornful: but the children of God love you, and always will love you. With what sincerity of affection does John, the beloved servant of the Lord, address you, in these tender words? "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." This very aged servant of Christ had outlived the rest of the apostles, and the burden of instructing the church lay upon him. He spoke to old and young, with the authority of a father, with the warm heart, and tender concern of the most affectionate father. He thus explains his design in addressing them: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." To you, my young friends, who are devout and charitable, the warm address of this aged

aged apostle is applicable, and will be allowed to have great force.

SERM.  
IV.

You have continued faithful, in times when you were surrounded by very formidable enemies. This exemplary conduct is to be repaid by the favour of God, and by a conscience void of offence. Your light did shine before other young men, for their direction in the way that leadeth to life. The hearts of your parents rejoice, and their eyes are raised up to heaven in thankful acknowledgment to Him who gave them such children. No satisfaction, no earthly happiness is to be compared with that of having virtuous children. Their affluence makes us proud; their wisdom is our boast, their courage is our glory; but their charitable opinions, their strict integrity, their benevolent tempers, their prayers and their alms, in the first place, are a great blessing to themselves, and in the next place, a sort of unutterable joy to their parents. Every good man can put his hand on his heart, and say with sincerity: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Though such parents be poor, though they

be

SERM.  
IV.

be meanly thought of; they shall triumph in the lovely characters of their children. Other parents wish to be as your parents, to bring to their own breasts the happiness that reigns in yours. You shall be pointed out as dutiful children; and every parent will say to his child, My son, my daughter, be like the sons and daughters of this man; “The sons of God, without rebuke, in the “midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”

You must not, however, rest upon the former part of your lives; or believe that you have not to advance a step farther than you have done already. “Therefore, be-  
“loved, seeing ye know these things be-  
“fore, beware lest ye also being led away  
“with the error of the wicked, fall from  
“your own steadfastness. But grow in grace,  
“and in the knowledge of our Lord and  
“Saviour Jesus Christ.”

With great labour, and much anxiety, you have combated the fierce passions of youth, and got a noble victory in this honourable warfare. The vigorous arms of the young warriors have chased the enemy from the field; and their heads have been  
crowned

crowned with wreaths of honour, gained in this combat. The veteran must not give way to the adversary, whom the raw soldier defeated. He must not exhibit less fortitude at fifty, than he did at twenty years of age. Do not tarnish your age with foul blots that your youth abhorred. The half of religion, the most difficult half is already made compleat. Let not an old man be more weak, and more easily enticed than a young man. When the most severe trials have not turned you aside: When you have defended your hearts against the most impetuous foes, do not turn your backs, after they have been weakened, and can only wield a light spear. A vicious age, succeeding a virtuous youth, brings double disgrace.

As you have begun your warfare properly, you must persevere to the end. “ Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith.” By such perseverance, a crown of joy is bestowed upon you,

SERM.

IV.



you, which the Lord has purchased. "There-  
 fore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast  
 and unmoveable; always abounding in  
 the work of the Lord; for as much as ye  
 know that your labour is not vain in the  
 Lord."

Though you be strong, at this time; new temptations may come suddenly, or in disguise. The cares of the world may inveigle a man in his decline, who has withstood the allurements of pleasure in the flower of life. Cunning may appear like prudence; covetousness, like frugality; peevishness and harsh judgment, like strictness of morals, and aversion from vice. In such circumstances, you must be very attentive. You must not give way to the temptations of youth, nor to the selfish contracted habits of old age. Pray that God would not allow your last days to be tarnished by vices that you kept far from in your first days. You are to join in the prayer and acknowledgment of the Psalmist: "O God, thou  
 hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."

2. I am to address such as have neglected to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

SERM.  
IV.  
~~~~~

How precious is the opportunity you have lost! How have you requited your Maker, for your creation, preservation, and redemption? You have refused the things belonging to your peace, till you have caused them to be hid from your eyes. You might have been the free servants of the Lord, but you have resolved to be the bondmen of the world, and of the unruly appetites of the body. You have grown old without wisdom: you suffer for the sins of your early life. The dregs of youth have made sour the breath of old age. Alas! you have deserved wrath; a diseased body, and a blasted character are to attend you to your grave.

Do you hope for mercy? Upon what do you found that hope? Do you expect that you can do more, at this late hour, than you had courage to attempt at an early one? How shall the weak conquer the enemy which had baffled the strong? Shall the man of seventy have firmer nerves, and a stouter heart, than one of thirty? Shall the  
withered

SERM.  
IV.

withered hand of an old man, draw the bow, or brandish the spear, to which the arm of the young man was not equal? You slept when you were young, shall you watch when you shall have become old? When you have lost your strength, though you were once like Samson, Delilah may bind you with cords, the Philistines may put out your eyes.

Shall I say that you are forsaken of God? Why should I form this harsh judgment? Ungrateful as you have been; much as you have abused his mercy, he intreats you to leave your evil courses; “Let the wicked  
“forsake his way,—and let him return un-  
“to God, and he will have mercy upon  
“him.”

However, if you do not repent, your case is desperate. You may be standing on the brink of the grave; one step may bring you to eternity. “Every tree which bring-  
“eth not forth good fruit, is hewn down,  
“and cast into the fire.” You have kept from the worship of God when you were young, and you have no inclination for it, when you have become old. What folly hath

hath directed you? A foolish gray-headed man is the most foolish of all men.

SERM.

IV.



“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?” If you should slight the present opportunities, when do you expect to have a better? Do ye deceive yourselves with the delusive hopes of a death-bed repentance? or, do you look for annihilation, the last anchor which an old man throws out, when he is about to be dashed upon the rocks. This is the anchor of infidelity; if it does not hold, he is driven ashore, miserable is his end. How art thou fallen, wretched man! how hast thou forgot the dignity of thy nature? And dost thou build thy happiness upon the dissolution of thy soul? Poor old man! dost thou depend upon the dotage of infidelity? May God give you hopes more comfortable in themselves, and more suited to your situation. Decrepid as your body is, low as your spirits are, polluted, as your hearts, he will not throw you off, if you desire to be reconciled to him. His mercy is not as the mercy of man: His vengeance ceases, when the sinner ceases from his evil deeds. To

L

this

SERM.

IV.

this purpose is that comfortable expression in the prophecies of Ezekiel: "Therefore, " O thou son of man, speak unto the house " of Israel, saying, If our transgressions and " our sins be upon us, and we pine away " in them, how should we then live? Say " unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, " I have no pleasure in the death of the " wicked, but that the wicked turn from " his way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye, from " your evil ways; for why will ye die, O " house of Israel?"

As your condition is dangerous, make use of the short time that remains, and be indefatigable in employing every moment of it. Delay not to that time which may make you unfit for every serious affair: " While the evil days come not, nor the " years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I " have no pleasure in them."

3. Our third address is to Christian parents.

You see the advantages derived from early godliness. If you love your children, and wish for comfort from them, exercise  
your-

yourselfes in this cause. “Train up a child  
“in the way he should go, and, when he  
“is old, he will not depart from it.” Bring  
up your families in the nurture and admo-  
nition of the Lord. Direct their soft and  
tender minds to the love of justice, sobriety,  
and humanity. At that age, they easily re-  
tain any impressions, especially such as are  
stamped upon them by the hand of a father.  
If you be careful parents to your children,  
you may hope that they are to be dutiful  
children to you. In the first place, give  
them good principles, but do not bewilder  
their weak judgments with things of idle  
speculation, or with things far above their  
capacity. “Avoid foolish questions, and  
“genealogies, and contentions, and striv-  
“ings about the law; for they are unpro-  
“fitable and vain. Your instructions can-  
not be too plain. The least intricacy dis-  
concerts a young person. The words should  
be the most obvious; the arguments the  
most familiar; they should be short, clear,  
pleasing to the fancy, and suited to the un-  
derstanding of a child. Above every thing,  
be at pains about their morals, and strive to  
deduce

SERM.  
IV.  
~

deduce every obligation from the doctrines and precepts of the New Testament. Teach them early to avoid dissimulation and double-dealing: Shew them that falsehood is a base thing, and that truth is never to be sacrificed to schemes of interest, or of pleasure. Let all your instructions lead them to remember their Creator. Convince them that God sees their actions, hears their words, searches their hearts, and that there is no escaping from his displeasure. If you give them this education, they shall be happy in themselves, an honour to you, a blessing to their families, an ornament to society, a defence to their country, and the glory of the Israel of God.

For this end, you must practise every thing you require of them. If you be devout and charitable, you may expect that your children will be charitable and devout. But, if you, who are parents, be ungodly and dishonest, how can you expect to have good principled children. They cannot believe that any thing disgraceful should be practised by those, whom they were taught to consider as the best judges of every thing  
that

that was proper, and whose lives, early préjudice convinced them to have been the best model for every thing that ought to be respected among men.

SERM.

IV.

A wicked man does his utmost to vitiate the principles, and corrupt the morals of his own household; to make their life abandoned, their death unhappy, and to prolong their misery after death. If you saw a man sharpen the dagger, or mix poison for his own children, how monstrously unnatural would the cruelty of that man appear? yet he is a worse poisoner, who can calmly destroy their principles, and make them heirs of the wrath of the most High. How can the child of such a father be disciplined to the service of God. Thou art a barbarous father; he is an unhappy child. Thy language and manners are impure: Thou swearest in his hearing; thou over-reachest before his eyes; thou makest a mock of religion, and encouragest him to do it. How can he be good, when such pains are taken to make him evil! An old enemy of God always educates a young enemy; the child follows his parent, though with unequal steps.

The

SERM.

IV.



The other side of this prospect is more agreeable: we pray that it may present a greater number of happy parents and children than this does of unhappy ones. The servant of the Lord trains up his child in the practice of virtue. In how beautiful a light doth Abraham appear? to whom God himself gives this lovely character; "For  
 " I know him, that he will command his  
 " children, and his household after him,  
 " and they shall keep the way of the Lord,  
 " to do justice and judgement." We have to follow this noble example. My hearers, give your children a good example, that your houses may be filled with men who love God, and hate covetousness.

Upon this footing yours must be a happy house. Your children will bless God for having such parents; and, after you have left them, they shall have the example of your virtues, to direct themselves, and all under their roofs. Long after you shall have been in the grave, your son, with raptures, will speak to your grandson; Hear, O my son, such was my father, such I hope thou shalt be. Thou art to have the inheritance

of his character : follow him ; and every father will point you out to his children. Thy life shall be happy, and thou shalt die the death of the righteous. The God of Abraham, will be the God of Isaac, and of Jacob, and a long race of saints is to adorn thy house. How noble a motive is this for parents doing their duty ; and for children following them ! The old man is at the head of a family of love ; and the young will strive, in his generation, to do as much good to his posterity as his forefathers did to him. Natural affection, the sweet endearments of domestic happiness, and every thing that is tender or engaging in the heart of man, must make us exert ourselves in this glorious cause. “ Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. “ Children, obey your parents in all things ; “ for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.” “ Remember now thy Creator in the days “ of thy youth, while the evil days come “ not, and the years draw nigh, when thou “ shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

SERM.

IV.



SERMON

# S E R M O N V.

The IMPORTANCE of SALVATION, and the  
DANGER of NEGLECTING it.

---

HEBREWS ii. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great  
Salvation.*

SERM.

V.



**W**HEN we observe men in the affairs of this life, what can be greater than the attention they shew? Seriousness is on every face, concern in every eye. They rise with the sun; they have wasted their strength before they can compose themselves for sleep. The fields are crowded with labourers; the work-shops with artificers; the face of the sea is covered with mariners; thousands push under ground, and ransack the very bowels of the earth.

Every

Every man applies his heart to his own employment; no amusement interferes with it; no pleasure makes him neglect it. Our first care is to provide necessaries for the body, the next to amass wealth for ourselves and for our children. We do not labour for the day; but, in our undertakings, we look to events that are at a great distance from us. We sow grain this season, in order to have bread the next. We plant trees, that we may have fruit twenty or thirty years after this time.

SERM.

V.



Our own happiness is placed in these things, and our projects for our families are founded upon them. Our first wish is to have our son in the way of making a figure in the world. This wish forms the thoughtfulness of our days, the anxiety of our nights. The fondness of a father points at this: his comfort depends upon it; his honour is interested in it. Do men ever think that you have thrown your child away, if you have put him in the way of affluence and power? Riches are honoured, though they should be gathered from the pillaging of the fields, the burning of cities,

M

or

SERM.

V.



or the starving of thousands of thousands. The widow mourns, the staff of bread is taken from the fatherless; the garden of Eden is turned into a wilderness, yet the oppressor is respected, and with freedom enters the houses of the great, and the palaces of kings.

“ The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” They stand and fall by one another. They have one constant aim, they never lose sight of it. But the children of light being fickle and inconstant, go backward and forward : keep the road one hour, leave it another ; take one step towards heaven, and take two towards the earth.

But if there be any truth in what we read ; if any, in what we hear or preach ; if any, in all that our fathers believed and maintained with so much hazard ; if there be a foundation for all the prophets taught, and for the doctrines for which the apostles suffered : if there be any truth in that religion, which Jesus confirmed by his death, the world is not to come in the first, nor in the second place. Let the infidel be ungodly,  
 who

who hath no expectation beyond the grave; let him be unholy, who bows to idols; the slave of his lusts, who is the slave of false gods. A good life, in all its parts, becomes our profession, and our engagements.

SERM.  
V.  
~~~~~

“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.” When we have so great advantages, what account have we to give? What is to become of us, if we have to answer for every thing? “If the Lord should mark iniquities, who shall stand?” Are our lives like the gospel? Is our strength fit for this trial? The hand is weak, the buckler is light, the sword is soft tempered. How can we keep off the enemy, whose joints are firm, whose armour is impenetrable, whose sword is sharp? Wo be to man if his defence depend upon his own arm. “So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of him that sheweth mercy.” Our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but of God.

But though our endeavours will not answer of themselves, yet without them there is no escaping condemnation. We must be in the way of activity, and not of sloth:  
for,

SERM.

V.



for, if we do not improve the opportunities we enjoy, we must be undone. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

In further illustrating this subject, we are,

- I. To consider the GREATNESS of this salvation.
- II. The MANNER in which we NEGLECT it.
- III. Shew that this neglect makes us INEXCUSEABLE.

I. WE are to consider the GREATNESS of this salvation.

In order to have a better view of this subject, we may turn our eyes on the state in which the world was, before Christ came in the flesh. Please also to reflect on the present condition of the nations, among whom the glad tidings of salvation have not been published.

There is the greater reason for this request, that there are not wanting men who cry up the superior advantages of those who never had a revelation offered to them.

These

These men speak in raptures of the heathen, sneer at the gospel, and cavil at all the hopes it affords. There never were greater numbers of these guilty men, than are to be seen in this age. They appear with a shew of wisdom; and are flattered into a conceit that they are the only men who are to be seen in any quarter. Being the oracles of infidelity, they dictate their responses with self-sufficiency: despise believers of every name: and thoughtless young men are proud of the honour of following these teachers. Vanity and noisy mirth govern these men void of understanding. Pride goes before them, dissipation behind them; riot on the right and left. Dark language and confused thoughts pass for unanswerable arguments: An infidel appears as a burning and shining light. The gloominess of scepticism passes for deep thought; the seriousness of religion, for weakness. It is thought manly to deny the Lord; to revile the gospel is called wisdom, and learning which is not fettered by vulgar opinions. Devotion is made enthusiasm; the service of God is named priestcraft. They make us selfish hypocrites in publick, and in private, men entirely unprincipled.

SERM.  
V.  
~~~~~

May

SERM.

V.



May I be allowed to put this question to them? What good do you intend to do us, and what could we make by being converts to this doctrine? Their answer is, We shall make the sons as free as the fathers were; we shall banish superstition and enthusiasm; make an end of the influence of designing priests, and break the chains in which the world has been shamefully held for so many ages.

Can any man, who knows the real state of the heathen world, subscribe to these notions? Were the times in which men served strange gods, so happy as their advocates represent? And would it be fortunate for us, to part with Christianity, and to turn back to Paganism?

It must be allowed, that some of the heathens were men of distinguished name, and that the hearts of their posterity may swell with pride, when they speak of their forefathers. But in this remote corner, which was then the seat of ignorance and barbarity, we have nothing to boast of. The inhabitants of our land, in these heathenish times, were the font of rapine, the sons of cruelty,

the

the sons of slaughter; men of bloody hands and savage hearts. Brutal strength distributed justice: Wo to the conquered; the sword was thrown into the scale: innocence was thought folly; compassion, cowardice; mercy, effeminacy; murder was the amusement of the field, and the sport of the streets. Friendship was a conspiracy for shedding innocent blood. Where-ever savage pride or revenge drove a man, he obeyed the impulse without shame or remorse: All his wish was, that his own arm should be vigorous, and his dagger sharp. In these days humanity was a disgrace; the widow was nothing. the fatherless nothing. A man lay down to rest, and was awakened by the howl of the assassin. The assassin was the body guard, and privy counsellor employed by the great and powerful. Brother lifted his hand against brother, uncle against nephew. The land was defiled with blood: There was a snare round a man's bed, a sword haunted his slumbers: Public justice slept, and the only satisfaction for crimes was from the furious poinard of savage revenge, which drunk up the blood of women and children.

This

SERM.

V.



This was once the state of this land ; and it furnishes a melancholy proof of the barbarity of man, when he is left to himself : “ For the dark places of the earth are full of “ the habitations of cruelty.”

If the morals of these times were of this kind, we have not a higher compliment to offer their religion. Allow me to mention one character of their worship : They had human sacrifices. They skulked about the house by night ; they broke it open by day : They made a spring upon their prey ; and shed blood with the savage wantonness of a blind gloomy superstition. The father and mother of the family were brought to the altar, the knife was put to their throats ; and the delight of their gods was in the warm stream that followed the stroke. Absurd, savage, abominable religion !

If we were to give up with the gospel, what security should we have, that we would not fall into the extravagancies of folly and wickedness into which our forefathers had fallen ? Here the pride of infidelity will speak up. We never should be like those savages, we should imitate the great men of old, concerning

cerning whom the historian and the orator have spoken with so much triumph. We should be like them in the field, in the closet, and in the meetings of the people. Our manners would be polished; our arguments convincing, our eloquence irresistible. We should leave maxims of wisdom for men of all ages: We should drive the barbarians from our frontiers, and raise many trophies of our magnanimity and public spirit: sea and land would be filled with our glory.

What reason have we to entertain these proud notions? How few chances are there of our resembling these celebrated men? We cannot, from the knowledge and polish of infidels in a Christian land, infer with certainty what they would have been, if they had lived among the heathen. Since the introduction of Christianity, a great change hath happened in the world: A softness prevails which was not known before. Even the face of war has been smoothed; the voice of humanity is heard amidst the noise of arms. The great men we have mentioned, often put prisoners to death, and carried women and children into slavery. The defenders of their country were sold like cattle. The ox was driven by

SERM.

V.



the goad, the wretched slave by the lash. Are any of these things done where the gospel is preached? The apostles of infidelity are not willing to ascribe this change to Christianity; but we trust it is not rash to say that the charity of the gospel going abroad into the world, has introduced these happy manners among the people. The adversary borrows from the new testament fine notions of morals, though he be not willing to acknowledge it. He takes up the arms with which the gospel defended itself against the heathen, and turns them against the gospel itself.

But to convince you that it is not probable that you ever could be much distinguished, you ought to remember, that the age of improvement among those who had only the law of nature, was a very short one; and that the countries where it prevailed make but an inconsiderable spot upon the globe of the earth. These things being considered whether is it more probable, that we should be like those men we have already mentioned or like the contrary set of heathens?

And though, in outward polish, we were like them, of what service could this be when

joined



joined to the absurdity of their religious tenets. The gods they worshipped, were the patrons of theft, deceit, sensuality, and shedding of blood. They came down to introduce adultery, rapine, and cruelty into the houses of men. Could the worship of these base gods have a good effect upon the lives of men? How great was the folly of worshipping graven images? “ Learn not the way  
“ of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the  
“ signs of heaven. For the customs of the  
“ people are vain; for one cutteth a tree out  
“ of the forest, the work of the hand of the  
“ workmen with the axe. They deck it with  
“ silver and with gold, they fasten it with  
“ nails and with hammers that it move not.  
“ They are upright as the palm-tree, but  
“ speak not: they must needs be born, be-  
“ cause they cannot go: Be not afraid of  
“ them, for they cannot do evil, neither also  
“ is it in them to do good.”

The ancient heathens, whom our infidels boast of, entertained such notions of the gods, as would disgrace the worst of men. The father of the gods was enclined to destroy his own son; the son, in his turn, dethrones his father, and reigns in his stead. In one place

SERM. V. place they worshipped a serpent, in another a calf. Superstition and ignorance ruled the people; they were directed by the flight of birds, and by the intrails of cattle. They ran howling in the woods and mountains, when filled with new wine: They joined in the mystery of iniquity; "and walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." These are the triumphs of false gods; this is the liberty with which the advocates of infidelity want to make us free. Praise be to God, that we are not as they are; that the salvation offered by our Lord Jesus Christ has been accepted by us.

To come down from old times; What, this day, is the situation of the nations who are without it? If we travel to the East, where Mahomet planted his religion with the point of the sword, what is the first thing which strikes our eyes? Religion is seen sheathing a sword in the bowels of parents; shrieks and groans are heard from gate to gate; the streets are running with blood; murder is at all the corners, and in the centre of the city: the conflagration spreads, and all is in a blaze. A voice from heaven cries

cries Slaughter.—The pen of the prophet runs with blood, and the writing is, “Wo, “Wo, Wo to the inhabitants of the earth.”

A set of men, made mad by superstition, pushed on by revenge, and by a paradise of foul delights, rush forward to execute vengeance on the nations: And, in a short time, the most lovely quarter of the globe is changed into a howling wilderness. Destruction possesseth the fields which once yielded a hundred fold; the tyrant rules, and great cities are the habitation of the bittern, and pools of water. We have reason to bless God who has brought us better tidings, and offered us the great salvation, which Christ has procured for his servants.

We formerly mentioned the ancient heathens; we now beg leave to place before you those of our own times. How many tribes of them are in the East and West? What ignorance reigns among them all? How degrading is it to human pride, to see millions of men near the level of the lower creatures? They live without clothes, without shelter; they cut their bodies, and come before their gods with wild yells, and mangled members: Fathers sell their children for baubles.  
They

SERM.

V.  


They have not the affection of fathers, nor the dutiful behaviour of children. What rites of religion have they? what a savage temper, what crooked morals? They are the slaves of their belly, the slaves of sensuality and revenge. There we see Paganism in its own colours, surrounded by its fears and magic spells.

Let infidels attempt to throw down the apostles, in order to raise the fiends of darkness. Their attempts are vain; for the church of Christ is founded upon a rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. We rejoice in the salvation given us, and we will keep at a distance from such as wish to lead us astray. "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

We have the light, while others walk in darkness. This light has entered your house and mine. "The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." Under this dispensation, we see God creating the world by the word of his power. We see the strong hand that made and supports every thing that is in the heavens, or on the earth. "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day,

“ day, and the lesser light to rule the night ;  
“ he made the stars also.” He made the sea  
and the land, mountains and valleys. The  
storm is sent abroad, the winds sweep the  
face of the earth, the rain and snow drive, the  
torrents fall, the thunder roars, the lightening  
flashes, and the earth shakes ; yet, at the voice  
of God, there is peace. We see that his eyes  
are upon the affairs of men. The wicked  
may imagine vain things, but he bringeth  
their counsels to nought. “ Thou shalt not  
“ be afraid of the terror by night ; nor for  
“ the arrow that flieth by day ; nor for the  
“ pestilence that walketh in darkness ; nor  
“ for the destruction that wasteth at noon-  
“ day. A thousand shall fall by thy side,  
“ and ten thousand at thy right hand ; and  
“ it shall not come near thee.”

SERM.  
V.  


Upon these accounts, we have more to answer for, than they have who make Chance the mother of Nature, or Necessity its governor and guide.

In the great salvation bestowed upon us, is included the superior knowledge of morals we have, and the goodness of our lives must be answerable to these advantages. The poor might rejoice at the glad tidings ; the mourner was to have a comforter ; the widow, a protector ;

**SERM.** protector; the fatherless, a guardian. We  
**V.** are directed to charity, which forms our o-  
 pinions, checks our passions, and gives feel-  
 ing to the heart. The noise of riot, the le-  
 vity of intemperance enters not the house  
 of a Christian. How much have we to an-  
 swer for on that account? What our Saviour  
 says to the people of Judea, is applicable to  
 our condition: "If I had not come, and  
 "spoken unto them, they had not had sin;  
 "but now they have no cloak for their sin."

The greatest of all blessings is, that we  
 have the offer of pardon. How blessed is  
 that sound? It is the sound of peace and  
 happiness. Without it what would the  
 world signify to us? We should have had  
 pomp on the one hand, misery on the other;  
 a great estate, and a broken heart. The  
 Lord himself has promised us peace, in these  
 tender words; "Peace I leave with you, my  
 "peace I give unto you; not as the world  
 "giveth, give I unto you. Let not your  
 "heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."  
 This is the happiness of believers. Their  
 souls are to live for ever in the habitations of  
 joy; while the wicked are to turn aside to  
 these regions where misery reigns, and is to  
 reign

reign for ever, without a spark of joy, without a glimpse of hope.

SERM.  
V.  
~

It is a great salvation, that this offer of reconciliation is given not to a small spot, as was the case of the old revelation, but the faithful, from the four quarters of the earth, are invited to dwell in the new Jerufalem, the city of refuge for the people of God. It is in acknowledgment of this privilege, that the four and twenty elders poured out their praises before the throne of the Lamb: “Thou art worthy,—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” We, who lived in a barbarous land, and were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, we have heard the tidings of peace. “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

How pleasant a spirit ariseth from this  
○ thought!

SERM.

V.



thought ! The weapons of war have been laid down, and peace has been proclaimed, from the rising of the sun, to the place where it goeth down. This thought gives patience in sickness, comfort in the season of mourning, and an easy mind on a death-bed. Fainting may seize our heart, agonizing pain our head ; our widows may mourn, and our children be left in poverty ; yet, “ light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” The heirs of salvation enter into the place of happiness, “ where they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more.” This salvation is preached in our land, in the name of “ Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Except a few atheistical people, men, in all ages, have spoken of another life ; but absurdity was mixed with all their notions. But the heaven of a Christian is the residence of happy spirits who delight in the law of God. “ We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” There enter to that place, the father who loveth his son ; the son who honoureth his father ; the man  
of

of lowly looks, a devout heart, and of unfeigned faith; he who does not covet his neighbour's house, or does not touch the profits of false-dealing. The mouth that does not bear false witness, and the spirit of forbearance and tender mercy are to be our attendants to the regions of everlasting joy, and we are never to part company. This country is not peopled by those who laid cities in ashes, and who made their thousands, and their ten thousands fall by the edge of the sword: but it is peopled by the friends of the poor, by those who turned many to righteousness; by those who loved the truth; by the men of clean hands, who made light the yoke of oppression. These men are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Having this happiness in our view, we can join in the rapturous expression of the apostle, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

The greatness of this salvation appears, not only from considering the happiness bestowed on us; but also, from the manner in which it has been secured. A thousand times more hath been done for us than we deserved. Did I say deserved? We deserved the wrath  
of

SERM.  
V.



SERM.  
V.  
~

of God. But unworthy as we are, "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that we might live through him."

Upon the subject of our deliverance, I will not mention what was done of old, though wonders were wrought in Egypt, in the Red sea, in the wilderness, and in the promised land. I will not dwell on this deliverance, as it only concerned one people. I am not to mention the prophets, as they only saw, through a glass darkly, the days of the Son of man. The Baptist was not thought worthy to loose the latchet of his shoes. The apostles were only the servants of him who saved us from the hands of the enemy.

We may add, that the troubles he bore, recommend this salvation. He was the son of Mary, was laid in a manger, fled from Herod, and was despised and reproached by the people. If he wrought miracles, they said, "He hath Beelzebub;" when he offered pardon, they accuse him of blasphemy. All his servants were mean men, and one of them betrayed him.

Injustice pursued him from the cradle to the grave. Here there was a firm league of the wicked. The men, whom hatred separated,



rated, had, in this case, the love of brothers. The pride of the Jew bowed to the insolence of the Roman; the high-priest of Jerusalem to the deputy of Rome; the ephod and the mitre of Aaron, to the rods and axes of Pilate. Hatred and selfishness bring down the highest looks; they make the prince lick the dust before the slave, whom he employs in using the dagger, or the poisoned bowl. Here all wicked men joined. Judas sold him, the pharisees bribed witnesses, the soldiers scourged him, the priests joined the mob in crying Crucify him, and Pilate condemned him. He bore this burden upon our account, and bore it without repining. This is the great salvation, that makes us heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and excites us to praise God who has done so great things for us. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.

# S E R M O N VI.

The IMPORTANCE of SALVATION, and the  
DANGER of NEGLECTING it.

---

HEBREWS ii. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great  
Salvation?*

SERM.  
VI.  


**H**AVING shewn how great the falvation offered us is, we proceed,

II. To consider the MANNER in which men NEGLECT it.

Every body understands what neglect is in temporal things. The indolence that wounds our peace, and ruins our worldly circumstances, effectually ruins our souls. What a slothful man has received from his father, falls heedlessly through his hands: his children are hungry and naked, his fields  
are

are unfown, tares grow for wheat, thistles for  
barley. “The sluggard will not plow by  
“reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg  
“in harvest, and have nothing.”

SERM.  
VI.



Neglect hath still worse consequences, in  
regard to spiritual than to temporal things;  
and it shews itself in many different ways.  
We are chargeable with neglect, if we keep  
from prayers, from charity, from doing  
justice, from paying our debts, or from re-  
lieving the poor. This slackness soon be-  
comes habitual; prayers are despised, public  
worship ridiculed, charity slighted, justice is  
avoided, the poor are allowed to starve; and  
a man sinks, rather than be at the pains of  
keeping himself above the water.

Even diligence in one thing may cover  
neglect in another, when we are careful a-  
bout small things, unconcerned about great.  
On this principle our Saviour expresses him-  
self, “Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees,  
“hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint, and  
“anise, and cummin, and have omitted the  
“weightier matters of the law, judgement,  
“mercy, and faith.” This sentence is appli-  
cable to every case, when spiritual things  
give

SERM.

VI.



give way to temporal. Following this idea, we observe,

I. That we neglect this great salvation, by giving the world the first place in our affection.

How many have reason to accuse themselves of this fatal neglect! The work of our days, and the watchful solicitude of our nights, are employed about the world; but godliness is only attended to when we have a relaxation from the cares of life. For gain men travel over sea and land; but when do we travel a day's journey for the treasure which fadeth not? Gain gives employment to the whole year, godliness to a few days of the year.

When we have the view of enlarging our fortune, we bear many dangers and hardships. We hold our faces to the storm, we dread not shipwreck on the rocks, we dread not the point of the sword, or we walk above a mine; we go where law gives no protection, innocence no guard; where the famine rages, or the pestilence sweeps away thousands. Where is the man who bears these trials for the riches of eternal life? To freeze his resolution, it requires not the storms of  
the

the sea, the sword of a strong enemy, the thirst of the desert, the pale face of famine, the flaming hand of the pestilence, nor the bloody dagger of the tyrant; the host of Pharaoh, the kings of Bashan and Heshbon, the children of Anak, nor cities walled up to heaven. If riches appear, religion leaves the pilot; if honour, serious thoughts withdraw; if amusement, every thing gives way to pleasure and dissipation.

We not only neglect salvation from worldly-mindedness, but unprofitable vices make us neglect it. You do not make any advantage of revenge; yet, to humour a savage temper, and a proud heart, you torment yourself, and run headlong upon the wrath of God. Men prefer the passions of an un-governed mind, and the appetites of an unruly body, to the fatherly admonition of him who made them.

What perversion is this? What neglect of happiness? Though the thing be of inestimable value, it is parted with for a bauble. We are sanguine about trifles, we are lukewarm and irresolute in regard to objects of an interesting nature; and great disorder must be the consequence. Every thing must

SERM.  
VI.

go wrong, nothing can be in its own place. If the honour we give a servant be denied to the master; if the meanest man be respected, and the chief ruler despised, things are not properly conducted. If the body have food and raiment, and the soul be left to starve; if we doat upon the things of time, and slight those of eternity, then salvation shall be entirely neglected by us. Religion yields to every stranger; and it is banished from home, to leave room for every chance visitant: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It is better to have the grace of God, than the favour of man. It is better to be a poor man, with a good conscience, than to have the gold of Ophir and Tarshish, with a bad one.

2. We neglect salvation, if we be inconsistent in religion: If we serve God for one month, and forget his service for eleven.

Our duty does not admit of fits and stops, of zeal and lukewarmness. We must have an unvaried constancy at all times, in all places, in every trial and temptation. We must pray on week-days, as well as on Sunday;

days ; in other places, as well as at church ; when we communicate, and when we do not communicate ; when we live among the lovers of religion, or the revilers of it. For, if any man veer about with the breath of the company he is in ; if he be grave with the sober, pray with the devout ; be compassionate with the tender-hearted, and a servant of Christ with the believer ; yet, if he shifts to other things, with other men ; if he swear with the swearer, blaspheme with the blasphemer ; if he lay on heavy burdens with the oppressor, deceive with the deceiver, or make sport of faith with the infidel : by this inconstancy he shews he has no respect for the gospel, or the author of it. If he be dissipated with the riotous, or impure with the sensualist ; if he be godly or ungodly as the fit may seize him, he declares that goodness is not his choice, and is not worthy of the trouble it may require. He is this hour at a communion table, the next he sitteth in the seat of the scornful. He rises from his knees to oppress the poor, and after having been satiated with oppression, he returns calmly to his knees. If there be such variable men, is it possible for them to neglect salvation more ?

SERM. more? They despise God, allow no authori-  
 VI. ty to his laws; are volatile, fickle, thought-  
 ~~~~~ less, unholy creatures.

3. We neglect our salvation, if we have not a good life.

Men separate things which ought always to go together. Where there is religion, there must be virtue; where there is virtue, there must be religion. This union was contracted from the beginning; an union to continue during life, and after death. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

There is, however, a sort of religion without good morals. Men who, without scruple, stab the name of their neighbours, are often thought religious, because they can speak fluently, and can knit their brows, and can destine millions to the flames of perdition. A man calls himself a Christian, for no better reason than that he comes to church once a week. Though the blood of a thousand wounds cannot soften his heart; though he can, with unmoved eyes, behold the ravages of war, famine, or pestilence; yet he may pass for devout, if he say, Lord, Lord, and may boast with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee,

“ thee, that I am not as other men are, ex-  
“ tortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as  
“ this publican. I fast twice in the week, I  
“ give tithes of all that I possess.”

SERM.

VI.



You have seen such men, or have heard of them ; you could not see or hear of any thing more offensive to the life and gospel of Jesus Christ : For the gospel forms men for the most exemplary life. Can a Christian be a cheat ? can he steal, or bear false witness ? It is impossible that this should happen. A Christian is the best father, the best brother, the best friend, the best countryman, the most worthy man in every station, and in every relation. Though you give him gold without weight or number, he will not deceive you ; for his conscience is a nicer judge than the eye of jealousy. Though a man on his death-bed should lodge with him a great sum, without bond, without witness, without any ground of suspicion, he would account for it to the last farthing. He has a better pledge for his integrity than a regard to character for the saving of appearances. He knows that the eye of God is upon him ; and that the Author of our faith would deny him, as an unworthy servant, if he should betray

SERM.  
VI.  
~

betray his trust. He is a man of faith, devotion, candour, of a good heart, and of charitable opinions. But the man who useth his liberty as a cloke to malicioufness, is the most dangerous enemy of the Christian name, and is for the downfall of the house of God. Let no man plead Christian privileges for an excuse to commit sin. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

4. If we neglect salvation by neglecting virtue, we do so by neglecting piety.

If we do not pray, we shall not have the reward of prayer. If we come not to church, we despise the faith, and the Author of it. Though we might, for argument's sake, suppose that a man without religion might be true to his friends, a man of his word, affectionate to his children, merciful to his dependents; an honest judge, and a mild governor: yet, if he have not the fear of God before his eyes, how shall he escape when called before the tribunal of the Judge of all the earth? If a man be a traitor to his king, will it be a good defence, that he has kept his

his promise to his friend, and that he has not despised the cause of his man-servant and maid-servant? If we be traitors to the King of kings, shall the private virtues of our own house save us? If we have despised his name, reviled his ordinances, opposed his will, how shall we answer in the great and terrible day of the Lord? To us the gospel is the instrument of death, not of life; is for our condemnation, not for our salvation.

We have supposed, that an unholy man may act the best part in the ordinary occurrences of life; but we have granted him much more than we ought, in reason, to have done. Take his conduct and his principles together, and you cannot have so favourable an opinion. How can he act uniformly, when his motives are fixed by the customs of the world, and vary when they vary? He has one measure for men of high rank, and another for his poor descendents. Every body knows that a man is often reckoned honourable, though he be a harsh master, a griping owner of land; though he grind the face of the poor, and behave with haughtiness and contempt towards merit in a low estate. Pride, or interest, make him

SERM.

VI.



the enemy of the friendless. He is a good man when pride leads ; wicked, when covetousness or impure passions govern. He betrays the wife or daughter of his friend, and is not the less thought of. With a treachery that is black beyond the colour of other crimes, how can sound reason praise him, though he have many smiles, and a gilded countenance ?

On the other hand, religion makes a man act fairly in every situation. If he be poor, he will be contented, and orderly ; if he be rich, he will be for a blessing to hundreds, to thousands. Such were Abraham and Job, such are many who live in our days. Unaffected holiness makes a great man the father of his country, the stay of the widow, the support of the orphan. Goodness and obliging manners reside at his house, and spread from the palace to the cottage. If I were to be a servant, let a religious man be my master, let him be the proprietor of my farm, my partner in business, my counsellor in trying affairs. Let him encounter the storm with me at sea, or face the enemy with me at land : Let him rejoice with me, when I rejoice ; and sympathize with me, when I mourn :

mourn : Let him be the witness of my death ; let him be the guardian of my children. Happy is the man who finds such a friend ! happy is the son who hath such a father ! happy is the father who hath such a son !

SERM.  
VI.  
~

This is the religion that leads to salvation, and not that which consists in forms. The forms of religion are good, so are the forms of law ; but a man may have both, without being religious or just. When we pray, come to church, or communicate, without feeling ; when all depends on custom, mere custom, it is by accident that we take the name of Christians. In one quarter of the globe we should have been Pagans ; in another, Mahometans ; the worshippers of a misshapen idol, or the disciples of a false prophet. Let no man call this cold, formal thing, religion. It is the mere shadow ; it has not its flesh and bones, much less has it the enlivening spirit. This was the religion of the pharisees ; whoever has it, neglects his salvation, and is in the great road to destruction.

5. Another instance of neglect consists in the want of faith.

The living in a Christian country, the being baptized, the attending on ordinances,

Q

or

SERM.  
VI.  
~

or the reading the scriptures, do not make us to be Christians. Faith, working by love, is necessary, that we may have a right to that exalted character. How can the offer of salvation be of use to him who is an unbeliever? Though Christ spake as never man spake, that man has no credit to give his doctrine; though he wrought miracles, though he fulfilled prophecies, yet it does not appear that he was a teacher come from God. To us who believe, Jesus is precious in his life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession. The man who wants faith, takes offence at his life, dares not trust in his death, does not believe that he rose from the dead, and sitteth on the right hand of God, and is to come, in the last day, to judge the quick and the dead. This man is an enemy of Jesus Christ, and has no title to expect the happiness procured by him. Want of faith, want of charity, or sobriety, constitute a criminal neglect, for which we have to answer. This leads me to consider,

III. How **INEXCUSEABLE** this neglect doth make us.

When we are accused of a thing we cannot

not deny, we always plead our ignorance of its criminality. But though this apology be a bad one, we have it not to make in the present case. We commit sin wilfully and presumptuously, and have nothing to plead for our own vindication. When wicked men follow their passions, and forsake God, can they say that they were ignorant of their own designs?

No doubt we see many very ignorant creatures. We see reason without improvement, revelation without wisdom. The gospel is preached to some men, without their reaping any advantage from it. This ignorance, instead of lessening their guilt, aggravates it. They are as ignorant as the heathens are. If we question them about their hopes, they can give no answer; if about the Christian life, we speak in an unknown tongue; if about the precepts and example of our Lord, they cannot utter a syllable. If, in a fit of obstinacy, we shut our eyes, who is to be blamed for our falling over a precipice?

The fault is entirely our own. For though we be so uninformed in these things, we are sharp-sighted when our interest is concerned: we have prudence in our families, and a method

SERM.  
VI.  
~~~~~

SERM.  
VI.

thod in the management of our worldly affairs; but we have been so careless and slovenly in matters of religion, that we must be in the dark. But will this excuse us in the sight of God? Will it plead for us when we stand in judgement? The Jews did not know the Messiah, though they saw him with their eyes, and heard him with their ears, and though he healed all manner of diseases among the people. They shut their eyes in reading Moses and the prophets; even the heathens were not so determined enemies of Jesus Christ. Did their ignorance save them? It was to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida, for Capernaum and Cana.

This sentence is to stand against ignorant Christians. Pagans may have an excuse; their ignorance is invincible: But wicked Christians can have none, if I dare call wicked men Christians.

We are inexcusable for having neglected so many precious opportunities, whether we fall through ignorance, or otherwise. We have read the history of the Lord, have seen him in his humiliation, and in his exaltation.

We

We have seen him persecuted, oppressed, and put to torment, without making any advantage of our knowledge. “Of how much forer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of God?”

SERM.  
VI.  
~~~~~

In the scriptures we find such sanctions of the law of God, as make neglect inexcuseable. Even the sanctions of human laws have a great influence, but they are not to be compared with those of the law of God. In human societies, some crimes are discharged by fines, others by imprisonment, or banishment, or death. Death draws a line which the arm of man cannot pass. Neither the justice of the upright judge, nor the partiality of the unjust one, nor the cruelty of the tyrant, can pass this line. Death may be made more tormenting, by tearing the flesh, or pouring on boiling oil. A despot may expose the body to be torn by wild beasts; or he may place it on high to defile the air: but a lump of cold earth does not feel his rage. Though the rattling of chains, and the whiz-  
zing

SERM.

VI.

zing of the lash, frighten the living; they cannot hurt the dead.

How insufficient are these sanctions of the laws of society, in comparison with those of the law of God? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

They who despise the mercy of God, shall feel that there is no escaping from his displeasure. "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgement of God?—But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." The pains of another life should banish neglect; the joys of heaven should make us "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Then the mist of ignorance shall be dispersed, our faith shall be increased; pain shall be removed from our bodies, and anxiety from  
our

our souls. Have we passed heavy days and sleepless nights? there is no grief or remorse in that region. False men do not enter there, nor scoffers, nor revilers of ordinances. The air is too pure for them, the sky too clear, the storm is not heard. Tainted souls are driven thence to the foul quarters of the enemy, where blasphemy has raised a throne, which is never to be thrown down. By neglect, we shall be driven to that wretched situation.

If with the ordinary promises and threats of the gospel we are inexcusable for our inattention, we may have particular advantages for which we have to answer. If we have had religious parents, will it not be our condemnation that we have profited so little by their example? If we take our leave of the piety of our fathers, how shall we answer in the day of accounts? We have to make improvement of every good book we have read, and of every good counsel we have received. The warm instructions of worthy teachers take every excuse from negligent hearers. "Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." We

SERM. We have to answer for our knowledge of the  
 VI. scriptures ; we have to answer if we be ig-  
 norant of them.

To shew that we have no excuse, we have to reflect, that what hath been required of us, hath been practised by others. There are good Christians in the world, I trust there are millions of them. They who love the Lord are to be witnesses against those who hate him. The charitable condemn our hard hearts, and the devout, our cold tempers. If a good man live in the house with us, how have we gained so little by his example? If we every week meet a hundred in this house, will not this aggravate our guilt?

At any rate, you have in your view, the scripture worthies. We see the patriarchs and prophets through faith and patience inheriting the promises. We see the holy apostles, we have before us the example of Christ. By harsh words, and an unfeeling heart, we declare against the Lord, and cannot escape punishment.

By our neglect we disgrace our baptism, we disgrace the communion. Broken vows, and fruitless engagements, aggravate our  
 .. guilt.

guilt. We disgrace our public, we disgrace our private prayers. .

SERM.

VI.



Add to this, that we bring a bad name upon religion. The gospel hath suffered more from the sins of professing Christians, than it did from the pen of the infidel, or the sword of the persecutor. The enemy rejoices when we go astray, and the name of the Lord is evil spoken of on our account.

To make our neglect still more inexcusable, we have to consider that we resist the Spirit of God. What a handle doth this give the scoffer at religion? Let their mouths be stopped. "Let our conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." Let our integrity shine round the world: Let the name of our neighbour be safe with us. We are to have the hearts of the friendly, the open hands of the charitable, the devout prayers of the godly, and the submission of the resigned; "always exercising ourselves to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man."

# S E R M O N . VII.

The CONDUCT of CHRIST, an EXAMPLE  
to CHRISTIANS.

---

PHIL. ii. 5.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus.*

SERM.  
VII.



**I**N every country, there have been men whose life hath been spent in doing good. They began their days, and they ended them in this service. Their labours were not for themselves, but for the people. They lived for them, they died for them.

There is a pleasure in looking back to the actions of these men. If we should find such persons among our forefathers, though at the distance of many hundred years, our hearts become fond, and we think that their goodness belongeth to us by right of inheritance,  
and



and that we ought to leave it for a portion to our children: Though a good man be as far from us as the rising sun, yet our opinion travels over sea and land; and though a thousand or two thousand years be past since he went off the stage, yet years do not put virtue out of date; distance doth not remove her out of sight. We love her, though she be at the opposite side of the globe.

I speak of such men as have made it their study to do good to all, to do harm to nobody; and have been celebrated for saving life, not for taking it away. They did not boast of burning cities, of ruining kingdoms, of slaughtering thousands, of making slaves of millions. These were the boasts of conquerors, who were the scourges of the nations, and who were more destructive than famines, earthquakes and pestilence. They caused mourning and a great desolation; their steps were in blood: "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." The cries of mothers, the curses of widows, the misery of orphans, attended their progress: "They cut off the name and remnant, and son and  
" nephew,

SERM.  
VII.

“nephew, and did sweep the earth with the besom of destruction.”

We speak of him who had the arms of a meek and lowly spirit, who was the friend of the widow, the support of the stranger; who loved the good, who pitied the wicked. His father was a happy father, his mother a happy mother: Nations strove for the honour of his birth. With rapture, his countrymen dwelt on his actions, strangers wished that he had been their fellow-citizen. With warm hearts they spoke of him to their children, and informed them, that he was born in this place, brought up in that; that here he appeared first to the people, that there he saved them from the hand of the enemy. By praising his virtues, we become virtuous; by recommending the goodness of his heart, we acquire a good heart.

If he hath done good to your house and mine, if to our son and grandson; if he is to do it to our descendents for many generations; our self-love, our affection for our children, and our concern for posterity, engage us to him; and from fondness, to imitation, the passage is short and easy. You love every thing he loveth; his friends are  
your

your friends, his enemies are yours. The character you admire, in some degree, becometh your own property, and every body can say, How like is this man to that: he wants to follow him, and to improve every day by imitation. The master is the light of the world, and the disciple is made to shine by the reflection of that light.

SERM.  
VII.  
~

However, in ordinary cases, it may be unsafe to follow any man too closely. For, as no character is perfect, we might imitate what is bad in a man, and have no resemblance of the good. We might follow Abraham's insincerity in the house of Abimelech, more than his faith and humanity in every other place; the vanity of Hezekiah for one day, and not his devotion for years; the denial of Peter, and not his repentance; the persecuting spirit of Saul, and not the calm zeal of Paul; John countenancing his mother's ambition, at one time, and not the fervent love and tender heart of John, which made him the beloved disciple.

However, there is one character which we cannot follow too closely; and the words of this text direct us where to find it. How blessed a thing for us, if the copy were like

the

SERM.

VII.



the original; if we followed him, though with unequal steps; if, to the extent of our power we had done every thing which he did; if we had lived like him, and had possessed his constancy in our death.

This example hath been often and earnestly recommended to us. When we were children, our parents advised us to have this mind that was also in Christ Jesus: When we could read, we read about it: When our understanding opened, we heard men preach about it. We cannot read, or hear, or preach too much about the interest we have in the example of our Lord. This counsel is gravely given us in the house of God; it is affectionately recommended in our private chambers.

We are on good grounds persuaded that this is our duty, and must be persuaded as we are Christians. I see the profession of Christians; when you come to this house, you appear in that character. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

If gratitude be a holy tie, we have the most convincing reasons for imitation. How much do we owe him, who came from the bosom

bosom of his Father, and became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh? He bore the trials of envy, malice, and oppression; was betrayed by his friend into the hands of enemies who thirsted for his blood, and he saved us from misery: This gratitude causes us to respect the virtues which did us so much good, and to engraft them upon our own souls, that the disciple may be like his Lord.

His goodness appeared first to the men of his own time. But every age, and every country, had an equal interest in it. He discovered it to the apostles; they declared the glad tidings to the nations, and converted many thousand disciples. Their disciples left their instructions for the use of their children. In this way the gospel found its way to the land of our nativity, where it early came to the knowledge of our forefathers. Through their hands it has come down to us, and through ours it is to descend to after ages. I only glance at these things, as they do not, at this time, come directly under our eye. I mention them, and do no more, in order to convince you to have this mind that was also in Christ Jesus.

This

SERM.

VII.



This is the subject upon which I beg leave to address you. I pray for your attention to it. It is an interesting subject, for it shews that we are not to read the history of our Lord, as a matter of curiosity; but we must apply his words and actions to the improvement of our conduct.

There is no subject, however, to which it is so difficult to do justice; for so many virtues crowd upon us, that we do not know which of them we have to dwell upon, and which of them we should touch slightly; which of them are within our power, and which of them are impracticable to weak creatures, such as we are. But, as it is your duty to hear of this subject, and as it is mine to speak concerning it, I shall adventure upon it in the best manner I am able.

The plan I propose is of this sort:—I would rather place before you some shadow of the goodness of our Saviour's heart, than attempt to discourse of the strength of his hand. We have in our possession nothing like his power, but the virtues of his servants are like his virtues. They are lower in degree, and less perfect in their motives; but as they are of the same kind, are a fit subject for imitation.

imitation. When he rebukes the wind, calms the sea, heals diseases, and opens the grave, we can only exercise our admiration of that power which appeared among men. But we may profitably contemplate, and, in some measure, imitate the goodness of heart which inclined him to heal all manner of sickness and diseases among the people. His tears for Lazarus, teach us to weep over the grave of a beloved friend: His tears for Jerufalem, to be grieved for the wickedness and misfortunes of our country. We can have no desire to despise a man for his poverty, if we be his disciples who was poor, and the friend of the poor. As he had not a place where to lay his head, shall we not learn to sympathize with the indigent stranger, who has no house to shelter him, no friend to comfort him?

In discoursing more fully on this subject, I am,

I. To recommend to you the IMITATION of the PRIVATE LIFE of our BLESSED LORD.

II. I am to direct you to follow the EXAMPLE of his VIRTUES in public life.

S

I. We

SERM.

VII.



I. We are to recommend the IMITATION of his PRIVATE LIFE.

We must begin at a man's house, when we want to give a faithful delineation of his character. He may appear to the people with many counterfeited ornaments, calculated to deceive. He may weep, though he be not grieved; smile, though his heart be sad: He may be a friend, without affection, an enemy, without an unfavourable opinion; praise the man he hates, run down the man he loves; have the warmth of summer in his face, the coldness of winter in his heart. If we have no trial of a man in private business, and if we do not observe him among his children and servants, we may be strangers to him whose house joins to ours. We may hear him speak, and observe him acting in a public assembly, without having any knowledge of his dispositions. When we see the smile upon his cheek, the attentive kindness in his eye, and hear words sweeter than honey, smoother than oil, we are inclined to think that he is the head of a happy family. We are disposed to believe that a frown is never seen on that forehead, and that boisterous passions never enter these doors; but the

the secret gets air at his own house, where every passion appears without disguise. He, whose voice sounded sweet to the stranger, makes his entrance there as an imperious tyrant. His look banishes cheerfulness, his eye sparkles with rage, his tongue is a poisoned sword; the wound cannot be healed, for new venom is always adding to the old. Abroad he is softness itself: There are no kind looks, no insinuating words, no friendly actions at home.

But he who is a good man at his own house, is found to be sincerely good in every place. The affectionate father, the dutiful son, the warm-hearted brother, the humane master, always makes a very happy family. The surly word of command, or the peevishness of a fretful temper, is not admitted to that company. The father requires what may be for the good of his son, and he requires it with tenderness. The son watches the eye of his father, and hastens to do his will, before he has had time to open his lips. How pleasant is this sight to the bystanders; how happy is it for the persons themselves? The father is the venerable counsellor of the son; the son, the vigorous protector of the father.

SERM.

VII.

I. To apply this reflection, allow me to take a view of Christ among his kindred. We have reason to join in the warm address of that person, who said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee."

He was born in a mean condition; all his kindred were poor, and, of consequence, little thought of: "The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." He met great distress, but he was not hardened by it. Misfortunes, for the most part, blunt the edge of natural kindness. The man who has not bread to eat, has not so tender affections, as he would have had, if he had had an even flow of good fortune. A man broken by heavy calamities hath neither time nor inclination for these delicate feelings which the fortunate are accustomed to, and from which their children reap great advantage. The heart of a mother is tender beyond any thing that others feel; yet long continued misfortunes can make her forget the child at her breast. Nature must have given a man the most exquisite sensibility, when he can forget the stings of poverty, and barbarous treatment, and be as affectionate



tionate as the person whose storehouse is full, who has talents of gold and silver. We admire that parent, that child, whose heart is directed by a benevolence which is independent of riches or poverty, good or bad fortune.

Our Lord gives a shining example of this lovely temper: of these affectionate tender dispositions. We see him obedient to his parents, when “he came to Nazareth, and “was subject to them.” This teaches us to honour ours. With this example before them, what excuse can the children of Christian parents have for their crossness and disobedience?

Jesus loved his mother most sincerely, and she loved him with all the warmth of a mother's heart. What sacrifices does she offer to this affection? She takes her leave of her house, her kindred, her country; bears poverty, sojourns among hard-hearted strangers, whose hearts boiled with rage, whose hands were ready for crimes, who hated the mother and son. Yet she stood by him in every trial; and when the mad zeal of his countrymen pursued him to death, she was

at

SERM.  
VII.

at hand, and was ready to encounter every hardship. The soldier and the centurion, the priest and the judge, the counsellor, and the governor, joined in the conspiracy of iniquity: tyranny and bloodshed defiled all ranks of the people: "The kings of the earth  
" set themselves, and the rulers take counsel  
" together, against the Lord, and against his  
" Anointed." Notwithstanding these severe trials, Mary was not afraid of their terrors; though the hands which had shed the blood of the son, might soon have shed that of the mother.

The accounts we have of this woman are short; yet short as they are, we discover that she had a tender and fervent devotion. Without ascribing to her the extravagant or idolatrous honours which superstition does, we can safely affirm, that she was a woman of the most affectionate dispositions. This was the hour of trial for her tenderness: "She trust-  
" ed that it had been he which should have  
" redeemed Israel;" and that the salvation of all the ends of the earth was to begin at her house. To appearance, these hopes were disappointed. Could any person have had more distress? Compassion drops a tear over her misfortunes.



misfortunes. Every mother must feel for her, and say, Alas! for that mother, how heavy was her burden? What woman ever suffered as she did?

Jesus saw her forlorn condition, and his dying thoughts were upon her. His agony on the cross did not banish affection from his soul. How tender is the account given of his behaviour on that occasion: "When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother." These are fine touches of natural affection. How much kindness is in these plain words? A sentence like this, which proceedeth from the heart, is better than a volume which proceedeth from the head. Neither the thorns in his head, the nails in his body, nor the spear in his side, could make him forget his mother or his friend. With his dying breath he recommended her to this friend, and the wishes of the Lord were a law to the beloved disciple: "And from that hour, that disciple took her to his own house." How precious was this trust? how honourable was it for this servant?

SERM.  
VII.

vant? He was to be the guardian of the mother of the Lord. This was the triumph of friendship and filial duty. Jesus was the son, Mary the mother; Jesus and John the pair of friends.

The example of that blessed family ought to be brought home to your house and mine. Here we have a noble lesson. Love and friendship are to dwell under our roof. Be you dutiful children unto your parents, and kind parents to your children. Let brothers and sisters be such in tender love. Let your household have warm affections, mutual sympathy, and an earnest concern for one another's happiness; without flattering words, or extravagant professions. Our faith pleads for kindness, and the example of the author of the faith pleads for it.

A Christian house is the seat of happiness. There sweet affection comes, not as a chance visitant, but she is the old, the ordinary tenant of that house. Ill-nature, with all her train of harsh passions, is shut out; for that is the dwelling of contentment, the gate of peace. Religion is sentinel at that gate, and pushes back the sullen, the discontented, the peevish, or the haughty.



haughty. Her language is, Go away from this place, we allow no strife or noise to enter here: All is calmness, every thing is pleasant within these doors.

It is joyful to speak on this subject. To what good-hearted man can it be irksome? The father directs the youth of the son; the son is the staff of the age of his father. The mother hath the beauty of holiness, the daughter copies after her, and gives joy to her heart, though her head be gray, and her hand palsied. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." The father rejoices in the youth of his son, the son feels for the sickness or mourning of his father. Who would not feel when pain torments him, or when tears fall from an aged head?

Such were the affections our Lord had for his kindred; such must all have who love him. The Lord of peace cherisheth the children of peace. Love and peace were the pillars of his house, let them be the pillars of ours. Let a kind heart, an engaging tongue, mutual good offices, and corrected manners, endear brother to brother, and friend to friend. "Behold, how good, and how  
T "pleasant

SERM.  
VII.

“pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

2. From the kindred of our Lord, we pass to his servants.

We have much to learn from the manner in which he discharged the duties of this connection. This lesson is of extensive use, as it leads to the happiness of a great part of mankind. Many millions are in that situation, and we must not lose sight of such a body of men. Christianity discharges this neglect. An outward polish makes a man smooth to strangers; pride makes him obliging to the affluent, or high-born; interest causes him to pay court to such as may make his fortune: but he is a plain man before his servants, without any false face. The honeyed words he uses in his hall, become to them bitter as wormwood, deadly as poison. His looks are over-bearing, his words provoking, his hands are ready to strike. He receives their faithful service with fullen disdain, or hath the disturbed eye, and abusive language of one whose reason is under a cloud. On the other hand, a disciple of Christ hath the most engaging address towards

wards his dependents, even if they should be slaves bought with his money.

SERM.

VII.



Our servants are in the next place to our children: They have put themselves under our protection; and we ought not to make our house their prison, or make them to eat the bread of sorrow: We have to cause them live in comfort and peace. If they be obliged to us for kind usage, we are obliged to them for faithful service. This should make us do good to one another, as we depend so much on mutual good offices. Though they be poor, he is mean indeed who acts the tyrant with men because they are poor. We are to be friendly to them at all times, our kindness is to be doubled either when they want health, or mourn for the loss of relations. Christianity calls them brothers: A harsh passionate master has forgot that he is a Christian, has forgot that he is a man. The language humanity utters to dependents is; "Did not he that made me, make him?" "and did not one father fashion us?"

Though Jesus Christ had to keep up the authority and dignity of a master, he had for his servants the mild concern of a friend.

We

SERM.  
VII.



We are charmed with the look he had in the midst of them. He sits on the seat of wisdom, the circle of disciples closes round him. Their eyes are fixed on his face; his tongue speaks peace to them, they hear the doctrine of consolation. His words are the words of choice kindness; his looks, the looks of sweet compassion.

He speaks plain things to them, in a plain manner. This is the eloquence of a sober mind, the eloquence of a strong man. It is not the gaudy dress of a diseased body, to cover feeble hands, weak knees, and a fearful heart. Our Lord speaks without the dictating looks, or pompous expressions, of those who wish to gratify their own vanity, more than to turn the people to righteousness.

Some times he spoke of things hard to be understood: Their acquaintance with the sweetness of his manners, gave them courage to discover what it was that straitened them. Though their education was mean, and their views confined, he heard them with complacency. Many of their questions discover great simplicity, if not weakness. He pities their weakness, he removes their ignorance. He would not use taunts or insult, for these  
are

are the children of ill-nature by pride; and he kept at a great distance from them. His friendship was too sincere; his feelings too warm; his heart too much engaged for insulting them with the ignorance that proceeded from the poverty of their condition, and the narrowness of their education. He is a mean man who mocks the unlearned, for not speaking in a polished stile, or for being credulous in his notions. A wise man is pleased when any body speaks in a manner natural to his condition. It is a petulant humour, and not wisdom, which leads one to sneer at plain well-designing people, who are precisely in the state in which we should have been, if we had had their opportunities only. Our Lord avoided all manner of insult in his conversation with his servants, who had once been poor illiterate fishermen of Galilee.

These servants had great prejudices. Who is entirely free of them? High birth and great fortune have those which proceed from pride and fulness; and disgustful prejudices they are to those who encounter with them. The poor have the prejudices of mean education, credulous company, and low circumstances.

SERM.

VII.

stances. Being unlettered men, they have many prejudices, and are obstinate in defending them. These opinions have come down from their forefathers, and their age makes them appear venerable. He is unwise who wants to overcome them by dint of authority. Let us get the better of them by gentleness, by address, by arguing with calmness, and without a dictatorial manner. He is very ignorant of the obstinacy with which men defend old notions, who expects that prejudices can be conquered by the strong hand, or by the power of ridicule. Absurd as many of them are, they must be treated with great tenderness. Can we expect that a man will alter his opinions for being treated with contempt, and being made the butt of petulance, conceit, and vain-glory?

Christ takes the softest way with his servants, in order to entice them to forsake their errors, and to embrace the truth. Like all their countrymen, they trusted that the Messiah was to bestow upon them worldly honour and power. They expected that the sword of David was about to open a passage to the subjection of the nations: They looked for the magnificence of Solomon, the king

“ who



“ who made silver to be in Jerusalem as  
“ stones.” In course, they challenged as  
their due, the being governors of the con-  
quered kingdoms. They believed that their  
gates were to be crowded by men to do them  
homage ; their halls to be full of petitioners,  
and that the market-place was to be stored  
with their clients and dependents. The Lord  
pities them for these ambitious notions, but  
he does not reproach them. He feels for  
their prejudices, gradually and softly cor-  
rects them ; disposes their minds for receiv-  
ing the gospel in its simplicity, and shews  
that his kingdom was not of this world, but  
of the world to come ; and that humility  
was the badge of his service : “ He that is  
“ greatest among you, let him be as the  
“ younger ; and he that is chief, as he that  
“ doth serve.”

He, often, had reason to blame them, but  
in the very moment of blaming them, he de-  
monstrates how warmly he loved them. He  
spoke not the language of pride or passion,  
the blustering words of command from a  
master to his slave ; but he used the calm  
expostulation of one who wished to save them  
from destruction.

SERM.  
VII.  
~

One of these servants betrayed him for money. To cover his falsehood, and to give a signal to his new friends, he came with smiles, and kissed him. There could have been nothing more disgraceful than the behaviour of this false friend; and words could not have been found too harsh for his crime. Yet the Lord only says, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" When he so softly reproveth this act of baseness, we need not be surprized that he treats his other disciples with a gentle spirit, and a sympathizing heart.

Boisterous people find fault in the spirit of bitterness. They sharpen their tongues in malice; poison is on their lips, their voice is the roaring of a wild beast, or the hissing of a serpent. To debate, is, with them, the pouring out abusive language; to blame, is the being in a rage. Their eyes rove in anger, their tongues are abusive; they sound the whoop of war; they maim and mangle every fallen enemy. As the spirit of the Lord was meek and forbearing, he does not blame with severity: He does not fester their tempers, by ascribing bad motives to their conduct; nor does he threaten them into an acquiescence

acquiescence with his argument. He did not make men angry at his advices ; but his manner made them angry at themselves. He was not over-bearing, like the Rabbies ; nor did he, like them, despise the people.

SERM.  
VII.  
~~~~~

Let this mind be also in us. We have to praise without meanness. and to blame without passion. We never can gain an adversary by giving him bad names. What man can bear reproof conveyed in this manner ? We ought not to fight with weapons of war, or with the deadly rancour of hatred and party zeal. The weapons of our warfare are not stained in blood. We are to have the arms of meekness, and of soft persuasion. We wield these arms, when we love our adversary, want to save him from misery, and to make him happy. We do not desire to harden the wicked ; our desire is, that he should forsake his evil ways. This was the manner of Jesus ; it must be our manner, if we wish to convince the understandings, and to correct the lives of sinners.

If he was condescending to his servants on other occasions, he was doubly condescending when he was about to part with them. They were to be left behind him as

U

orphans,

SERM.  
VII.  
~

orphans, exposed to poverty, reproach, and cruel usage. Their future sufferings warmed his heart, on the prospect of being taken from them. The heart of a father, which is fond at all times, is anxiously fond when he is about to leave his children. He sees how much their childhood is to be exposed to the cruelty of the hard-hearted; how much their youth, to the designs of the interested: to him who lays a snare for the inheritance of their fathers. These anxious thoughts visit the bed of a dying man, and make pain or sickness the least part of his burden. His dread is, that his children may have many enemies, after his eyes have been closed, and his bones are mouldering in the dust.

At the approach of death, the fatherly thoughts of the Lord were upon the apostles. The parting with them was necessary, but it was to be a bitter parting. As his bodily presence was to be taken from them, with peculiar earnestness he recommends them to his Father in heaven, in the following words: “And now, I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.”



As his concern was about their fate after his death, he took every opportunity of doing them honour during his life-time, and he pointed them out to the world as the objects of his favour and good opinion. “ And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and mother.” How engaging was it to have this noble testimony before all the people? to have it from an unerring judge? From him, who “ needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man?”

To make this goodness the more distinguished, he appeared with a look of undisguised humility. They were men of mean appearance, below the notice of the rich, or the acquaintance of the great: yet how condescending was he? how lowly was his manner? how different was it from that of the great men of this world? The man in purple despises Lazarus in rags; but Christianity is not haughty to the poor, but gently soothes his cares; and with great humility and feeling comforts him in his distress; and gives  
him

SERM.  
VII.

him the tender salutation of love, and equal esteem, in terms of the most heart-felt kindness: Poor as thou art, thou art my brother; my brother, as thou art a man; my beloved brother, as thou art a Christian. Thou art naked and hungry; come to my house, eat of my bread, be covered with my garment: Be unto me as the son of my father, as the beloved of my mother.

The man of a high look, and of a proud heart, disdains to be seen with the person of low estate: or, if they ever happen to be together, the haughty man, by his reserve, his contemptuous look, his self-sufficiency, demonstrates that he looks upon himself as a creature of a higher species than his poor brother. By this method he shews that he hath not this mind that was in Christ Jesus. For he addresses poor fishermen as his friends, doth the meanest offices for them, and behaves to them with affability, softness, kind language, and humble manners.

We must imitate the temper, and banish the empty pride, which intoxicates weak men, and, by impairing their reason, makes them value themselves upon what implies no praise, and despise every body who is not in such affluence and honour as they are.

We

We are not allowed, on any pretext, to have that disgusting disposition, for we belong to him who preached and practised real charity, “which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” Humility is the badge of our profession, the example and precept of the Lord form all men for this amiable disposition. Though he had honour with the Father, before the world began, he did not “mind high things, but “condescended to men of low estates.”

The follower of Jesus must not despise any man of any rank, if he be found to behave properly in his own station. As we have all come from the same stock, and have the same expectations, we will not think meanly of him for whom Christ died; of him who has been baptized with our baptism, redeemed with the same blood, and the joint-heir, with us, of the kingdom of heaven. Let not pride ever enter into the bosom of a Christian, but let him be clothed with humility. “Except “ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom “of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is “greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

# S E R M O N VIII.

The CONDUCT of CHRIST, an EXAMPLE  
to CHRISTIANS.

---

PHIL. ii. 5.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus.*

SERM.  
VIII.  
~

3. **F**ROM observing Jesus Christ among his servants, we are led to imitate his affection to the poor, and his sympathy with every loss or misfortune to which the sons of Adam are exposed.

The poor are so numerous in every country, that every thing that is for their good, promotes the happiness of the half of mankind. Nature pleads for her children; she pleads that the sons and daughters of affliction ought to be comforted; that bread should be given to the hungry; that “the parched  
“ground

“ground should become a pool, and the  
“thirsty land springs of water.”

SERM.  
VIII.

This is the excellency of our religion: Our faith protects the poor, and connects them with the rich by the most tender engagements. Sympathy with distress of every kind, was agreeable to the primitive manners of the first disciples; and is recommended by the example of Christ Jesus. By our sympathy we become the benefactors of thousands, and do our endeavour to prevent the misery, and to promote the happiness of all the children of men. The poor and the widow are attended to by the man of feeling, who can lay his hand upon his breast, and say with sincerity, “From my youth he was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother’s womb.”

The friend of the poor shews that goodness is natural to him, that it springs from the heart, the sweet bed of benevolence. The heart is not the soil for selfishness; it must be planted in a proper soil, where no warmth, nothing kindly ever can enter, where winter always reigns, and the soft breezes of summer never blow.

We may oblige the rich from interest, or  
from

SERM.  
VIII.  
~~~~~

from the pride of being intimate with “a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel.” We give freely when we expect to be overpaid, but we deserve no praise for our liberality. It is only a good heart that conducts us to private charity; a heart that followeth the directions of the Father of mercies, in doing good for the love of goodness.

I speak of real charity, not of the noisy thing which is the daughter of pride, the mother of ostentation, which maketh a man bestow his goods to feed the poor, without feeling for them. A man fleeces one set of needy creatures, that he may be blazoned, by fame, as building hospitals for another. He gives alms freely, but it is to gratify vanity; and the labourers of his fields must suffer for it. If you have genuine charity, from the motions of your own heart, you give food to the hungry, cloaths to the naked; you mourn when he mourns, you rejoice when he rejoiceth.

How lovely is he who possesseth this character? When he entereth the miserable hut, where disease is; when he poureth wine and oil into the wounds of a wretched fellow creature; when the widow and the orphan  
have

have a portion at his table, poor and rich pray for health and long life to him and his children: And, when he dies, the rich and poor mourn for him: the rich, because the mighty have fallen; the poor, because they have lost their father.

We have a lesson of charity from the example of our blessed Saviour. Though he had not much to bestow, the poor were always attended to. He had much feeling; and there is nothing he condemns so much as a hard heart. How many a woe was pronounced against the Pharisees, for making outward sanctity an excuse for cruelty and oppression?

As the Lord never despised a man for his station, and as he loved him only for the qualities of his heart, we must sympathize with our brother, in proportion to his distress; and we must not rest in words. We have to lighten his burden; and what we do for him, we must do without a grudge.

Jesus relieved the poor, but it was in as secret a manner as possible. We must copy after him: "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." When thou doest thine alms to

SERM.  
VIII.  
~~~~~

be seen of men, much money may be given away from pride. Vanity opens the hand, though covetousness close the heart. If vanity be stronger than avarice, a covetous man may appear charitable. His heart finites him for what he has given; but he continues to give, that he may have something to boast of. He doth not care for the poor. He does not give them bread for the love of God, or from compassion on their want; but he bestows it, that his ears may be charmed with the music of flattery, the tinkling of praise from the tongues of the unthinking multitude.

Though the charity of our Lord was much concealed, it appears on many occasions. A share of his small store was at the service of the widow and fatherless. His precepts too agree with his example; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Like him we must give alms; and if we give them from the heart, we know that we shall have his approbation, though the narrowness of our circumstances doth not allow us to be liberal in our benefactions. How great is the value of almsgiving, when he who  
giveth

giveth a cup of cold water, in the name of the Lord, shall not lose his reward!

SERM.

VIII.



A poor man gives us room for the display of the most lovely dispositions. We give him a portion of the good things of this life, and for his sake, we acquire the riches of the kingdom of heaven. "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth."

Is he then the follower of Christ who grindeth the face of the poor; and forceth from him what he had earned by the sweat of his brow; and snatcheth the bread from the mouth of his children? If cross accidents, sickness, or old age, bring poverty, let us not afflict the afflicted, or put away an aged man with a heavy heart. Perhaps, your father, or mine, was once old, perhaps he was poor and friendless, and mourned for the death of hopeful children, torn from him in the flower of youth. We also may be old, may be forsaken in the hour of need; our bodies may be wasted by disease, we may have many painful, melancholy pangs for  
the

SERM.  
VIII.  
~

the breaches made in our house. Such pity as we look for, we ought to possess. The kindness I would have you to bestow on my father, I ought to bestow on yours. If I be harsh to the aged and infirm, how can I expect to be treated with softness, when I shall be aged and infirm? What is your situation this day, may be mine to-morrow; for the same changes may happen in my life as in yours, in my family as in your family. Your children are orphans this year, mine may be so the next. Should not I, at this time, soothe the sorrow, and ease the pain of your children; that other men may support mine, when the cloud shall have come upon my house? Distress ranges up and down the world; she travels from village to village, from house to house; from chamber to chamber. The highest rank, the most vigorous health, or the most flourishing family, do not secure us.—The inference from this doctrine is, that we ought to bear one another's burden. The faith of our Lord Jesus, and his example form us for sympathy.

If we have the mind that was in him, we  
never



never shall use the poor harshly. Particularly our hands should be stretched out for his relief, who, in better times, had relieved many a worthy man. Do not insult his misery, spare his shame; raise the head that is bowed down, and strengthen the feeble knees. And though a man may have been wicked in his youth; yet, if his misfortunes be heavy, charity has no memory for old sins, so as to shut its heart against a fellow creature in want. We may have a bad opinion of him, yet our opinion should not harden our heart against a brother who is destitute of daily food. Though he deserve nothing on his own account, we open our hands because he is in misery; because we ourselves may find a reverse of fortune, and because the precepts and example of Jesus oblige us to open them. “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.”

The example of our Lord teaches us, not only to have compassion on poverty, but on every sort of calamity to which the life of man is exposed. Great sickness, or violent pain, is a heavy misfortune; and every Christian

SERM.  
VIII.  
~~~~~

Christian must sympathize with it. A beggar, who enjoys health, is more happy than a chief ruler, whose body is wasted, whose spirits are worn out by continued distress. The gilded chariot, or the lofty palace, gives no relief to his fainting heart. Though his fields be covered with cattle; though his corn and wine abound; though silver glances in every corner of his house; yet his bed is sleepless, his food is loathsome. He has wine, but he cannot drink it; he has costly raiment, but he cannot put it on. Neither the face of plenty, the kind look of friendship, nor the smiles of his children can raise his fallen spirits. He has respect from all who approach him, but what good can it do to one who is in torment? His head is fixed to the pillow, his faint voice is scarcely heard: He cannot lift his eyes; he gasps for breath, or is in convulsions with pain.—This man is to be pitied, though his house should be like that of the king of Nineveh or Babylon. A Christian does sincerely pity him. To this he is directed by the advice and example of the Lord himself.

He



He felt for men in this condition, and he wrought many miracles to relieve them. The hands, the knees, the voice of the paralytick failed. He gave expression to the tongue, strength to the hands, and fastened the joints of the knees. The man received sight, who had been born blind. Formerly, mid-day was as midnight, the city was as the wilderness. At the word of the Lord, he saw the order of the heavens, the beauty of the fields, and the smile upon the face of man. As the hand of Jesus was strong, his heart was sympathizing; and he requires sympathy from all who call on his name.

How fine a parable is made out of this circumstance, in the story of the Samaritan? There are a plainness and feeling in that story, which demonstrate that it proceeded from the heart. The circumstances are tender and affecting. The good Samaritan is the man of feeling. The priest and the Levite were false saints, who saw distress, and passed on the other way. Every man wishes to have such a heart as the Samaritan had. Every one who meets misfortune, wishes to have a tender-hearted Samaritan to sympathize

SERM.  
VIII.  
~

thize with him. This parable should be often thought on, for it recommends the finest sentiments, in the most engaging manner. This is the eloquence of the friend of man, which speaketh from the heart to the heart. "Go, and do thou likewise."

The compassion he so feelingly describes in the parable, he practiseth in regard to the widow of Nain. This woman had first lost the companion of her youth, yet still she had left an only son, who might have supported her in her declining years. Distress came double upon her, and the last stroke brought to her recollection the severity of the former. By the first stroke the protector of her youth was carried off, by the second the staff of her old age was broken.

How happy was it that Jesus was passing that way? He never saw distress, without being grieved for the sufferer. His heart melted for the anguish of this afflicted mother. "Now, when he came nigh to the  
" gate of the city, behold there was a dead  
" man carried out, the only son of his mo-  
" ther, and she was a widow; and much  
" people of the city was with her. And when  
" the

“ the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier, (and they that bare him stood still,) and he said, “ Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak : “ and he delivered him to his mother.” How happy a change came to that house? Joy came after weeping ; the heart of the widow was comforted, the tears of the mother were dried up ; the breath returned to the lifeless body of that young man, the strings of his tongue were loosed, and the hour of his burial, was that of his being raised from the dead.

We have the same lesson at the grave of Lazarus. Four days after his death Christ came to Bethany, which had been the city of his friend. In coming, he met Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who, at the sight of one whom her brother loved so affectionately, shed many tears : And, at the remembrance of what he had done for others, has a reflection very natural to one in her circumstances ; a reflection which suited the warmth of her own heart, and the opinion she entertained of the Lord : “ Lord, if thou hadst been here, my  
Y “ brother

SERM.  
VIII.  
~

“ brother had not died. When Jesus there-  
 fore saw her weeping, and the Jews also  
 weeping which were with her, he groaned  
 in the spirit, and was troubled; and said,  
 Where have ye laid him? They say unto  
 him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.  
 Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved  
 him.” The whole passage about Lazarus  
 is so affecting, that it recommends the tear  
 of friendship, and the sigh of sympathy:  
 and is sufficient to confute them who think  
 that happiness consists in wanting sensibility:  
 A doctrine which springs from pride, and  
 would make an end of those sentiments which  
 are most ornamental to human nature. It  
 would be the triumph of humanity, if we  
 had this mind that was in the Lord; if the  
 bowels and mercies of Jesus, were the bowels  
 and mercies of all who call upon his name.

His compassion reached all men, it reach-  
 ed even his enemies. They were his enemies  
 in every place. From Dan to Beerſheba they  
 had one voice, one watch-word was sent round  
 the people: This word was, Crucify him,  
 crucify him. Yet much as they hated him,  
 cruelly as they persecuted him, how tenderly  
 does he mourn for them? “ O Jerusalem,  
 Jerusalem,

“Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and  
“stonest them that are sent unto thee: How  
“often would I have gathered thy children  
“together, as a hen doth gather her brood  
“under her wings, and ye would not?”

SERM.

VIII.



There are many instances of this nature. Are we Christians, and can we see a poor creature in distress, without feeling for him? Yet how many hard-hearted men do we see. They go to the house of mourning, with the same ease that they go to the house of feasting. Though death be there, they give themselves no trouble; or, they use a talkative sympathy, which useth many words, but there is no communication between their hearts and their tongues. Real sympathy speaks in short sentences, or is entirely silent: “So they sat down with him on the ground  
“seven days and seven nights, and none  
“spake a word unto him, for they saw that  
“his grief was great.”

A man who does not feel, can speak fluently of comfort; but his are words of form, which instead of healing the heart, wound it deep. Even at the time he wears the mask, his secret language is, What concern have I in this scene of mourning?

It

SERM.  
VIII.

It doth not grieve me, why should I mind it? My children at home are safe. The father of the family expires, the children weep over his lifeless body; their mother, now a widow, being unable for the struggle swoons away; and when she opens her eyes, it is only to observe her own wretchedness. A cold-hearted man can, without pain, look at this melancholy company; or, if the forms of neighbourhood obligé him to have a grave appearance, he hastens to leave that hapless family, that he may join in the laugh with them that mind no sorrow that passeth beyond the walls of their own house. Is that man a Christian? Hath he the spirit of Jesus? God forbid that any of you, my hearers, should have so hard a heart. Let us not give pain to a broken-hearted widow. Let us not forsake her when her fortune hath forsaken her. Let us not forget her, because musick is not in her hut, and the feast upon her table. Let us not give unkind looks or harsh language to the fatherless. It is only mean-spirited pride that insults the fallen; pride and selfishness shut the door upon them, and uses barbarous language. Go away from this house; thou art helpless. I will not help

help thee. Who now should pay me for my kindness to you?

SERM.  
VIII  
~

How different is the behaviour of a follower of the Lord? How sweet are his words? how kindly his looks? how precious are his tears? How tender sympathy did the apostle learn from the example of his Master? How worthy is it of our imitation? How great goodness do his words declare? "For out of much affliction, and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you."

Let us cultivate these dispositions. When we sit by the bed of a sick man, we ought to reflect, that next week we may be as much broken as he is this week. When you lose a son, I should reflect, that I also have a son to lose: And, how soon may grief pass from your house to mine? In this persuasion our sympathy will be sincere, it will be lasting.

Sympathy is pleasant to the mourner. It is pleasant to the sick, to observe the watchful attention of his neighbours, and to overhear their sighs, and notice their tears. Our  
Lord

SERM.  
VIII.

Lord had this temper; his servants also had it. The apostles had sympathy from the brethren, and, in their turn, the brethren had it from the apostles.

You ought to follow such examples; you mix your tears with those of your brother, and he mixes his tears with yours. The distress of the one, is the distress of the other. A Christian church is a choice society of men, who “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Jesus, the head of that society, requires that the tenderness of our affections should be formed on the tenderness of his affections. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love; if any fellowship of the Spirit; if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded; being of one accord, of one mind.”

4. When we speak of the private life of our Lord, give me leave to mention his devotion.

When he sat with his disciples, his ordinary discourse was about godliness. What warmth of devotion was in that company?

In

In his prayers he gives an example of piety and faith. How much may we learn from these prayers? We are taught to be spiritually-minded; to ask from the heart; and to expect that an answer in peace shall be given us.

SERM.  
VIII.  
~~~~~

These were his family prayers. How blessed is that family, whose head prays in this spirit? The family was assembled; the fear of God was in the midst of them. Jesus pours out his soul, the apostles pour out their souls. He prays with them, he prays for them, he prays for all the world. How great was the happiness of those who lived under that roof? Happy master, happy servants! The Son of God, and the servants of the Son of God.

Let us have this spirit, let us convey it to our children. Let them be early trained to prayer. It is no shame for us, or for them, to be seen on our knees. It is a bad sign of the times, when men are ashamed of bowing their knees. It was not so of old, when the men lived whom we so much admire. Whether they were Christians, Jews, or Heathens, they joined in prayer and praise

SERM.  
VIII.

to the Deity. It is the invention of this and the last age, to lay claim to wisdom, by neglecting the service of God. Being Christians, we must, like the Author of our religion, pray with fervency, pray from the heart. The direction of the apostle on this point is, “ I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands.”

As the Lord was devout with his disciples, he was devout in his private prayers. How exemplary was he on the Mount of Olives, when he passed entire nights in exercises of devotion? This gives us a fine lesson. Tho’ we be in a secret place the Lord hears us, and gives an answer to our requests. “ When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Let us pray, but let us not be proud of our prayers, or despise



despise our brethren. Let our devotion make us good neighbours, kind friends, plain dealing men. The Pharisee prayed loud and long; and in the language of sanctified pride, he said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this publican."

We have now mentioned a few things which we may learn from the private life of Jesus Christ. We are without excuse, if we be not more dutiful sons, more humane masters, more faithful servants, more charitable, more sympathizing, more devout, than men who never had our advantages. "This is the condemnation, that light is come unto the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

# S E R M O N IX.

The CONDUCT of CHRIST, an EXAMPLE  
to CHRISTIANS.

---

PHIL. ii. 5.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus.*

SERM.  
IX.

**T**HERE must be a vast pleasure in dwelling upon a character which containeth every thing that is good, without a single mixture of evil. We have our eye fixed on this man: We mourn for his sorrow, we feel for his pain. We regret, if his friends be false, or if his enemies prevail against him. We watch his bed in sickness, and pray for him with the same earnestness that we would have done at the bed of an only child. If he lay his son or his daughter in the grave, our eyes are raised to heaven, that God may give comfort to the house of mourning.

OR

On the other hand, if good fortune follow good designs ; if the son of the righteous be righteous and happy ; if his countrymen love him, if strangers respect him, if he be in honour at home and abroad, we wish to be like him, though his dwelling be in the wilderness, or at the extremity of the earth. It is not the voice of prejudice which interests us in this man, nor is it the voice of the misled multitude : It is the voice of God within us, that persuadeth us, that “ the righteous is “ more excellent than his neighbour.”

SERM.

IX.

When we add, that this character belongs to the founder of our religion ; who comforts us in sickness ; who supports us in health ; who makes smooth the face of adversity, and makes steady all the steps of prosperity ; who conducts us through life, who is with us when “ we walk through the valley of the “ shadow of death.” When he doth so great things, gratitude and interest connect us with him ; we bow to his authority ; we have this mind that was in him.

We have had, already, an occasion of entering upon this subject. We have seen the Lord, among his kindred, his servants, among the poor, and in the exercise of prayer.

The

SERM.

IX.



The son, the friend, the master, the guardian of the poor, and the worshipper of God, proclaim the virtues of his private life.

We now proceed,

II. To direct you to follow the example of his virtues in public life.

On this head I beg leave to recommend to your imitation the following particulars.

I. His disinterestedness, which is the first thing we look for in a man of public character. Disinterestedness gives force to the speaker, and persuasion to the hearer: She makes the judge to pass righteous decrees, and the law-giver to make equitable statutes; the magistrate to fear God and hate covetousness. The disinterested prince is the father of the people, for he pursues their good, and not his own gain. His own ease, health, and good name, come only in the second place. The great design of this man is, to break the force of famine, to stop the progress of pestilence; to guard innocence from violence, to curb iniquity without passion; to be a terror not to good works, but to the evil. He may be evil spoken of during his life time, but praise is liberally bestowed upon

on

on him after his death. His example is preferred upon the young by the old, upon children by their parents.

SERM.

IX.



The praises of disinterestedness found from the rising to the setting of the sun ; and men pretend to be directed by it upon every occasion. Though selfishness guide their hearts, and give keenness to their spirits, they speak loudly of generosity and public spirit : “ that they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward.” This has long been a contrivance for misleading the people. This was the pretext that Absalom used to gain the hearts of the children of Israel, and to excite them to rebellion against his father and king : “ Oh ! that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice.”

An unprincipled man thunders in praise of public spirit. The meaning is, he wants to make this a step to avarice, if he love money ; to ambition, if he love power. He may have the strongest language to stop the mouths of his adversaries ; he may have the softest words to gain the confidence of his friends ;

SERM.

IX.

friends; a mother does not appear more kind, or a sister more affectionate.

This address answers as long as it can be concealed; but if it be known that he only acts an assumed part, we may admire his dexterity, but we abhor his principles. Though the tongue of a beggar flatter the man who gives him an alms, and rail at him who refuses to give it, his fair speeches do not discover goodness, or his railing accusation a hatred of vice. His praise and dispraise proceed from the same selfishness.

A selfish man, this year, supports a measure with keenness, and has the whole dictionary of abuse by heart. The next year he condemns these very men, and these very measures. When he speaks of his friend, he has interest in view; when of his country, it is interest, or it is resentment, disappointment, or party-spirit, the vilest form in which selfishness appears. He thinks himself at freedom, if he have companions in iniquity. The question is not, Is this right or wrong? But, What am I to make of it? What money am I to put into my pocket? or, How am I to tread upon the neck of my enemy?

Interest may come in the way of a good  
man

man, and is not to be slighted for every reason; but she will not force him to turn aside a hand-breadth from his duty. Conscience guides the man's hand, opens his mouth, directs his behaviour, forms public connections for him. He supports his country while he is in health, he prays for it when he is sick, and he blesses it with his departing breath. When a man is thought selfish, you hear him with disgust and distrust, as you suspect a snare is laid for you. But, if we believe him to be otherways, we respect him though he be an enemy: We trust his word, if he say that he is our friend; we even trust him when he gives unpleasant counsel.

In particular, a reformer in religion, as Christ was, ought to have great self-denial. Without it, he is quite unequal to the correcting the abuses of the world. If ever there was disinterestedness of the most excellent sort, it is to be seen in the history of Jesus. Though we examine every page of it, we cannot find any selfishness. He had before him the cause of godliness, and had from first to last a warm desire of making men happy.

For what reason did he come to the world?

The

SERM.

IX.



The race of man was to have been undone for ever, if he had not appeared to rescue them. The ruin of one nation would have been disastrous, but here destruction was to have raged from East to West. The Egyptian, Ethiopian, the Syrian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Barbarian, and Scythian, were to have fallen together. Misery was to follow the course of the sun, and to possess every quarter of the globe. Who delivered us from bloodshed? Who pulled us out of the fire? It was Jesus the son of God. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." I do not at this time speak of the greatness of redeeming love; I only speak of these qualities of the heart which are fit for imitation.

We love goodness for its own sake, and rest upon it with peculiar satisfaction. He who praises old times, speaks, with feeling, of these distinguished names that shine in history. In these instances, however, the warm fancy of the writer, and his zeal for his country, might have made him praise the old worthies beyond what the truth authorized. But, in commentary upon the life  
of



of the Lord, even the most vigorous imagination must fall far behind the true history.

Every thing he said and did was contrary to selfishness: We are obliged to use improper language, and to make suppositions that would have been indecent, if it were not that we could not otherwise have applied this example to our own situation. With this explication, we repeat, that every part of his conduct was the reverse of selfishness.

He had many severe trials during all the time that he served the people. These trials began when, at Bethlehem, he was laid in a manger, and when they had to carry him to Egypt, from the wrath of Herod. His was a life of hardship from the cradle to the grave. Now these hardships were of his own choice, and they were born in order to make us heirs of the kingdom of heaven. The account of this redemption we give in his own words: "Therefore doth my Father  
"love me, because I lay down my life that  
"I may take it again. No man taketh it  
"from me, but I lay it down of myself: I  
"have power to lay it down, and I have  
"power to take it again."

The great men of the world bear hard-

A a

ships,

SERM.

IX.

ships, but they bear them to satisfy avarice or ambition. They bear the scorching sun; they lie on the ground covered with snow; they throw themselves into the impetuous torrent, or into the conflagration of a great city: They take hold of the battlements of the lofty tower; the points of a thousand spears do not make them draw back; their bodies are covered with a hundred scars; they persevere in their design, in defiance of famine and disease.

It would be true glory, if they should encounter these hardships for the love of humanity, and of equal laws; if it were to save their country from the invader; if it were to protect old men from violence, the young from oppression, women and children from slavery. But these worshippers of glory, labour not for their native land, that "peace be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces." They bear fatigue and danger, that they may have many slaves at their feet, and that much gold and silver may adorn their houses. Their pride, cruelty, and selfishness, made the cultivated fields a wilderness; the great city a desolated village, Babylon the great, "a possession for the bit-  
tern,

“tern, and pools of water.”—“The wild  
“beasts of the islands cry in their deso-  
“late houses, and dragons in their pleasant  
“palaces.”

SERM.

IX.



The hardships born by Jesus Christ, were not endured to carry away the spoils of conquered kings, or to satisfy ambition or revenge; but to bless all nations who lived on the face of the earth; the generation that then was, and all the generations of men to the end of time. For this cause he was exposed to the hatred of enemies, to the treachery of friends, the malice of false witnesses, and the bloody sentence of an arbitrary governor, and an unjust judge. He was directed by a public spirit of the most excellent nature, which saved the people of God from the hand of the enemy.

In the first place, this generosity engages our admiration. In the next place, we are to form our own conduct upon it. We are to imitate that benevolence that did good, without any prospect of reward. His servant must not balance every thing by profit and loss; but he must often be contented to suffer in his estate, his person, and his good name. Under the gospel, men are not to be  
lovers

SERM.

IX.



lovers of themselves ; but they ought, to the utmost of their ability, to be benefactors to all the world.

The public spirit practised by the Lord, and required of us, is of a most extensive nature. It is not confined to certain tribes, or to this or that spot of the globe. It embraces all the world, and does not confine our good offices to a narrow district. We are required to love our country. Our country is a venerable name, and gives rise to the most generous actions. But we are not so to love our country, as to hate the rest of mankind. The native country is sometimes considered only as a tract of a few miles. It would be disgraceful, if we were to do good only within that small compass, from which we were to fall forth, and to hunt down the rest of mankind like so many wild beasts. The follower of Christ must not be confined in his notions. “ As  
 “ we have therefore opportunity, let us do  
 “ good unto all men, especially unto them  
 “ who are of the household of faith.” “ This  
 “ is my commandment (says our Lord) that  
 “ ye love one another, as I have loved you.”

Every step of his conduct was different  
 from

from what a selfish man would take. The man, who, at every hazard, wants to raise himself, hath a fawning humility in one place, a contemptuous arrogance in another. He insults the man below him, bears insult from the man above him ; is overbearing and mean-spirited by turns ; a tyrant to one sort of men, a slave to another.

If Jesus had had interested views, he, either, would have flattered the persons of the great, or soothed the vices of the people. The priest and the levite, the scribe and the elder, were the absolute directors of the people. These were the friends to be gained by a man who studied interest. A selfish man would have sacrificed his own opinions, or the characters of innocent men. No compliance is so mean, that selfishness will not make ; no action so base, that it will avoid. But the Lord had no time-serving turn : the good were to be praised, though thousands should take offence ; the wicked to be blamed, however high their rank, however conspicuous their office. Hypocrisy, and a narrow spirit, formed the character of the leaders of the Jews. Their worthless lives deserved no mercy, and he gives them no quarter.

Their

SERM.

IX.



SERM.

IX.



Their anger, pride, and selfishness were roused at the attack made upon them. The eyes of the people were opened; they were made to observe how much they had been abused by these wolves in sheep's clothing. Their popularity was blasted, their interest thwarted, their hypocrisy, oppression, and malice, were blown open. They were enraged at their accuser; they breathed revenge; and they joined as one man to hurt his name, and to ruin his influence. Every thing unfair, deceitful and harsh was practised by these furious zealots. But as interest could not move him, their railing and mad zeal could not embitter his spirit. Let this mind be also in us. We must do what may be proper, whatever harm men may do, or whatever railing accusation they may bring against us. Their reproaches ought not to make us have an ill will to them; we are not allowed to return evil for evil, or cursing for cursing.

In turning from the rulers, our Lord did not flatter the people. False teachers rail at one sort of men, while they bow the knee to another. If they depend upon great men, they preach universal and unlimited submission;



sion, and make the voice of the rulers to be the voice of God. If they make court to the people, "They despise government: presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." They persuade they people that every man is a public enemy, who doth not humour every rash notion, or turbulent measure of the multitude. The people mean honestly, though they are apt to be misled; their passions are warm, strong language rouzes them to fury. These are the arms with which the leaders support their own consequence. As the spirit of a Christian is naturally mild, when, in bitterness of language, "he breathes out threatening and slaughter," can this man be guided by principle? Interest models his face; interest forms his opinions, and engages his heart. His praise is partiality, his censure is harsh judgement.

When our Lord finds fault, there is decency; when he blames men, it is in the spirit of meekness. He had an open dealing without abuse, and a candour that did justice to friends and enemies. He knew that severe language does not usually make bad

men

SERM.  
IX.  
~

men good; that it often makes them worse, and threatens to make even good men bad.

All these things convince us, that our Lord was disinterested in all he said, in all he did or suffered. He loved the truth for its own sake, and took every method of recommending it. He loved the sons of men. His public instructions, and private admonitions, had their advantage in view.

In the spirit of this example, let us not confine our kind offices to a few. Let the general happiness of the church of God be pursued by us. Let not hard usage, or unkind language, or the love of gain, make us do evil to any, or refuse to do what good may be in our power. “Love your enemies, “bless them that curse you, do good to them “that hate you, and pray for them which “despitefully use you, and persecute you. “For if ye love them which love you, what “reward have ye, do not even the publicans “the same?”

2. As a consequence of disinterestedness, give me leave to mention, that he bore voluntary poverty.

We deserve neither praise nor dispraise for the good or bad fortune to which we ourselves

selves did not contribute. It is quite a casual thing, and the doing of his forefathers, whether a man has been born to inherit a great fortune, or to gain his bread by industry and hard labour. A man ought not to value himself upon what has come by accident, more than a nation to give itself the preference because the climate is more genial, the sun ascends higher at noon, and the trees produce richer fruit.

SERM.  
IX.

One person enters upon the stage with great state; his very brothers bow themselves to the ground in his presence: Another enters as a beggar, with hunger, thirst, and nakedness for his companions. The first had no merit in his superiority, the second deserved no blame for his meanness. But, if a man had had the option of appearing in the one character, or the other, then it would have been an immense honour to him, to have preferred poverty to riches, in order to give happiness to his friends, his country, or the world in general.

This was the history of Jesus Christ. He was not ushered into the world with any of that pomp and magnificence, with which the birth of great men uses to be announced.

SERM.

IX.



The found of the trumpet did not stun the ear, gold or precious stones did not dazzle the eye; congratulations did not pour in from the city and the country; the noisy mirth of the people was not about the gate. He did not live in a palace, and was not attended by chariots and horsemen; where, on a single word, or motion of the head, a thousand swords are drawn, or returned into the sheath. He was a plain man, of mean birth, without the support of great friends, the guard of brave men, or the defence of powerful nations.

Though he had power to have appeared above the kings of the earth, yet he appeared as the servant of their servants. He did not make his entrance into life with the riches of Solomon, but with the poverty of Lazarus. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." He wanted to wean our affections from the cares of life; and, from his example, we learn, that a man may be great, though he be not clothed in purple; great, though he dwell in a cottage.

This

SERM.

IX.



This voluntary poverty shews a public spirit, unknown in corrupted times. A contracted soul directed by pride, pleasure, or a love of money, makes us look upon the character as visionary. In a selfish generation, when every thing has its price, we deny our faith to what we have not seen. We who live in the days of luxury and covetousness, have a difficulty in believing what is told concerning the simplicity and clean hands of the ancient worthies. But when the facts are certified by a cloud of witnesses, in defiance of selfishness, we admire them in strains of the highest praise. He is a great man, indeed, who has the courage to prefer poverty to riches. These men, with a firm countenance, refused the talents offered for a base action. "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips." In former days a man came from poverty to save his country, and, after saving his country, to poverty he cheerfully returned. He handled the spade one day, and the staff of command another. When we so liberally, and so deservedly praise this lover of his country, why should we refuse praise to him who saved the whole world from

SERM.

IX.

from destruction, and hath given us a victory over death and the powers of darkness. When he wrought out our salvation, he had neither flocks, nor herds, houses, nor fields; neither the ostentation of magnificence, nor the pomp of a numerous attendance. "The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the son of man had not where to lay his head."

From his trials, we learn to bear patiently our own. We understand, that a man is not to be despised for his poverty, nor to be valued by the multitude of his possessions. We learn also to do our duty, though the doing it may be attended by poverty, reproach, and hard usage. There is no necessity for our being before others in affluence, but there is a necessity for not being behind them in goodness. Our poverty ought to be forgotten by us, and covered by our benevolent actions.

To this application the example of our Lord conducts us. For, though he bore voluntary poverty, he did not make his boast of it, as hath been done on many occasions. The ordinary way is to glory in the trappings of riches; but pride appears often under the mortified garb of poverty. Men catch at the admiration

admiration of the multitude, by running to the desert, and living on the fare of wild beasts; or, if they enter the city, they mean only to have many eyes fixed upon their self-denial. A hermit may be as proud in his cave, as a conqueror when he enters the cities of his enemies, and when thousands of captives fall down before him. His word is law; his heart swells at seeing himself the master of many millions of men. There may be as great pride in rags as in purple.

We must have true humility in imitation of the Lord; and therefore, whether we be poor or rich, we will not value ourselves upon this or that condition, but act properly in both. Having such an example before us, if we have abundance of the good things of life, let us communicate a share of it to our indigent brother. We should not refuse to bear poverty, when this shall be the will of providence. Let us bear it with contentment; let us bear it without making a boast of it: let us bear it with the ease that Jesus Christ did; and though we feel inconveniencies from it, we shall find it not to be so heavy a calamity, as the mere man of the world feels it to be.

SERM.

IX.



Poverty is surely no disgrace, when our Saviour, his apostles, and so many of the most distinguished have been tried by it. It may bring disrespect, or harsh usage, from low-minded pride. Our food may be less favourable, our raiment may be less splendid than that of the affluent. We may not have greetings in the synagogues, the uppermost seats at feasts, or be saluted, Hail master. But if we have within us what is better than food or raiment, honour, or smooth speeches, can we repine at having our share of that poverty which the Lord bore during all the time of his pilgrimage? Whether we abound, or be in want, let not the happiness of man, or the cause of godliness, be forgot. Let us bear our distress patiently, in imitation of the example of Jesus Christ. If men reproach us with our poverty, that injury may be easily born: But if they reproach us with our vices, our consciences must take the alarm, and a wounded spirit who can bear? Let us have Jesus Christ for our pattern in this, and all the afflictions of life. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

SERMON

# S E R M O N X.

The CONDUCT of CHRIST, an EXAMPLE  
to CHRISTIANS.

---

PHIL. ii. 5.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus.*

**I**N discoursing of our Lord's public charac- SERM.  
X.  
~  
ter, we have mentioned his disinterested-  
ness, and his voluntary poverty.

3. The next thing we have to observe is,  
that as he was not moved by interest, he was  
not moved by praise.

It is, indeed, more handsome to act for  
praise than for money; but it is better still  
to honour God, and do good to man, for  
the love of God and man. The desire of  
praise is a blind guide, and hath caused much  
distress in the world. It is doubtful whether  
avarice or ambition hath occasioned the  
greatest

SERM. greatest destruction among mankind. There-  
 X. fore the one ought not to be the motive of  
 our conduct more than the other.

In this observation we are confirmed by the whole tenor of our Saviour's conduct. He was obliged to oppose the prejudices of his countrymen, which were the more dangerous as they sprung from wrong notions of religion. In this situation, instead of acting for praise, he encountered the ill will of the men of that generation. The priests and pharisees were the ringleaders of the multitude; and, for their own ends, they used every reproach which could embitter the minds of the people; they accused him as the enemy of Moses, the accomplice of Beelzebub, the blasphemer of the god of their fathers. But he was not to be moved by their curses or their threats. The scribe cavilled, the pharisee traduced, the priest blasphemed; he was reviled as a drinker of wine, and the companion of sinners. "When he  
 " was reviled, he reviled not again; when he  
 " suffered, he threatened not; but committed  
 " himself to him that judgeth righteously."  
 The approbation of his Father supported him  
 against

against the rage of the people, who bawled in defence of impiety.

What lesson does his conduct give us? We are to do good, though the multitude should speak evil of us. And how oft are they zealous for the worst measures? They are frantic, if they are contradicted: They are not to be satisfied without blood. The interested become the ringleaders, and conceal the worst motives under the mask of the public good; they ring the alarm-bell, they assemble the crowd. The soil is dry, they throw in a fire-brand; the blaze spreads, and lays every thing waste. Zeal without knowledge hath often kindled a flame, which threatened to consume the earth. The prophets, the apostles, the band of martyrs, and the Lord himself, have suffered in this conflagration. These examples should arm us against the keen desires of those who are outrageous in a bad cause.

We do not mean that we are to be indifferent what the world may say of us. Indeed, they who have no regard to public opinion, are abandoned beings. This is the last stage of profligacy. When a man has lost shame, he is past recovery: he glories

SERM.  
X.

in his crimes, and never is seen to leave them.

A good man is grieved when they speak ill of him : He looks upon this as one of the greatest earthly misfortunes. He rejoiceth when the world doth him justice ; he regrets if they accuse him wrongfully. He does his duty however, independent of the opinions which men may form.

This was exemplified in the life of our Lord. One set reproaches him for the meanness of his birth ; another for the poverty of his friends ; a third blackens his good name. His words were watched, his actions misconstrued, his friends persecuted, his enemies were in triumph ; yet all the injuries, all the reproaches of his adversaries, could not make him less solicitous for their good. He makes them an offer of his favour ; they refuse his offer : he makes a second and a third trial ; he makes it a hundred times. The rulers begin, the people follow them ; the clamour circulates ; yet neither the malice of the rulers, nor the clamour of the people, could make him indifferent about them. They were his brethren, the sons of Abraham, the sons of Jacob, the heirs of the  
promised

promised land, to whom the first offer of peace was to be given.

SERM.

X.

This was a spirit more noble than any thing which the records of mankind have brought to our knowledge. How far was it before the generosity and forbearance of those men of old, whom we have heard so much celebrated? These renowned men of ancient times engaged in their enterprizes with warm hearts, and keen expectations. As they sincerely loved their countrymen, they ardently desired to make them happy; and, upon that account, they, with great reason, expected to have been received by them with great cordiality; and with deference to their opinions of the public good. A short trial convinced them how fickle, disorderly, and how easily prejudiced the multitude were; and how nearly the highest honour bordered upon the deepest disgrace.

But though these distinguished men were not listened to, they did not despair on the first trial. They renewed the attempt; things became worse and worse: they still persisted in opposition to every discouragement: the people that had at first been warmed moderately, by degrees were heated into madness:  
by

SERM.

X.

by collecting the inflammable materials of a vast country, the flame burst forth like the glow of a furnace, or like the rivers of fire that are thrown out by a burning mountain. Who could resist their force? Wisdom was no match for folly; private spirit for public madness.

Being refused at home, they moved to another country; they met as bad usage among strangers as among their countrymen; the complaints were low at first, but the clamour was soon increased by the addition of many thousand voices. All these things broke their spirits, rankled their temper, and, in a fit of despair, they ceased to strive with those who seemed incorrigible. They deserted the meetings of the people, and, being filled with resentment, instead of loving, they began to hate their country. They took up arms against it, called in the enemy, and filled with blood those cities which they formerly had wished to make great.

Let us turn from these men to Jesus Christ, and we shall observe a public spirit more lasting than the other; more refined, steady, and uniform in its exertions. Continued, increasing bad treatment, could not sour his temper,

temper, or abate his zeal for their good. The utmost virulence of disappointed interest, or the most envenomed rancour of poisoned tongues did not make him turn from the children of his people. If he went to the palace, Herod was there ; if to the hall of judgement, Pilate ; if to the temple, the high-priest. Notwithstanding this combination, he stood by his countrymen through good and bad report. Success would not have given other men that affection, which he had in the midst of ingratitude and disappointment.

SERM.

X.

He was indefatigable in their cause. He traveled through the cities of Judea and Galilee ; through Samaria, and the borders of Tyre and Sidon ; and offered all of them the blessings of his kingdom, though, with one voice, they reviled and persecuted him. He addressed them in public, he addressed them in their private houses. But all could not save him from the strife of their tongues. They persisted in cursing, he persisted in blessing.

After this example, we are not to draw back from doing good, though men should be evil and unthankful ; though they should  
unite

SERM.

X.  


unite in a confederacy for ruining our characters, and entailing disgrace upon us.

Indeed, it is not easy to bless them who curse us. After all our endeavours, there is something remaining in us of the man of sin. He who in word or deed has done us great injustice, does not easily merit our entire and cordial forgiveness. We regret that we have so much of this spirit, and we ought to labour hard to subdue our own tempers, in imitation of the lesson given us; and though, in our present weak state, we cannot get an entire victory over ourselves, we may, at any rate, prevent a settled grudge from rankling in our hearts. Can he be a follower of the meek Jesus, who for years broods over a quarrel, and the prosecution of which, perhaps, he leaves as a legacy to his children?

How happy might it be for the world, if this mind were in us, that was in Christ Jesus! It would be very fortunate for our passing through life, with little disturbance; it would ensure peace to our families, and might be profitable to our neighbours, as our mildness and long-suffering might make many to be mild and forgiving. And, though we be mean men, we have men of our own  
station;

itation ; we may have children and brothers to be instructed by our Christian forbearance. They may be gained to godliness by our exemplary conduct ; and we must be blessed by the reflection of having done so much good to ourselves and others. “ Brethren, “ if any of you do err from the truth, and “ one convert him, he which converteth “ the sinner from the error of his way, shall “ save a soul from death, and shall hide a “ multitude of sins.”

4. From mentioning our Lord's forbearance, we are led to recommend the calmness with which he supported the truth. This calmness reflects disgrace upon the manner in which we see disputes conducted. There are laws for open war, which the Greek and the Barbarian respect. Your enemy does not thrust a dagger into your back ; he does not mix poison with your drink, nor does he mangle women and children. But what laws do they observe in this sort of war ? If I be for a thing which you are against, your first essay is to get by heart the whole vocabulary of abusive language, to open your mouths wide against me, and to make every aspersion to be dashed against my face. Fac-  
tion

SERM.

X.

tion charges the mine, interest lays the train, passion lights the match, and innocence is blown away. Can you have no mercy upon innocence? Fierce controversy never knew mercy.

Can this evil spirit possess a follower of the Lord? It never can haunt where the genius of Christianity has taken its residence. If we be the genuine servants of Jesus, we shall love like brothers, though we may happen to differ about some points of theory. If I make an allowance for you, why should you refuse me the same justice? Let us never presume to charge a man with bad opinions, unless the facts be clear, and the tendency of them be evidently to corrupt the heart, and destroy the peace of man. It is enough that you should be obliged to answer for what you did or said, though you be not for what you neither said nor did. Whether the Lord blames the traditions of his countrymen, their ceremonies, their opinions, or their practices, he always speaks calmly, and with that dignity which becomes a teacher come from God.

He addresses them smoothly and affectionately. He first, with the least pain, lays open

open the wound, then he extracts the poison, and, in the last place, he applieth softening medicines, that it may safely be closed up. SERM.  
X.

Here every thing was opposite to passion or interest. Under the influence of these base motives, a man wants to build his own fame or fortune upon the foundation where he had demolished that of his neighbour. Godliness is the excuse, but gain is more at heart than godliness. The true reason is, "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth:" But the words sent round the streets are, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." It is interested policy, and not zeal for religion, that gives men great heat; I mean, to that length; as to cherish harsh opinions, and lead to a severe behaviour.

The example of the Lord teaches us to defend the truth, and lay open error with the most gentle temper. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Words of wrath did not suit the character of the preacher of peace. Passion was not the sword he wielded; it was the sword of the

SERM. Spirit of all comfort. The violent temper of  
 X. the priests, the impetuous rage of the people,  
 and the partiality of the judge, did not extort  
 one angry word from him. Let us adorn our-  
 selves with this temper, as far as we are able,  
 and defend the truth in the manner in which  
 she wishes to be defended. "Sanctify the Lord  
 " God in your hearts, and be ready always  
 " to give an answer to every man that asketh  
 " you a reason of the hope that is in you, with  
 " meekness and fear: having a good consci-  
 " science, that whereas they speak evil of you,  
 " as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that  
 " falsely accuse your good conversation in  
 " Christ." When we fight with deadly wea-  
 pons, the enemy is hardened, and every  
 stroke makes the heart to fester. When we  
 want to convince our brother of an error in  
 opinion, or of a false step in his conduct, we  
 ought first to gain his confidence by our ten-  
 der treatment of him; and let him see that we  
 look upon him as a brother. This engaging  
 manner will make him hear us with patience,  
 hear us with prepossession in our favour, and  
 make him give way to our arguments, be-  
 cause he feels they proceed from a mind en-  
 lightened by the truth, softened by humanity,  
 and

and perfected by Christianity, Let our advice discover the soft insinuation of an equal, and of a friend; not the domineering language, or dictating looks of a superior to the man he despises. The mild address, the calm persuasion, the affectionate arguments of the Lord, might easily bring us to this engaging manner, and to that sort of persuasion which charms the hearer, and ends in a compleat defeat of error, and in procuring an incontestable victory to truth.

SERM.

X.

5. We have to imitate the consistency of the conduct of Jesus Christ.

How many blemishes in our lives arise from want of consistency? What promises doth our youth make, which our advanced years do falsify? We flatter ourselves, that we, our son, and our brother, have more wisdom and goodness than other men. We hear men dwell with rapture upon the quickness, judgement, and goodness of their children, about whom other people have never been able to discover any thing beyond what is common in the world. Natural affection and long habit begin the cheat; the deceitful language of friends and strangers carry it on. The flattery of dependents, hourly repeated, makes us fondle  
our

SERM.

X.

our child in our bosom, as giving hopes of an extraordinary appearance in his riper years. We introduce young men into the world with these things in our view; but how soon are the extravagant hopes of the parents and relations disappointed? How unlike is the noon to the morning, or the evening to both?

Even after a man hath appeared with some advantage, how many inconsistencies appear? The colour of a man's conduct changes every ten years: in fickle people it changes every year, and sometimes more frequently. A sedate boy often grows up into a dissipated young man; an extravagant young man as often becomes a covetous old man: And even there is often a change in one short day. The same person in one part of business appeareth to be open-hearted, in another to be close and intriguing. At one period of life a man may be a pattern of sobriety, and, in a very short time, his licentiousness may be the proverb of the city and the country.

This fickleness gives a man a mean look, is of great disservice in regard to this life, and is of the very greatest in regard to that which is to come. The example of our Lord was attended with the most singular evenness and consistency

consistency. In childhood he had the com-  
posure of ripe years, and his ripe years had  
the sweetness and innocence of childhood. SERM.  
X.  
Of how tender an age was he, when “ they  
“ found him in the temple, sitting in the midst  
“ of the doctors, and asking them questions?”  
Wisdom and truth were in the mouth of a  
child: The law and the prophets were laid  
open by him; and he instructed the teachers  
in the things pertaining to the redemption of  
Israel. “ All that heard him were astonished  
“ at his understanding and answers.”

His conduct was the same in every age, in  
every place, and in all circumstances. He had  
not kindness one day, and a hard heart an-  
other. There was not sweetness in one com-  
pany, and bitterness in another. There was  
not love to one, and hatred to many. There  
was the same disinterested, unvaried love, from  
first to last.

The disciple must apply the example of his  
master to his own case, and be consistent in  
every part of his life. There cannot a worse  
thing be said of a man, than that he is hot,  
cold, and lukewarm, in the course of a few  
days. Can any thing be meaner than that  
you should have one opinion in this house,  
another

SERM. another in that ; that you should have a third,  
 X. and a fourth ; that your behaviour should  
 change as oft as your opinions ; that actions  
 of hatred should succeed professions of friendship,  
 and a profane spirit the fervour of devotion ?

We may change our sentiments, and still continue to be worthy men ; but there is a consistency, a plainness, and simplicity in this change. It is attended by great modesty and hesitation, and distrust of ourselves. The reflection of an ingenuous mind, upon these occasions, is, I will not put to shame the man who speaks or thinks this year as I did the last. If I was once mistaken, may I not be so a second time ? Therefore, I shall be cautious in censuring those whom I formerly supported. A change that proceedeth from principle, is charitable in its construction ; but every change is to be suspected that frets the temper, leads to violence, and makes a man do bad offices to his old friends. Whether you change your notions, or not, always have integrity, good nature, and kind affections.

With these allowances for a change of opinion, you will permit me to observe, that the better we are, the less shall we be doing and undoing.

undoing. We will not be pulling down in SERM.  
the evening what we built in the morning. X.  
If we had perfect goodness, as Christ had, we  
should not have been inconsistent in a single  
article; as there would have been no opinion  
to correct, or practice to amend. Therefore,  
the more we improve in the imitation of him,  
the more consistent shall we be in charity, so-  
briety, faith, and devotion. The love of God  
will uniformly direct our steps; and, as we  
love God, we at all times must act fairly to  
man: No bribe will make us cold to our  
friend, or false to our trust.

The Lord forms us for this evenness of con-  
duct. Rich men were to him as poor men;  
poor men, as rich men; for it was his heart's  
desire to make them happy. This desire ought  
not to leave us on any occasion; and from  
our consistency we shall reap much satisfac-  
tion. The Lord will acknowledge us as his  
disciples, and will receive us into the man-  
sions of the blessed, agreeably to the promise  
which he gave his servants, in these words:  
“ If any man serve me, let him follow me;  
“ and where I am, there shall also my servant  
“ be: If any man serve me, him will my Fa-  
“ ther honour.”

SERM. 6. From contemplating the virtues of his  
 X. life, we are led to contemplate the virtues of  
 his death.

If it be possible, his death was more distinguished than his life; and we learn from it to die the death of the righteous.

The most interesting sort of reading is that which places before us a good man when he is about taking his departure from life. The subject gives us many profitable lessons; and there is not a day in which we may not apply them. The registers of mortality are always filling up. How many names are written in this record? Yours may be put down to-day, mine to-morrow. It is our business to attend to such circumstances in the case of others, as may enable us to die in peace.

Some men have saved their country by their death; they have devoted themselves to destruction for the people. Some have instructed their own age and country; and have left a legacy to every age, and every country. Some of the best men suffered by violent hands, because they would not desert the cause of virtue; and we are confirmed in worthy resolutions by their firmness and constancy in the midst of pain and disgrace. Their judges were known for partiality and  
 hardness

hardness of heart; the number of their ene- SERM.  
mies were as the stars for multitude. But X.  
the righteous despised the rage of the multi-   
tude, and the tortures inflicted by the tyrant.  
They remained unmoved on the wheel, or on  
the cross. Amidst these scenes of distress, there  
was something to fix their minds, and to  
engage them to the pursuit of real substantial  
goodness. How fine a sight is a man, who is  
willing to part with every thing he holds  
dear, rather than bring a stain upon his con-  
science!

How little is there to be admired about o-  
ther men, when we look at the death of Christ?  
Where have we the best view of him? Is it  
in the garden of Gethsemane, in the hall of  
the high-priest, or before the judgement-seat  
of Pilate? Is it when his enemies bear false  
witness, when he wears the crown of thorns,  
when he comforts the dying penitent, or when  
he prays for his enemies?

How great composure had he in all his  
agony? What instruction have we to get from  
his cross? Our indignation awakens when the  
life of an innocent man is at the mercy of  
perjured witnesses, or prejudiced judges. But  
the Lord had no indignation, though he met

SERM. perjury from his countrymen, and false judgement from Pilate. The only passion he felt was pity for the men who had polluted their souls by injustice, and stained their hands with innocent blood. In the midst of violence and torture, we see him calm and affectionate. Pride and selfishness raised him many enemies; pride directed by furious zeal, and by the most finished cruelty; cruelty heightened by insult. The bitterness of their tongues did justice to the unprovoked malice that rested in their hearts.

“Crucify” was their answer to every question. This sound was in every mouth, Crucify him, and give us Barabbas. Hard-hearted men! How many things ought to have disarmed your rage? Here stood the priests; there, Jesus Christ. Curses and blasphemy were in their mouth; glory to God, and good-will to man in his. The nails were in his hands, and the spear in his side, yet his eyes were raised to heaven; his tongue made intercession for them. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Was ever forgiveness like this? Did ever any other suffer injury? did ever any lose

lose his blood in this spirit?—Where now are SERM.  
the precepts of the ancient sages? Where are X.  
the morals so much boasted of? Where are  
their calmness, their command of passion,  
their contempt of death? Where are their di-  
rections for living and dying? While we look  
at a twinkling lamp, we say that it outshines  
the brightness of the sun.

When you behold this forbearance, how  
can you resent your petty quarrels? There is  
no corner for revenge in the heart of a  
Christian. God forbid that a servant of the  
Lord should meditate revenge. How could  
he do it, who observed the virtues of the  
death of Christ; and whose mind was form-  
ed upon them? If we harbour ill will, we  
belong not to him; we belong to the cor-  
rupted world, to the foul dregs of corruption  
fermented by passion. Keep away from re-  
venge, if you have any of the spirit that  
was in Jesus. What is our religion good  
for, if, instead of doing as he did, we do  
what he avoided?

Like him, let us finish a godly life, by an  
exemplary death. Though enemies satisfy  
their eyes, and please the malice of their  
hearts

SERM. hearts in our distress, yet, if we die in peace  
X. with God and man; if we die praying for  
friends and enemies, we shall be happy  
though friends forsake us, and enemies torment us.

Let our life and death be so ordered, that when men shall see how exemplary we are at home and abroad, they may safely say, That man is a Christian; that life, that death, could only have been formed on the principle of imitation of our Lord, who "left us an example, that we should follow his steps."

SERMON

# S E R M O N XI.

On a GOOD EXAMPLE.

---

MATTHEW v. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

OUR Lord seems to have directed this SERM. discourse to his twelve chosen disciples, XI. rather than to the multitude which had followed him “from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.”

As, at the hazard of life, and good name, these men were to recommend a new religion; and as their success depended upon their conduct, they had reason to be cautious how they acted. They ought to measure every step, and weigh every word. A fault scarcely observable

SERM. fervable in other men, would bring disgrace  
 XI. on people of their opportunities and pretensions. The place they held was high; thousands had their eyes upon them: Their public and private behaviour would be examined, and the cause they supported would rise or fall, as they should appear to be good or bad men. The hatred and jealousy of the world would expose them to reproach, and the least spot would appear glaring on men so much known; and would give their enemies an opportunity of wounding Christianity through their sides. Our Lord, therefore, exhorts them to have so exemplary a life as might dispose mankind to give a patient hearing to their doctrine, and to examine the evidence of the faith which formed such worthy men. “Let  
 “ your light so shine before men, that they  
 “ may see your good works, and glorify your  
 “ Father which is in heaven.”

You will observe that they were encouraged to this duty, from the noble motive of increasing the number of those who were to serve God. Their virtues were to give a wider compass to the truth, and to engage men to glorify their Father in heaven. We see that the very private virtues of the servants of the  
 Lord,

Lord, were to proceed, in some degree, from SERM.  
a warm desire of doing good to mankind. XI.

But though this counsel or command might in the first place, have been addressed to the apostles; there was not a disciple of any rank who might not have brought it home to himself. Please to observe, that, at this time, our Lord was discoursing to a very crowded assembly; and though the greater part of the hearers might have had no serious intention, and came there in order to satisfy their curiosity; and though others might have attended that meeting with the design of cavilling at the words of the Lord, in order to lead him into a snare; yet numbers might have come to him, with the design of being made wiser by his counsel, and better by his example. Though there were Pharisees in that company, who meant to do ill, and not to learn to do good, yet we may safely suppose that some proportion of the audience was made up of persons who wished to be instructed in their duty. These men had a great prize in view, they attended the ministry of Jesus with very serious thoughts, and with a resolution of forming themselves upon his laws.

Upon looking back to their former conduct,

SERM. duct, they found many defects in themselves ;  
 XI. they came to hear the Lord, to be informed  
 how they were to remedy these defects. He  
 received them in the most engaging manner.  
 By this manner, and by the miracles he  
 wrought, he had already gained a name as a  
 teacher come from God ; and from him men  
 had to learn what they ought to do to be sa-  
 ved. These men entered that congregation  
 with a sincere desire of being made acquaint-  
 ed with the will of God, and with a resolution  
 of being the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

The text is applicable to that ingenuous  
 character. They had resolved to stand by the  
 Lord, whom they believed to have been the  
 promised Messiah. This resolution was to ex-  
 pose them to great enmities, to much censure  
 and abuse. The evil eyes of many bad heart-  
 ed men were about to be fixed upon them.  
 These were to be spies upon them, were to  
 put the worst construction upon their words  
 and actions, and to blast their name ; and to  
 do every thing to frustrate the designs they  
 had in view. It was their duty not to give a  
 handle to such hardened unbelievers, who  
 would take advantage of every false step of  
 their behaviour.

They

They were required also to confirm the re-  
solutions of those who had obtained like pre-  
cious faith. Each of them, in his own sta-  
tion, was called upon to build up the house  
of God: And though, as private men, of no  
name, the light of their example might not  
shine at a distance, yet there was not one of  
them who might not do much good or ill in  
the world. The very meanest of them had  
neighbours of his own condition, had bro-  
thers or sisters, sons or daughters, to be made  
happy or miserable, as he gave them a good  
or bad example. However poor a man may  
be, he cannot be wicked for himself alone.  
One poor man entices another; and the in-  
fection spreads, till they have become a great  
company.

Goodness spreads in the same manner: Ten  
good men would do much in a village, a hun-  
dred in a city, a thousand or ten thousand  
would be a blessing to a province; as a thou-  
sand or ten thousand wicked men would spread  
the contagion of vice, from one end of the  
land to the other. One mutinous, or cow-  
ardly soldier, may draw in ten, ten infect an  
hundred, a hundred a thousand. “ Know ye  
“ not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole

SERM.

XI.

“ lump.” The mutiny grows warm, the voice of the worst man is the loudest; a disgrace or defeat may come from the example of a few private men. Absolute ruin may come upon the best from neglecting the beginning of evil.

The first servants of the Lord were precisely in that condition. A few good men were to sow the seeds of goodness; a few wicked men were to sow the seeds of sin. And, as there were evil-minded adversaries, the Christians of that time might expect to meet the most ungenerous treatment. The enemy would take advantage of their misconduct; and though they should attempt to correct their faults, no concealment or reduction could baffle the industry of such enemies. All their vices would be dragged into the light, and the whole body of Christians would be evil spoken of on their account. Therefore, if they loved the Lord; if they were in earnest for his service; if they wished the church of Christ to flourish, themselves and others to be happy, their light ought to shine before men.

We also have reason to take this counsel to ourselves. As we are not born for ourselves alone, we ought, to the extent of our power, to forward the happiness of all the people.

Our

Our conduct may, in a great measure, check SERM. the attempts of the patrons of infidelity, and XI. keep in countenance the friends of the faith.  In degenerate times, like ours, we must always be on our guard, as there are so many enemies to take the advantage of us.

We know there are men who never mention religion, unless it be to raise the laughter of their abandoned companions. They delight in nothing but in thoughtless or uncharitable censures. They do not allow the followers of Christ a single spark of integrity, devotion, or charity. They possess a genius and ready fancy, in making good evil, and evil good. They are positive in ascribing our conduct to the most hateful motives: The confidence of a hardened forehead makes them very positive, and very noisy in these assertions of reproach. If we do any thing to confirm their harsh opinions, their eye sparkles with pleasure, their heart beats with joy. It is the triumph of the wicked when the just man falleth: This is the jest of their table; the common proverb among the sons of riot: this is the mark at which all their arrows are directed.

If one of the brotherhood doth a bad thing, they handle his fault with tenderness, they  
comfort

SERM. comfort him as a friend, they defend him as  
 XI. a brother. But when one who pretends to  
 religion acteth improperly, the whole band  
 fall upon him; they make a common cause  
 of it; the shafts fly from the right and left;  
 and for the rebellion of one, many innocent  
 men are made to suffer. The railing accusa-  
 tion goeth abroad against all the worshippers  
 of the Lord: the cry is echoed from the one  
 end of the land to the other: He only doth  
 what every body expected; all the rest of that  
 society are at bottom no better than this man,  
 though their wickedness be better concealed.  
 The sin of one is multiplied a hundred times:  
 it is applied to you, to me, and to all the ser-  
 vants of Christ. The godly hangs down his  
 head, the ungodly shouts for joy.

But if, on all occasions, we have a Christian  
 conversation, we shall, through the mercy of  
 God in Christ, save our own souls; and our  
 example may contribute to save the souls of  
 other men. If our manners be plain, if our  
 hearts be sincere; if we love the poor, abhor  
 a bribe, do justly, and walk mercifully, we  
 shall be a means of turning many to righte-  
 ousness.

If we have an advantage which is denied  
 to

to the greatest part of mankind, we are ob- SERM.  
liged to improve it. The virtues and vices of XI.  
a man of name are keenly followed, success-  
fully followed by people of every station. Their words are recorded, their actions form the measure of right and wrong. Their good qualities appear more lovely than they are in reality; their bad less hateful. If a man be far before others in knowledge, and farther in modesty and distrust of himself, he gives a fine lesson to his plain neighbours, and makes them respect that knowledge which improveth the heart, and maketh sweet the temper. If wisdom banish pride; and shew itself in guarded actions, subdued passions, in warm friendship, in tender sympathy, our light shineth before men, and the wish of every body is to be like us. If a man hath great feeling in the midst of plenty; if his heart be kind, his manner humble; and if he cherish the brother of low degree; what charm appeareth in his life? If from the magnificence of his hall, he retire to the devotion of his closet: If the master of a palace can mix with the poor; if he plead their cause when they are oppressed, and relieve them when they want bread, his example will soon become

SERM. come a public blessing. His humanity will

XI. bring humanity and devotion into repute.

Every body prays that God would enrich him with such a character; that, in imitation of him, his sons and daughters would be the sons of charity, the daughters of godliness.

As I intend to enlarge upon this subject, please to give me your indulgence, while I consider,

I. That it is our DUTY to give a GOOD EXAMPLE.

II. Enquire into the NATURE of these good qualities for which we are to be exemplary.

III. I shall observe how much GOOD we do by this exemplary behaviour.

I. It is our DUTY to give a good example.

As nature hath designed us for the endearments of social life; and, as in solitude we become a prey to chagrine, we find we cannot be happy if we do not make others happy. If we should be placed in the wilderness, with every thing to gratify our appetites, we must be unhappy; as we have not neighbours to rejoice with us when we are in health, to sympathize with us when we are sick; to soothe

foothe our sorrow, and to lighten our heavy hours. The spring is not chearful, nor the harvest fruitful. The day doth not raise our spirits, the night doth not afford us calm rest. The plain is dreary, the mountain full of horror.

SERM.  
XI.  
~~~~~

We have an interest in the people, and they have an interest in us. We should strive to make one another as happy as possible. Our hearts and our hands ought to join in promoting the interests of society; and if there be any thing which greatly forwards the health or the peace of mind of our neighbour, we must assist him, though we should be exposed to much trouble. We ought to attempt to improve his understanding, and refine his morals.

Now, we make men better, either by our advice, or by our example. For such is the nature of man, that we lose easily by a wicked life, what we gave with difficulty, either by argument, or by counsel. We may preach and exhort, caress and threaten, and pour out a torrent of eloquence, from the beginning to the end of the year; yet our words are idle, our arguments want force, our advice enters into closed ears, if our lives be worthless.

SERM. less. No good can follow the flaming pre-  
 XI. tensions of a worker of iniquity: "Ye shall  
 " know them by their fruits: Do men gather  
 " grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

We may propose to convince the heart of man by strength of reason alone. But this is an experiment that doth not answer once in ten times; and cannot answer in the present state of things. How can a profane man persuade his neighbour to pray? If he swear through the week, could he persuade men not to take the name of the Lord in vain, by thundering against swearing every Sabbath? Could a man whose house is double-barred against the poor, by the subtlety of argument, or by the flowers of declamation, give feeling to a hard heart, or make an oppressor lighten the heavy burden of his dependents.

This warfare demands other arms than angry words, or perplexing arguments, or the intricacy of deep learning: and if these arms were ever so powerful in themselves, what hand could use them? The sword would rust in the sheath, as few are able to draw it. It requires genius, education, leisure, and much exercise, to follow the labyrinth of dispute through all its intricate windings. The thread  
 is

is so fine that an ordinary eye cannot see it; and it escapes the touch of an ordinary hand. By dexterity of management, truth may appear like falsehood, and falsehood like truth. If the combatants be equally matched, and if they appear before plain men, vice may carry the victory, as soon as virtue. One man in ten hath not great parts; one in a hundred hath not improved them, and cannot improve them, because his time is necessarily employed in hard labour. The providing for his family incapacitates him for cultivating his mind.

An exemplary life hath an advantage which argument wanteth. It speaketh a language which is expressly understood by the learned and the unlearned. "There is no speech nor language where this voice is not heard." The labourer of the ground, the reaper of corn, the keeper of sheep, or the artificer in brass or iron, can judge of a good life, as well as the scribe, the interpreter of the law, the counsellor of princes, the judge or the ruler. He is not able to give a reason for his approbation; yet he easily distinguishes between a good and a bad character. We cannot open our eyes, without being charmed with the

SERM. appearance of goodness. By a sort of instinct  
 XI. we love it in ourselves, and in others. This  
 is exquisitely illustrated in a passage of the  
 book of Job, in these words: "When the ear  
 " heard me, then it blessed me; and when  
 " the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; be-  
 " cause I delivered the poor that cried, and  
 " the fatherless, and him that had none to  
 " help him." It requires strong temptations,  
 seducing company, or bad habits, to prevent  
 the impression that the conversation of a wor-  
 thy man stamps upon the hearts of all who  
 come near him.

Therefore, if we wish to convert sinners,  
 and to confirm the servants of God, with an  
 inward sense of religion, we must have an  
 outward impression of it. "Ye are the light  
 " of the world. A city which is set on an  
 " hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light  
 " a candle, and put it under a bushel; but on  
 " a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that  
 " are in the house."

We must not be discouraged from making  
 this trial by a false shame. There are some  
 men, there may be many, who, in their hearts,  
 have a regard for religion; yet, for fear of  
 being thought hypocrites, conceal it with as  
 much

much anxiety and care, as they would have SERM.  
concealed fraud, cowardice, or treason. The XI.  
friend of their bosom must not suspect it, the  
secret must be kept up from all their house-  
hold. They do not pray in their family ;  
family prayers have too vulgar a look, too  
constrained an air, too illiberal a manner for  
these fearful, shame-faced worshippers.

Undoubtedly we are not allowed to imitate  
the austere looks, and the self-righteous man-  
ner of the pharisees and hypocrites, who  
“ love to pray standing in the synagogues, and  
“ in the corners of the streets, that they may  
“ be seen of men.” The modest Christian is  
to enter his closet, and to pray in secret. This  
however does not imply, that we should be  
ashamed of being seen upon our knees, pour-  
ing out our soul in prayer. It only means,  
that we are not allowed to make a boast of  
our devotion ; but let it not be constructed  
into an injunction of concealing our attach-  
ment to religion from all the world, on every  
occasion. One of these disciples, who, like  
Nicodemus, comes to Jesus by night, double  
bars his door at the time of prayer : As it  
is not creditable for a man who would be  
thought wise, to be seen before the throne of  
God :

SERM. God; and as it does not suit the airs of un-  
 XI. concernedness which the man of the world  
 gives himself.

The first desire of a man of this stamp is to be thought to have liberal sentiments; and he thinks he must shew this temper by being as well pleased with the scoffs of the libertine, as with the guarded and innocent conversation of the professed Christian. He does not find fault with wicked humour, lest it should be thought that the company he frequents are men of confined notions, and mean education. In this spirit, several of the Jews concealed the favourable opinion they had of Jesus, lest they should disoblige the pharisees who were bigots, or the Sadducees who were infidels. It was thought illiberal and mean, in these days, to believe in Jesus of Nazareth; and the answer given to every argument in his favour, was, "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed in him? But this people who knoweth not the law, are cursed." We may be liberal with a decent appearance of religion; liberal in not confining our good opinion to this or that sect, or in casting out of the church of God those who differ in opinion from us. The apostle Peter,  
 in

in one sentence, places before us the creed of liberal sentiments: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

SERM.

XI.

If false shame restrains the professions of some men, the worthless lives of counterfeited saints, have restrained others. If they should appear to be religious, they are afraid men would think them hypocrites. On that account they give out that absolute secrecy ought always to attend godliness: that it must not be seen in their words, looks, or manner. They do not think it reflects upon them to be known for the virtues of the second table: If they be friendly, sober, generous, or good intentioned, they wish to be thought so; but they say that devotion loses all its value the moment it is brought into the sight of the world. On this plan, they must not be often at church; they must not appear serious when they are there, lest an opinion should go abroad, that they are directed by priests, and that they are mere bigots, or raving enthusiasts. Their manner must be as unconcerned, their words as free, their company as licentious, as if they had not had God in all their thoughts.

SERM. thoughts. They think hypocrisy the most  
 XI. disgraceful of all characters; they would rather deny the Lord, than be under this imputation. There is no disputing that hypocrisy is a very bad thing: but are we to declare war against true religion, because the uncharitable may give out that we have only the religion that is false?

But why should we direct all our shafts against hypocrisy in religion, when we give quarter to every other sort of it? Many do their alms to be seen of men. This is an affectation of charity, the mere blazoning of vanity; and is with justice denominated hypocrisy; and its value in the presence of God is "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." There may be hypocrites also in humility, whose looks are lowly, whose hearts are haughty. They conceal their pride, that they may forward their interest, by catching at the good report of men whom they despise in their hearts. Every body sees that there are false pretenders to integrity; there are ten hypocrites in this line, for one in that of religion. All fraud and over-reaching is carried on successfully, under the mask of honesty. Justice is not justice, honesty is not open-dealing,  
 friendship

friendship is not friendly, when our only desire is to have our actions spoken of. Who-  
ever wears a mask is a hypocrite, whether he personate a saint, a friend, or a lover of his country. Every virtue is to be sought for on its own account; and the approbation of God and of a good conscience, not the praise of men, is to be our reward. Devotion is in the same situation with other good qualities.

It is the principle upon which we act, that makes an action good or bad. If the principle be good, the action is good, whether men observe it or not; and circumstances determine, when we ought to conceal it, or when we ought to bring it in view. When the world is inclined to impiety, and when open profligacy and infidelity prevail in every quarter, a man ought to be determined in his profession, and to check the impiety of the multitude, by doing honour to religion in public and private.

Though a sincere Christian does not blazon his actions, yet he is not ashamed of them; and, in one way or other, his real character comes to be known to every body who sees him. The habit of the soul must be often seen in the course of many years. A hypocrite

SERM.

XI.

SERM. crite cannot be always on his guard, nor can  
 XI. a Christian conceal his attachment to the Lord,  
 and to his religion, nor ought he to attempt  
 it. There is no reason for his concealing it.  
 The desire of having a character for holiness  
 may not be improper, if it be not the motive  
 of our conduct, and if it does not come in the  
 first place. It is a harmless desire: it may be  
 praise-worthy when it follows our actions,  
 and does not go before them. A tender-  
 hearted man wishes to be thought tender-  
 hearted; a man of integrity is grieved, if the  
 world believe him to be a deceiver. May  
 not a godly man be grieved if men should  
 give him the character of being ungodly?  
 May he not feel an unjust attack upon his  
 sincerity in religion, as much as he would do,  
 if it were against his honest name? Godliness,  
 we hope, does not bring such a discredit upon  
 us, that we should be ashamed of it. We  
 deny not our loyalty to our earthly rulers:  
 Our loyalty to the King of kings is not to be  
 hid in an heedless age, when infidelity passes  
 for deep knowledge; when the enemy of the  
 Lord is envied by the vain, respected by the  
 dissipated; when he is the boast of the young  
 man, and the oracle of the old.

In

In the days of the apostles, religion was as much ridiculed, as it is in ours. The cross of Christ was an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles; but the apostles did not, on that account, conceal their sentiments. What one of them said, was applicable to all; “ I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Great caution, however, is to be used in regard to these things. When you shew you are religious, shew also that you are virtuous. When men say that you are devout, let it not be in their power to say that you are licentious companions, unfair dealers, troublesome neighbours, or treacherous friends. Be lovers of God and man, “ for an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

There is the better reason for our being on our guard, that there are many who have a profession of religion, without a good conversation. Such were the scribes and pharisees in the days of our Lord; and it is to be deeply regretted, that in our days there are so many of the same character. However, the faults of bad men prove nothing against religion. When bad men have an interest to promote,

SERM. or a passion to gratify, they dissemble in religion, they dissemble in morals. There are, (as I mentioned already) as great dissemblers in friendship and compassion, as there are in religion. The hypocrisy of false saints affords no reason against a decent profession, any more than the dissimulation of friendship demonstrates that there is no real friend. A bad man may have an appearance of piety, but a good man cannot be without it.

Such a profession is not to be dispensed with. Our blessed Lord shews the use and necessity of such a temper, in these words; “Who-so-ever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.” The apostle Paul puts this confession upon a level with faith, in these words of his epistle to the Romans: “That is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

We are not allowed to say, that religion is of so private a nature, that it must not be exposed to view, but, at all times, and in all places, ought to be kept out of sight. Revelation,  
supported

supported by reason and experience, speaks another language; and declares that we must expose it to view upon many occasions. We are to be unreserved in our profession, when we can do good to particular Christians, to societies of the faithful, or to the church in general. The old testament patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and martyrs, gave an example, which may be useful to us in our days. They bore many hardships, and would not deny the faith, though they had to suffer on its account, poverty, stripes, imprisonment, and death in all its terrors. Let our light shine before men, that we may in every thing resemble the ancient worthies, and be entitled to the happiness which was bestowed on them.

I again repeat, that there is no excuse for hypocrisy. Let us not attempt to conceal deceit under the appearance of decency. Let us not have an useless parade of religion, or amuse ourselves with a set of phrases we do not understand; or bestow that attention on forms, that we ought to have bestowed on cultivating the heart. In all our professions, we ought to put this question to ourselves,

What

SERM. What good am I to do by them? Am I to  
 XI. be better myself, or to make others better.  
 Is my life as far before that of my neighbours, as my pretensions to superior godliness?

For our own sake, and for the sake of mankind, we ought to join in public worship: And in the house of God we ought to have the veneration, composure, humility, the penitent acknowledgment, and the warmth of thanksgiving which should always attend us to the service of the Lord our God. Our behaviour is to be regular, devout, and fervent, that we may engage the hearts, and fix the eyes of the congregation; and instruct them to draw nigh to God in the beauty of holiness.

We are also to carry our religion to our own houses, that our children, our servants, and the stranger within our gates, may, by our example, be formed for piety and virtue. In the first place, we and our house must serve the Lord. In the next place, we must recommend this service to our friends, neighbours, and to the whole church. We are to pray in secret; yet secret as our prayers are,  
 they

they will have a great effect upon our public SERM.  
and private conduct. Though there be no XI.  
witness; yet the effect of our secret prayers  
are seen in the absence of all sinful words,  
actions, and gestures. Though our modesty  
keep us from boasting, yet when a good pur-  
pose is to be promoted, we speak of charity,  
temperance, faith, and godliness, with warm  
feelings, earnest language, keen though calm  
zeal. The fire that glows in our breasts,  
will, through our means, glow in the breasts  
of our neighbours and countrymen; and we  
and they will encrease the faith and good  
works of each other, by being patterns of  
every thing that a servant of the Lord ought  
to practise.

SERMON

# S E R M O N XII.

## On a GOOD EXAMPLE.

---

MATTHEW v. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

SERM.  
XII.

**H**AVING considered that it is our duty to give a good example, we proceed,

II. To enquire into the NATURE of these GOOD QUALITIES for which we are to be exemplary.

If I were to speak of every thing on which our light is to shine, I should give a full description of the character of a Christian. Such a description would swell our discourse out of all proportion, and be distressing to the speaker and hearers. On that account, I am only to mention a few of the leading qualities, for which we are to be exemplary.

On

On this head we shall speak little about gross and scandalous sins: For there is nothing exemplary in avoiding what is of that denomination. Did ever any body exhort us to imitate a man for not being a thief, a false swearer, a murderer, or a traitor? Human laws punish these crimes so heavily, and custom has made the voice of the people be so much against them, that, corrupted as the world is, few commit them, in proportion to those who do not. It would be degrading to Christianity to value itself upon avoiding these base transgressions. A good-hearted Pagan or Mahometan blushes to be accused of them. They ruin a man's character so effectually, that none will fall into them who wishes to pass through life without being pointed at as a person who brings disgrace upon human nature. God forbid that a Christian should not aim at something which is nearer to perfection.

In order to make our light shine before men, I beg leave to put you in mind, that you are cautiously to keep at a distance from the sins which are not avoided by the learned or the unlearned, the courtier or the clown. In enquiring into the motives of our conduct,

SERM. we seldom put this question, Does this thing  
 XII. agree with the law of God? Has it reason  
 upon its side? If it answer to the customs of  
 the world, we are satisfied; our conscience  
 does not accuse us: The following the mul-  
 titude makes a thing good, the being singular  
 makes it evil. Particularly, we think our-  
 selves right, if we follow persons of fortune,  
 and great name; and if our vices be not  
 thought to be low creeping vices, but the  
 vices of men of spirit.

We are not, however, to humour the cor-  
 rupt taste of the city or country. We are  
 not to imitate the reigning vices, however  
 powerful their patrons may be, however re-  
 spected for their abilities and address. We  
 must take from these vices the covering of po-  
 pular opinion, under which they hide their  
 deformity; though by our singularity we  
 may bring much hatred or ridicule upon our-  
 selves.

In this we walk in the footsteps of the best  
 men that ever acted upon the stage of this  
 world. They have all been singular in with-  
 standing the tide of prevailing iniquity. The  
 example of great or small men does not form  
 an apology for leaving the laws of God. The

voice

voice of the congregation of Israel, bawling SERM.  
for the idolatry of Egypt, did not excuse XII.  
Aaron for worshipping the golden calf. 

In bad times, when goodness is under a cloud, and when the people turn away from God, by an exemplary conduct we may do great service to the interests of religion. When profligacy, selfishness, and infidelity, are to be seen in every society, and in every house; a few regular, generous, and devout men may occasion a wonderful change in the manners of the world. When our friends and countrymen have fallen asleep, the good example of a few may rouse them to new life and vigour. Though all of our acquaintance be cold in religion, we are not to be cold; the more lukewarm they are, the more fervent and zealous ought we to be. Though they be slack in morals, we are not to be like them; the slacker they are, the more guarded ought we to appear. If there should be the corruption of Babylon, we must have the integrity and firm courage of Daniel.

Our example must go much further than this. As it is difficult to draw the line which separates good from evil, there are many doubtful things which we cannot determine

SERM. to belong to the one class, or the other. In  
 XII. these cases, we must deny ourselves to what  
 ~~~~~ may be indifferent, rather than run the risk  
 of passing over the disputed limits. He who  
 acts when he is in doubt, commits a sin,  
 though the action in its own nature be innocent. "To him that esteemeth any thing to  
 " be unclean, to him it is unclean."

There may be a certain degree of levity, which hath no sin in it; as our nature requires some relaxation. It might be too gloomy, to have our minds always fixed on serious things; and innocent trifling may be allowed for raising our spirits, if it be kept within bounds: Yet it may be unbecoming a Christian to spend much of his time in this idle and unprofitable manner. Though we may have cheerfulness, and ought to have it, yet the decency of our character does not admit of spending our days in catching at the laugh of the thoughtless, or in ridiculing the folly of the man without understanding. Our cheerfulness must be that of a man, not the trifling of a boy; a cheerfulness which gives a breathing time to the gravity and composure of a Christian. Let us avoid that jesting and foolish talking which is not convenient.

nient. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt."

SERM.  
XII.

We must aim at something beyond this negative sort of goodness. Our light is to shine on all the virtues which our faith recommends. True piety takes the lead of these virtues, and is calculated for spreading abroad the fear of God; and from the godliness of a few, for instructing the people how they are to come to the house of God, how to engage in private prayer and meditation. I beg leave to add a few sentences to what I have already said on this part of our duty.

Piety is a most exemplary thing, particularly in an age when seriousness is not much attended to. It must, however, be engaging in its nature, and have no unpleasant mixture in its composition. This piety is easy and chearful, kind and affectionate, good-natured and charitable; makes an agreeable friend, a kind-hearted relation, a loving father, and a dutiful child.

The heart of man falls in love with this piety; it gives dignity to our character, and great weight to our example. It shines forth in the first place to our own families, and then it is seen, loved and followed by our neighbourhood.

SERM. neighbourhood. There is another sort of it,  
 XII. however, which does as much harm. It has  
 happened unfortunately, that some devout  
 people have been very forbidding in their  
 manner. By their manner men are dis-  
 gusted at the service of God, as they do not  
 love to join such a morose company. The in-  
 terest of piety hath suffered more by connect-  
 ing it with austerity, than from any other  
 cause. It comes to be thought that sourness  
 always guards the side of religion. Can it be  
 believed that a gloomy countenance is a sym-  
 ptom of a pious heart? By giving godliness  
 these sullen and downcast looks, we cause  
 numbers to take offence at it. Particularly,  
 we frighten young people from having any  
 connection with it; for their heart revolts at  
 melancholy, and cannot associate with that  
 person whose brow is unpleasant, whose voice  
 sounds harshly.

Whence have men made out the creed  
 which enjoins these severities? From what  
 book or chapter of the old or new testament?  
 from what prophet or apostle have they de-  
 rived these notions? They have them not  
 from the precepts or practice of Jesus Christ,  
 or of his servants. A disciple of his has the  
 best

best reason for having an open countenance, and a chearful heart; as he is encouraged by innocence, and a good conscience; and supported by the expectation, “that an entrance shall be ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This well grounded hope, makes him happy at all times, and in all places. At home or abroad he is not more gloomy, more distant or reserved than other men. He is serious in the time of public or private worship; when he gives advices to his children, when he is employed in reading the word, or in meditation on it: but chearfulness sits at his table, she gives a welcome to the stranger; she smiles upon the son or daughter of the house. An obliging pleasant spirit enters these chambers, presides at that table. Why may not a devout man be open in his temper, and insinuating in his manner? Why may he not have a pleasant humour, a harmless, engaging humour, at the time he unbends himself for mirth? There is no ill nature to rankle him, no interest to disconcert him. The arrows fly on every side, but they leave no wound, they draw no blood; they are the arrows of love; every body opens his bosom to receive them.

Let

SERM.  
XII.

SERM. Let us have that sweet devotion, and we shall  
 XII. be instrumental in engaging our neighbours  
 to follow us.

This exemplary piety smooths the temper, gives contentment to the heart, and the most earnest desire of doing good. How charming is the smile which godliness gives to charity? We figure the devotion of angels to be of this nature. Sweetness and mercy enter into this character. They pray for peace on earth, goodwill toward men. These prayers have a heavenly, an angelical air. Innocence, warm thanksgiving, love to God, joy for the conversion of a sinner, sorrow for the impenitent, appear in one enchanting figure; the figure of devotion fostering benevolence. Who can observe it, without admiring it? Who can admire it, without copying after it? Let your devotion shine; she is a noble guide, the mother of every virtue. “She doth not  
 “slander with her tongue; she doth not evil  
 “to her neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach  
 “against her neighbour.” Kind words, charitable opinions, and engaging looks, attend upon godliness. No body can be displeased in her company, except the envious and bad-hearted, who sicken at her appearance.

As

As far as our example can extend, we must introduce this lovely stranger to the acquaintance of many, "that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven." When they observe the undisguised goodness of true religion, they must be excited to imitate it. SERM.  
XII.

There is the more reason for giving this lesson to our neighbours, that the world seems rather to be falling backward in this respect, than advancing forward. We must do our utmost to prevent this apostacy; and if we be devout without shew, pride, hypocrisy, or a narrow spirit, we shall cause many to follow us. Holiness will travel from house to house, and from heart to heart.

To do honour to our religion, we ought to be exemplary for an integrity, which no trials or temptations can get the better of. It brings a reflection upon the cause of godliness, that many who engage in that service are mere mercenaries, who take every advantage in their dealings, serve for pay, have no generosity, but can lift their hands against their friends, with the same ease that they do it for them. Every thing is declared to be just which the law allows; and nothing is wrong,

SERM. wrong, unless a man suffer for it in a court  
 XII. of justice. Men, who pass through the world  
 with some character, use freedoms with truth; or, if for the mean look it has, they do not tell a direct falsehood, they mislead us by doubleness of speech, or any of the sleights of deceit. The arts of sophistry constitute a part of education; and men sometimes glory in leading the simple into a snare, by which he may bring loss or disgrace upon his family.

However, we ought not to screen deceitful professions, nor unfair advantages, behind the practices of any set of men. Neither the love of money, nor the strength of passion; the interest of his children, nor the attachment to a party, can make a good man do an indirect thing. He will not lie, he will not cheat, he will not equivocate. Would the servant of Christ act dishonestly, or swear deceitfully? he would not, he could not give such a scandal to the church of God. Forbid it decency, forbid it virtue, forbid it reason, revelation; forbid it peace in life, and happiness after death.

We must be exemplary for a primitive plainness of manners. The intricate and crooked ways of the man of design, do not answer the  
 honesty

honesty and openness of an “*Israelite indeed,* SERM.  
XII.  
“*in whom there is no guile.*” Let not a man  
smile, in order to deceive; let him not pro-  
mise, to lay caution and suspicion asleep; let  
not his tongue say one thing, and his heart  
another. Let every thing be downright, open,  
and candid, without wiles or stratagems, or  
quirks, or evasions. These are for the mere  
man of the world; let him use them, they are  
fit instruments for bad-hearted men. The  
servant of Christ has other views, other prin-  
ciples. He is modest in speech, sure in pro-  
mise, of an honest heart and open counte-  
nance; not shuffling for gain, but steady,  
plain, and unaffected. Let there be a great sim-  
plicity in your life; “*that ye may be blame-*  
“*less, the sons of God without rebuke, in the*  
“*mids of a crooked and perverse nation, a-*  
“*mong whom ye shine as lights in the world.*”

I might add, that we are to be examples of  
brotherly love. If we have a large share of  
the good things of life, modest merit will be  
sought for, though she should live in a cot-  
tage, labour the ground, or attend upon cat-  
tle. The frankness of our face would relieve  
her from embarrassment, though the splen-  
dour of our house might disconcert her. How

SERM. agreeable is it to observe the rich and powerful  
 XII. ful condescending to their poor brothers, and  
 addressing them in terms of great cordiality? Such were Abraham and Job, the lights of ancient days.

We are particularly called upon to be exemplary by a fatherly concern for the poor, when great distress is in the world, as that was of which the prophet speaks: "For behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water." Though there has been no general calamity of late, as God gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness; yet you have heard, often, the cry of the poor; you remember when there was not bread in the land; you have seen old age, you have seen childhood in want. Some of you who hear me, may have felt hunger and nakedness. If God should ever bring back these misfortunes, he will give an opportunity to them who are rich in this world, to be rich in good works. Their light will shine on such occasions. Though there be mourning, there shall be a comforter; there shall

be bread in that house. “ He hath disperst SERM.  
“ abroad, he hath given to the poor, his righ- XII.  
“ teousness endureth for ever.” The earnest ~~~~~  
prayer of this man is, “ Now he that mini-  
“ streth feed to the sower, both minister  
“ bread for your food, and multiply your  
“ seed sown.”

If the example of a compassionate man teaches you how to use the comforts of life, you may improve every other advantage in your situation. By observing your behaviour, men be taught to be modest with great abilities, and humble in an exalted station. The rich are taught not to be proud or hard-hearted; the poor not to be repining and low-minded. The study of one, the study of thousands, is to acquire this character. Every man is pleased with himself, and with his neighbour's. Kind offices travel from your house to his, and from his to yours. The high look, the contemptuous stare, the stately nod of pride enter not his company.

In this struggle of kindness, each doth for his brother all that he has ability to compass. The man of a good heart does not weigh every thing in the scales of prudence and oeconomy. There is nothing better than pru-  
dence

SERM. dence when it follows our actions, does not  
 XII. go before them. Let prudence act as a hand-  
 maid to virtue, not as a mistress. It is not  
 prudence but selfishness which makes a man  
 cold-hearted to his friends, and unconcerned  
 about the straits of the poor. Have that pru-  
 dence which is the daughter of charity; and  
 not that false thing which is the daughter of  
 covetousness, the sister of meanness.

We are also to be exemplary for a temper  
 which is not easily provoked, and is easily  
 pacified. Knit brows and reproachful words  
 suit not our character. We must not be dri-  
 ven to lift our hand in wrath, or to open our  
 mouths in bitterness.

We must also restrain the appetites of  
 the body. The beasts of the field follow the  
 first impulse of appetite. They go without a  
 struggle, when it drives them. In this they  
 act agreeably to their nature. As they have  
 no reasonable soul, they must follow the di-  
 rections of the body. But man knows order  
 and decency. His existence is not measured  
 by the years of his pilgrimage on earth, but  
 extends beyond the grave: and this is a state  
 of trial for eternity. Having this in his view,  
 the servant of Jesus must be distinguished for  
 mortified

mortified passions, restrained appetites; for cleanness of heart and hand. SERM.  
XII.

The day would fail me, if I were to bring before you every quality for which you are to be exemplary: I shall therefore conclude this part of my discourse with quoting a passage from the epistle to the Philippians, “ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things, Those things which ye have both learned, received and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.”

We proceed,

III. To observe the GOOD we do by this exemplary behaviour.

The power of example is felt by all mankind; especially if it should be that of a man much known. When a great leader falls, ten thousand fall by his side; the conquerors are defeated, and they pursue who had begun to fly. The people through good and bad report follow the virtues of a person of chief name. Jeroboam was the wicked father of a wicked

SERM. wicked family, the wicked king of a wicked  
 XII. people. That family being corrupted them-  
 selves, turned the people from the service of  
 the living God. The contagion began in the  
 palace, which was the fountain of false wor-  
 ship: The courtiers caught the manners of  
 the king; and the children of Israel bowed to  
 graven images, in imitation of the court and  
 the city. Idolatry broke out at Bethel, it  
 overspread the ten tribes like a flood; and all  
 Israel was made to sin. On the other hand,  
 Josiah raised religion from its grave, brought  
 it in to the house of David, recommended it  
 to the people; and, by his means, the tribes  
 of Judah and Benjamin turned, as one man,  
 to the God of their fathers.

Every man can recollect instances to con-  
 firm this observation. A good example civi-  
 lizes a whole nation; a bad one, makes sa-  
 vage a nation which had been civilized. The  
 reformer assembles the wild people from their  
 dens and caves; teaches them to till the  
 ground, and to build cities. They learn to  
 live like men, instead of roaming in the forests  
 like wild beasts. Religion, law, manners, and  
 good habits, are introduced.

Example has, at one time, made ten thou-  
 sand

land men lay down their lives for their coun- SERM.  
try. The same people, by having selfish di- XII.  
rectors, have fallen into slavery in the course  
of a few years. The fathers thought it noble  
to die for their country, the sons have taken  
money to open the gates to the enemy.

The power of example was never more  
conspicuous than in the age of the first Chri-  
stians. When they despised the edge of the  
sword, and the devouring fire; one may safe-  
ly affirm, that one engaged another. The  
band of martyrs was filled up in some degree,  
by a father enlisting a son in this service; a  
brother, a brother; and a neighbour a neigh-  
bour.

To come from these heroic times, we feel  
that, at all times, men are formed for good  
or evil by the company they keep. Public  
spirit and private virtue pass from one citizen  
to another. When any body is pointed out  
to us for a man of merit, we wish to be as  
worthy a man, as distinguished for the love  
of our country. We learn much from ob-  
serving his actions, from hearing his conver-  
sation. It was on this principle that the  
Queen of Sheba said of the court of Solomon;  
“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy  
servants,

SERM. "servants, which stand continually before  
XII. "thee."

We must, then, be regular, from tenderness to our neighbours. Our wickedness hurts ourselves in the first place: It is an aggravation of our offence that we hurt other men. It gives a relish to our goodness, that many are the better for it. On this footing our example may recover bad men, may support the weak, may confirm the most finished Christian.

1. We may recover the wicked. Being the slaves of iniquity, they are more to be pitied than the drudges at the oar, or the criminals appointed for torture. A few years give freedom to the slave; a few hours bring relief to the criminal. How light is their misery to his who lives and dies an enemy of God? And what can be more delightful than to contribute to his relief?

Now, a good example may have this effect: for a good character commands respect from every body. The reason that it has not more visible consequences is, that goodness is only seen by starts, but wickedness every day; or that it cannot be denied, some professors of religion may be seen leading a bad life. If  
our

our religion makes us open-handed to the poor, if we pass over great injuries, if we protect the weak, and guard the innocent, a man must think well of us; and may strive to imitate us. Though the experiment does not answer in every case, it may answer in most instances. Good opinion may soften into fondness; and a few steps more will lead them to imitation.

There is a possibility, there is a great probability of our reclaiming very bad men, if we treat them in this manner. But can we have any such hope if we be worthless men. For though a bad man be master of the most overpowering eloquence, yet if he be known for a man of no principle, his eloquence will only strike the air, or tickle the ear, it can find no entrance into the heart. Of such men the prophet speaks in these fine words: “ They  
“ come unto thee as the people cometh, and  
“ they sit before thee as my people; and they  
“ hear thy words, but they will not do them:  
“ for with their mouth they shew much love,  
“ but their heart goeth after covetousness.  
“ And lo, thou art unto them as a very love-  
“ ly song of one who hath a pleasant voice,  
“ and can play well on an instrument, for  
L I “ they

SERM. "they hear thy words, but do them not."

XII.

If we be wicked, what answer could we give to this question. Do you believe all that you describe with so much feeling? How could you believe it, and act in such a manner? By this conduct we confirm men in their vices, and in their infidelity. Instead of preaching the gospel, we plead the cause of Antichrist. Neither sermons, nor private exhortations, can convert a sinner, till it be known that the speaker loves God and man. It was in this way, in some degree, that the apostles made so many converts. The admiration of their life and conversation made Jews and Gentiles open their ears to receive the word.

There may, indeed, be some veterans, who have worn out their strength; and become grey in the service of vice. They early enlisted in this service, and they will not desert from it, when they are grown old. There are poor hopes of the reformation of such worn-out sinners. Yet charity does not allow us to give them up as desperate. The riotous son returned to his father, and Manasseh repented of all his sins. With such examples before us, we ought to hope for the conversion of the very worst men. And how  
exalted

exalted a joy would it cause, if we could bring back to the Father of mercies one of these miserable souls. SERM.  
XII.

And, if there be some determined men who are wicked from principle, there is a greater number of those who fall through ignorance. Unhappily, they have fallen in with guides who conducted them in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. They at first entered upon it, because it was easily found, and no body directed them in the road that leadeth to life. Here we have the prospect of a plentiful harvest: and if we could save one of these unfortunate creatures, we might think that we had not lived in vain, as we had saved a reasonable creature by "pulling him out of the fire." Exert yourselves in this noble cause of virtue and happiness.

2. If the wicked should stand out, we are not to give over, for we may do great good to those who have newly begun a religious life; or to those who have not hitherto made a choice. These men are at the saving or losing, and how happy is it for them to have proper guides? How unfortunate to have unprincipled men to direct them? Sensible of the danger they were in, the best men have frank-

ly

SERM. ly acknowledged, they might have been a-  
 XII. bandoned creatures, if they had met strong  
 temptations and enticing company.

This observation is particularly applicable to youth. Old age is obstinate in its resolutions if they be bad; positive and determined if they be good: and is not easily moved from any design or opinion. But youth is not so determined in any thing, that good or bad company may not make them alter their purpose. They turn out virtuous or vicious, as their friends incline to virtue or to vice. Give them a good example, and you may be assured that they will improve by it.

Above every thing, we may be of service to our children who naturally imitate their parents. In their opinion, the practice of their fathers sanctify every thing. If the father lyes, the son lyes; if the father defrauds, the son defrauds; if the one despises the Lord, the other of course despises him. Let the young man observe you to have good principles; and, from the cradle, he will be trained to goodness, to sobriety and plain manners. The father resembles Abraham, the son Isaac; the godly son of a godly father. The father has comfort from his son, the son has honour  
 from

from his father. That son will live happily, bring up virtuous children to be joint-heirs with him of the kingdom of God. SERM.  
XII.  
~

3. If example has a good effect upon the rising generation, it has it upon Christians of an old standing. The world is full of temptations; and continued temptations will make the strong to fall. Enticing company, taking the advantage of our weaknesses, undermines the best principles. Therefore we ought to fly from what is bad, and to be the companions of those who fear the Lord. One holy man confirms another, and is confirmed in his turn; ten are strengthened by ten, a hundred by a hundred.

We learn a fine expression of devotion from one, contentment from another, humility from a third, charity from a fourth. We gradually advance from one grace to another, till we be perfect in holiness and faith. We shall be good ourselves, we shall make others good; and the communion of saints will make a happy society. We shall live and die like Christians; and, after death, we shall join the company who always sing hallelujah before the throne of God.

# S E R M O N XIII.

Of NONCONFORMITY to the WORLD.

---

ROMANS xii. 2.

*And be not conformed to this world.*

SERM.  
XIII.

WE often hear men declare, that they cannot be happy without religion: That this world hath nothing to entice a reasonable creature; and that every thing we doat upon, is vanity and vexation of spirit: yet, if we judge from actions, and not from words, religion is only thought of by starts; and the first thing we propose for ourselves is to make a figure in the world. We direct our early studies, we make choice of an employment, we form connections, and contract friendship upon this plan.

We

We propose the same plan for our children, and we have the voice of mankind to encourage us. Every body says, Is not he a happy man who inherits a great fortune, or has raised one for himself? And, if we avoid such things as are meanly thought of, we imagine wealth and honour are bought at a cheap purchase; at the expence of complying with every custom, whether it be a good or a bad one. We are sure of the good opinion of the world, and we trust to have peace in our minds, if we be kept in countenance by the practices of our neighbours.

Now, this humour prevailed at all times, particularly, in the time of the apostles. At that time the Romans were masters of the known world; but they had forgotten the private virtue, the public spirit, and the great renown of their forefathers. The struggle had long been how a man might get before others, in cunning, fervility, debauchery, and shedding of blood. Freedom was exposed to sale, judges sacrificed the innocent to the pride, covetousness, and cruelty of the guilty; the rulers were tyrants without controul, who scourged the backs, and cut up the veins of thousands of slaves.

Christianity

SERM.

XIII.



SERM. Christianity made its appearance in these  
 XIII. degenerate times; and it was with difficulty  
 that it could stand against profligacy and corruption, that reigned so universally. It proposed to soften the hearts of the cruel, to curb the appetites of the intemperate, to give an open heart to the lover of money, and self-denial to the lover of pleasure; to make the judges just, the rulers mild, and the subjects orderly.

The apostles encountered these hardships, when they preached the gospel among the nations. Though Paul had a large share of them, yet he gave no quarter to vice, wherever it was, and however powerfully it might be supported. This is the intention of the advice he gives in the text: "And be not conformed unto this world."

I trust this is an interesting subject to all who call upon the name of the Lord. You are not at freedom to do a thing, because others do it; nor to avoid it, because they avoid it. The worst actions may be praised, the best may bring disgrace. It may be thought high-breeding to neglect the service of God, and seriousness may pass for a sign of mean education. Many would be ashamed

to be seen at their prayers. They think every man who prays, has a weak head, or a disturbed imagination. SERM.  
XIII.

Though these men should be as a thousand to one ; though they should be respected for their fortune, their abilities, their rank, or a celebrated name, yet we must keep at a distance from their example ; otherwise we must renounce the religion of Jesus Christ.

However, when we are required not to be conformed to the world, it is not intended that we should aim at singularity ; but that we are to do nothing sinful, in compliance with the practice of mankind. We follow the religion of kind affections, which manages our business, trains up our children, and connects us with our friends, our country, and with mankind in general. The bond is strong which connects all the sons of Adam, that is stronger which connects Christians of every name. For the different denominations of Christians are only names for the brothers of the same house. We are not desired to have any thing strange or forbidding, much less is it a duty to hide ourselves in the wilderness. We fly from the sting of a serpent, the tooth of a lion, the eye of a cockatrice, or the blast

SERM. of the pestilence; from the force of fire, the  
 XIII. raging of the sea, or the destruction of an  
 earthquake; but there uses not to be any  
 think frightful in the seeing man. We must  
 enter freely into their assemblies, that we may  
 receive assistance if we be weak, and give it  
 if we be strong.

It is chagrin, and not religion, that forces a man into solitude. Unsocial passions thin the streets, and make the market place desolate. Religion does not shun society, it is the great support of it. By our engaging manners, and strict integrity, we recommend godliness to the notice of our countrymen; and our pleasant carriage at home, and in the house of God, draw many to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The apostles, instead of being hermits in the desert, were teachers in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome.

As we are not to banish ourselves from the endearments of society, there is no obligation upon us to be singular in our look, conversation, or address. Vanity, directed by weakness, values itself upon trifling distinctions. But where there are a sound understanding,  
 and

and a good heart, every thing is done with ease. There is no noise or affectation when a good man differs from the world, or when he agrees with it. SERM.  
XIII.

The world is not to be opposed for a slight cause. Why would we oppose a custom, that is not immoral? You may be like your neighbour in every harmless thing. The ease of conversation, the order of society, and the happiness of the people, require these mutual compliances. But religion requires nothing that is rude, abrupt, or contrary to the innocent forms of civilized life; nothing that may give unnecessary pain to others, or cause ourselves to be avoided.

The servant of the Lord may have polished manners. He is more inclined to have them, than a man of loose principles can be. There is something very insinuating in a son or daughter of Christian charity, who thinketh no evil, who, from the soul, wisheth to do every body good. There is a kindness in the eye of beneficence, a softness in her heart that no art can imitate. She never gives offence without cause, she never hurts the sensibility, or exposes the small weaknesses of a neighbour or friend. Therefore though she may be with-

SERM. out some outward accomplishments, yet she  
 XIII. hath that sweetness which makes her pleased  
 with herself, and pleasant to all who come  
 near her.

Whether a good man have or want a polished behaviour, he will have nothing disgusting in his composition. If some people have an austere, censoring manner under the cloak of religion, let us not be conformed to them in that particular. Some men make bluntness, and an aptness for invective and abuse, a sign of sincerity in the faith. But we ought to remember, that devotion does not allow us to gratify our peevish humour by giving pain to any who names the name of the Lord, or bringing them to reproach. As we are brothers we must exchange good offices, and do so in the most affectionate manner.

In renouncing the world, a Christian does not exercise severity, or judge harshly, speak contemptuously, or frown when others smile. He may be a pattern of devotion, who, for his cheerfulness, is followed by the young, respected by the old, the delight of every society. A man in public life may, at his hours, have the utmost decency, and regularity, which the gospel recommends. The father of  
 that

that family is religious, the mother religious; the sons, the daughters, the servants religious. The man of the world is the man of God. That is a happy house, where godliness and a gentle spirit join in establishing peace, and in blessing the society with mutual love, with tender wishes, and friendly actions. Their religion gives a cheerfulness to their conversation; and their conversation a polish to their religion. This sweet devotion does not hide herself in a cave, but she resides in the city, adorns a court, improves and refines the world. She banishes sourness, cherishes good nature, and makes the happiness of all the desire of all. Thousands have one heart, and one hand, the heart of benevolence, the hand of benevolence.

If we are not to be different from other men, or to banish ourselves from society, in not being conformed to the world, we are not commanded to be indifferent to the good things of life. If we use fair means, we may be good Christians, though we attend to our own interest: nay, when a man speaks much about despising the world, there arises a suspicion he doth not speak from the heart. We may honestly acknowledge that we love respect,

**SERM.** spect, and that harsh usage hurts us. We wish  
**XIII.** to possess affluence. Who can put his hand on  
 his heart, and affirm, I have no such wish? I believe there are very few that could give this assurance with a safe conscience.

Our faith allows us to wish for good fortune: but let nothing be unfair. Though riches and respect are desirable things; yet an unstained conscience is more desirable, and is to be polluted for no bribe. But if no force be put upon our principles, the advantages of life deserve our care. The rich man is clothed in purple, his hall is full, his table is pressed down, his cup runneth over. Hundreds watch the motion of his eye, and the opening of his mouth. If he be pleased, there is a look of joy; there is sadness if he be displeased. His opinions are submitted to, his wishes are anticipated, his friends caressed, his children honoured. For a share of these advantages men bear stifling heat, benumbing cold, the fatigues of war, the dangers of the sea, or the ravages of disease.

It is natural to wish for these great privileges, but for them all we are not allowed to travel a single step in the road of vice. Though we be fond of our children, their fortune is  
 not

not to be made at the expence of a bad con-  
science. They are so near our hearts, that  
we ought to exert ourselves as far as foresight  
and honest industry reach. But if conscience  
is to suffer, let them be poor, rather than we  
should be worthless. We must despise riches,  
if they be procured by fraud, violence, or  
hardness of heart. On these terms, riches  
would be a disgrace to us, not an honour.  
If we cannot be rich with a fair character,  
let us not hesitate a moment; we must be  
poor rather than dishonest. Let us leave our  
children the inheritance of our good name,  
that followed us through the world, attended  
us to the grave, and that will be an ornament  
to our posterity, when our bones are moul-  
dering in the dust.

How many act upon other principles? But  
that is nothing to us. If men ordinarily  
gain their point, they are not straitened about  
the means by which they compass their de-  
sign. One holds another in countenance, and  
the number of offenders makes them think  
that there is no offence.

In this respect, perhaps, one age hath no  
reason to reproach another. They take oppo-  
site directions, but they depart equally from  
goodness.

SERM. goodnefs. Profanity is the fafhion of this  
 XIII. age, hypocrify was the fafhion of that. One  
 fet of men are oppreffors, another intemperate,  
 a third double-dealers. Every time of life,  
 alfo, hath a fet of fins which doth eafily befet  
 it. Youth takes this road, old age that. The  
 buyer deceives in one way, the feller in an-  
 other. The rich are over-bearing, the poor  
 mean-fpirited. Great men have their vices,  
 fmall men have theirs. Vice glitters in apart-  
 ments of ftate; it is the fame vice in the cot-  
 tage of the labourer, though it hath a coarfer  
 drefs, and a homelier manner. No body is  
 afhamed of being conformed to the world;  
 he gives out, that every body who keeps clear  
 of the reigning vices, is a hypocrite at heart;  
 and, if it were not for concealment, he would  
 appear in deeper colours than the barefaced  
 finner. Every body removes blame from him-  
 felf, and has the fame excufe. What call is  
 upon me to have a perfection few are poffef-  
 fed of? What I do, is done freely by men of  
 great opportunities.

Men do not trouble themfelves in finding  
 what may, in its own nature, be right or  
 wrong; but though an action be fhamelefs,  
 they make it right, if it have the voice of thofe  
 who

who had the public opinion. These leaders SERM. amuse with sounding words, and hide the XIII. deformity of vice, under a veil painted with gaudy colours. Profligacy is dressed in high taste: "She walks with stretched-forth neck, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as she goes." Modesty is thought awkwardness; diffidence, folly: To dare to blaspheme the name of God, passes for courage. Not to blush at a vile action, is called knowledge of the world. The loud laugh of infidelity is thought a sign of a bold and free spirit, that is not deluded with the credulous ill-informed vulgar.

A thoughtless young man enters this field, enticing companions throw themselves in his way; cover his eyes, and make him to run upon stumbling-blocks. They haunt him in every place, never leave him to self-examination: They find out his weak side, and take advantage of it. If his head turns giddy, or his foot slip; they give him a push in order to bring him to the ground; or, if his eyes glimmer, they conduct him blindfolded into the midst of the morass, which hath no bottom.

SERM. To bring about his ruin, they give to  
 XIII. vice elegance, insinuation, softness, beauty, and gracefulness. She smiles and looks lovely; she has the sweetest words, and the most alluring address. Her counsellors and retainers hide the net she spreads for catching the unwary: The unhappy young man falls into the snare, and cannot extricate himself.

These evil companions gain the confidence of the heedless and unexperienced: They laugh at their scruples, enter into their interest, gratify their passions, flatter their pride, blow them up with conceit: they stagger with wine, they run into the midst of the most trying temptations. They initiate them in the mystery of iniquity, and they become sworn friends to every man who reviles the gospel, and makes a boast of sin. Being once connected with such companions, they wish to surpass their instructors. The seed has not been sown in barren ground, and it even produceth a hundred fold.

The most dangerous appearance of vice is, where she hath the anxious looks, the warm address, and soothing words of friendship. By these wheedling arts, the sweetness of a young man's dispositions may prove the cause  
 of

of his ruin. Friendship introduces him to the haunts of vice: She lies in ambush for his imprudence: She closes the eyes of the guardians of virtue; a deep sleep falls upon them; he is taken prisoner at midnight, and has made no terms. He yields to evil communication. Mirth, laughter, and an empty noisy joy banish seriousness from that company; for, "fools make a mock at sin."

SERM.  
XIII.  
~

At first the impressions of a religious education may keep off the enemy for some time: but as the attack is both above and underground; and as the defender is faint-hearted, religion is dislodged by main force; vice enters the breach, keeps, and will long keep possession. Infidelity cometh to its assistance; infidelity, with great swelling words of vanity, with the heart of a coward, the tongue of a champion. Three such men draw in a fourth, these entice a fifth, and a sixth. The plague spreads from house to house. What can stop the infection? They allure your son and mine. Every father's, every mother's heart breaks; and mournful complaints are to be heard in every street, and in every lane. The disconsolate parents mourn for the sins of their first-born, in accents of sorrow, bordering on despair:

SERM. XIII. despair. Alas! my child, where are the fond hopes this heart of mine conceived? where the promises of thy childhood and youth? How art thou fallen? How hast thou wounded thy father's heart? Thou hast banished sleep from my eyes, hast brought disease upon my body; and maketh my gray hairs to go down to the grave with sorrow. Ah! what distress is it to a father to see a hopeful child fall a sacrifice to the arts and insinuation, the inveigling arts of him who ruins the young, by seducing them into the vices and impertinencies of an evil world, to which they ought not to have been conformed.

But will the grief of his parents retain him? Will it loose him from the bonds of his ensnaring deceivers? Though parents mourn for his fall, he will not part with those who cause him to deviate from the instruction of wisdom. He looks on these as the only friends and companions who deserve attention. The poor misguided youth believes that this is the right road, and that these are the only true conductors. His counsellors speak to a deaf man, his parents address a rebellious child: neither the voice of reason or revelation is heard for the noise of riot, or the heedless

less laugh of dissipation. “ He goeth as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver ; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life,”

SERM.  
XIII.

This is the day of the triumph of wickedness ; when thousands fall down before her throne, and do homage to her, as to the queen of all the earth : Yet this is the time when good principles shew themselves to best advantage. They teach us not to follow a multitude to do evil, or to screen ourselves behind the practice of a thousand, or of ten thousand. Goodness doth not depend upon the number of its votaries. She doth God’s commandments, and avoids what he forbids, independently of praise or dispraise ; independently of custom, of the notions which may prevail, and of the number, power, and abilities of those who march at the head of the sons of riot. Noah was godly before the flood ; Abraham served God in Mesopotamia, Lot was virtuous at Sodom, so were Isaiah in the court of Ahaz, and Daniel in the house of Nebuchadnezzar. There were good men in the family of Nero, so were there in the council of the Jews. The prophet thus describes the prevailing

SERM. prevailing profligacy of his countrymen :

XIII. " Behold, I and the children whom the Lord

~ " hath given me, are for signs and for wonders

" in Israel." It is to be observed, that though

the corruption was general, yet this family con-

tinued faithful, and was not to be corrupted

by the example of an evil generation, nor was

it to be terrified by their threats. On many

other occasions the world was wicked, but

good men did not yield to this temptation.

When idolatry was thought to have prevailed

universally in the land, God himself declared

that there were many who stood firm : " Yet

" I have left me seven thousand in Israel,

" which have not bowed unto Baal."

Wickedness was never at a greater height

than in the days when Jesus Christ appeared

in the flesh. The priests and the pharisees

ruled the people, and they were shameless hy-

pocrites. They set no bounds to their envy

and malice ; none to their cruelty and oppres-

sion. Love to God, and good-will to man,

were discarded by these pretenders to holi-

ness. Pride, selfishness, a hard heart, and a

narrow spirit, entered the house of Aaron, and

spread through the twelve tribes. Tradition

was trusted, the law was of no effect : The wi-

dow

How was oppressed, the fatherless were robbed of their inheritance; the law was a scourge, the seat of justice the sanctuary of iniquity; the house of God became a den of thieves; and religion was made an excuse for shedding of blood. The people were entirely led astray by these false pretexts, and our Lord found a necessity of exposing their worthlessness to the eyes of the people. He held them up to view, as zealots of abandoned lives; who had oppressive hands and covetous hearts.

The discovery he made created him many enemies, who compassed sea and land to satisfy their revenge: Enemies who did not rest, till they had caused him to die upon the cross. From the beginning of his ministry, till it was finished, these men thirsted for his blood. He foresaw the danger, he knew the bitterness of their hearts, yet this did not make him less earnest in his Father's work. He set about the reformation of the world, with the help of a few despised men. The servants follow the diligence of their Master, learn courage from him: And though reproach was behind them, death before them, yet they supported their trials, by having a good conscience in secret; a good, though hated profession, in public.

SERM.  
XIII.

SERM. public. They were not conformed to the  
 XIII. world; but the firmness they shewed at home  
 to the Jews, they shewed abroad to the Gen-  
 tiles. Neither zeal for the idolatry of their  
 fathers, nor veneration for their lawgivers  
 and learned men; neither the interest of their  
 priests, nor the pomp of their sacrifices; the  
 superstition of the people, nor the tyranny of  
 the rulers, could move the apostles; and they  
 suffered death, rather than bow the knee to  
 graven images.

From their example we are taught not to be  
 conformed to the world; and after these dis-  
 tinguished men, we must not be deterred from  
 our duty by the opinions which are counte-  
 nanced, or the practices which are followed  
 by the greater part of mankind. If we be  
 fellow-labourers with the apostles, if we have  
 this mind that was in Jesus, and if we wish to  
 have his church built upon a sure foundation,  
 we must not take the counsel of the unholy,  
 nor excuse our own profligacy, or want of  
 principles, by the profligacy, or want of prin-  
 ciples of others.

As this subject opens upon us, we intend  
 to be more particular in explaining it. But  
 this we reserve for another discourse.

SERMON

# S E R M O N XIV.

Of NONCONFORMITY to the WORLD.

---

ROMANS xii. 2.

*And be not conformed to this world.*

**H**AVING already shewn, in general, what SERM. XIV. is implied in the precept of the text; and having given some limitations of it, we proceed to be more particular.

1. Give me leave to begin with some observations upon the thoughtlessness and dissipation which has prevailed from the beginning, even in the best times.

In our days thoughtlessness seems to be gaining ground, at an amazing rate. It seems, in some degree, to have extinguished feeling, and to have founded the happiness of man upon vanity and trifles. Its object is to keep at the greatest distance from every thing

SERM. serious. It is only necessity that ever makes  
 XIV. a triffler be in earnest.

~~~~~  
 If men of this stamp are not obliged to labour for their bread, they apply themselves entirely to amusement. Whatever vigour of body, or strength of understanding they have, is spent in this service. Amusement is the employment of the week, the employment of the year. One gaudy trifle succeeding another, employs the head and the hands. The conversation may be sprightly, but a man is not made wiser. There are many words, but they are light as chaff: One hour passes idly, a second is spent as the first, so are a third, and a fourth.

Though these men be idle, they have no rest. Idleness hath the languid air, the panting breath, and the fallow look. Its watching and care are as distressing as the hardships of the sea, the thirst of the desert, or the fatigues of a camp. In the morning, the slothful is harassed in contriving how to saunter away the day; in the evening, his body is wearied, and his spirits exhausted. When the labourer is enjoying the sweets of rest, he is running backward and forward through all the vain schemes of dissipation. He does  
 not

not commune with his own mind; he is a SERM. stranger at home: he runs into company; and XIV. if he has the misfortune to be a day by himself, his spirits are funk: he cannot be happy but in the midst of bustle, and noise, and dissipation. The scene is always shifting, and every art is used to hide a man from himself. There is the same perpetual round of thoughtlessness. This day is like yesterday; to-morrow will be like this day; the same humour will continue to the end of the year. A man may pass a very long life, and may have been in a hurry from first to last, yet his days may have been so unprofitably spent, that, when he grows old and diseased, chagrin and discontent will sour his temper; and, as he cannot move abroad to the dissipation that kept his spirits afloat, he frets and repines at home; and his ill humour makes the lives of his children and servants unhappy.

An old man cannot find trifling agreeable; nor can it give him any satisfaction. His age is accompanied with such infirmities as shew him that his glass is near run. Having lived to this world, when he comes to die, he will not close his eyes in peace. As he did not prepare himself for death, he cannot bear to take a near  
view

SERM. view of it; he turns from it, lest he should  
 XIV. be awakened from that unconcernedness upon  
 which he builds his happiness.

Diffipation makes the head turn giddy. She sees strange sights, hears strange voices; and fills the imagination with an idea, that in order to be happy, she must be always idle. How great must the disappointment be, when, in the end, she finds that all she called happiness, was a dream or a shadow? The misery of the old man proceeded from his having been, in his youth, scrupulously conformed to the world: in his following the thoughtlessness and diffipation which prevail so much among the different orders of men.

If we are not allowed to imitate the ordinary diffipation of mankind; what shall we say to that sort of it which ought to be avoided as the destroyer of every good principle, I mean, when a man ventures his fortune upon the decision of mere chance. This is the worst sort of thoughtlessness, if that be not too soft a name for a vice which lays asleep every tender, every benevolent sentiment. Covetousness, in the extreme, is the ruling passion of these men of the world. They lie in wait for the young, the weak in judgment, and for him whose  
 head

head is disordered with wine. They make plunder of the confidence of a relation, a friend, or a guardian. The hospitality of your house is made an excuse for robbing your children. Can this be supported on any principle of religion or morals? Covetousness stifles every affection, and destroys every tie of blood, or obligation of gratitude. It is a maxim that allows of few exceptions, That a fortune which is made suddenly, is not made fairly: That honest gain is only to be acquired by labour, industry, and perseverance.

Though you should be the successful adventurer, you must have been much hardened, if you feel no stings of conscience for the distresses you have brought upon innocent families. Children are turned out of their father's house, because they had the misfortune to encounter with you. He who lived in plenty has no bread: Poverty has come from your hand: Your breath brings misery, as the mildew of the clouds brings famine into a fruitful land.

If we suppose, on the other hand, that a man is the loser, how can he behold the face of the relations he has ruined? It had been happy for his children that they had been fatherless;

SERM. therless; for his wife that she had been a wi-  
 XIV: dow. He who ought to have saved them,  
 has destroyed them. Hold thy hand, barbarous man. An amiable wife, and engaging children, do warmly beseech thee not to throw away their inheritance, and to leave them for a patrimony cold, and hunger, and nakedness. Thy son, or thy daughter, may, without friends or comforters, be exposed to a thousand misfortunes, by the iniquity of their fathers. Thy adversary, who, at this time, may appear with softened brow, will be the first to execute this sentence: He is a hardened creature. How could he be otherwise, when he flourishes by the misfortunes of men? Hold thy hands, barbarous man, that thou mayest not force thy children upon the paw of the bear, or the tooth of the lion, who thirsts for their blood.

Some vices portend great evil to the country where they are practised: This vice in particular. The hazard is, That he who lays a snare for his friend, will not be scrupulous about the interest of his country. Though the number, the rank, or shining parts of those who take this road, may give a currency to  
 the

the most selfish of vices, yet no rank or ability can authorise any man to be the plunderer of his friends, to make prey of the harmless, the unsuspecting, the ignorant, and the uninformed. SERM.  
XIV.  
~

I have hitherto confined myself to the disposition which prevails among those of easy fortune. I am about to call your thoughts to the dissipation of the poor, to which men are not to be conformed, more than to that of the rich. How many are excessively thoughtless of those who gain their bread by the sweat of their brows? Necessity forces them to labour hard, yet they squander, in their vices, what ought to have been applied to the maintenance of their children.

This rule holds particularly in great cities, and in every place where great numbers are crowded within a small compass. There, many of the poorer sort are the most worthless, and the most disorderly of all the inhabitants. The contagion spreads from street to street, and from gate to gate. From the work-shops they direct their steps to the house of riot, where they spend in one day what they have earned in six. From fatigue they pass to debauchery, without thinking of to-morrow, or  
making

SERM. making any provision for it. Their children  
 XIV. are starving at home, while they are rioting  
 abroad. Fatherly affection gives way to coarse  
 mirth, and the noise of disorderly compani-  
 ons.

Allow me to observe, That the dissipation of the poor is the most dangerous and most criminal of any. A polished education gives men some sort of decency, however corrupted their principles may be. But a man, without education, who hath given himself up to debauchery, is restrained by no consideration. He is the sworn enemy of order, joins in every tumult, is either a ringleader or an accomplice in every uproar; and it often happens, that, he endeavours to repair, on the street, or high-way, the loss he has sustained by his thoughtlessness, and his extravagance. He has reduced his family to beggary, and he attempts to relieve them by committing crimes. He has also acquired such a habit of worthlessness, and has entered into such connections, that the older he is, there is the less prospect of his recovery.

To guard us from being conformed to the manners of these men, let me add, that, besides ruining their children, they bring them

up

up to the inheritance of their own vices, andSERM. give them a regular education in the school of XIII. dissipation. The labour of the parents have been so well rewarded, that one is often seen, who, almost in childhood, has a readiness and dexterity in crimes, which does honour to the master under whom his education has been conducted. From this school fall forth these very young people who crowd the prisons, and the courts of justice, and who fill up the records of untimely deaths. How many of these unfortunate creatures do we hear of? They have been unfortunate in having worthless parents, worthless companions, ill directed passions, and many temptations; and they have fallen a sacrifice to the bad examples they have followed.

Now, dissipation, either in rich or poor, is inconsistent with every rational view we have: And we know that Christianity does not admit such a conduct. A light behaviour does not suit our expectations: We must have seriousness and decency. Cheerfulness, indeed, is allowed us. Innocence and plain manners are always cheerful. When the smile of goodness brightens the eye, the heart feels no bitterness, the tongue pronounces no harsh language:

SERM. We are chearful ourselfes, and make that  
 XIV. chearfulness to circulate. But we ought to  
 ~~~~~ avoid “ foolish talking and jesting which are  
 “ not convenient.” The laugh is raised, and  
 kept up, at the expence of religion. This spirit  
 may be encouraged by men of name, who  
 rate themselves high for ridiculing everything  
 that was respected by their fathers. These men  
 sharpen a weapon which must destroy them-  
 selves, in the end; and do great prejudice to  
 the world in general. “ As a madman who  
 “ casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so  
 “ is the man that deceiveth his neighbour,  
 “ and faith; Am not I in sport?” Even the  
 peculiarities of a good man ought to be touch-  
 ed with a gentle hand. For the ridicule which  
 is pointed at him, may easily glance aside up-  
 on religion itself.

We are to speak more at large upon reli-  
 gion in the following part of this subject;  
 but, when thoughtlessness came in our way,  
 we could not avoid making these observa-  
 tions upon this particular sort of it. We  
 ought not to spend our time in trifling,  
 though it should be innocent; it is madness  
 to do it, when frivolous things are connected  
 with wickedness, and end in our destruction.

The

The heedlessness of the world doth not excuse our heedlessness, neither doth their extravagance excuse our our extravagance. Though many spend their substance in riotous living, we are not to follow their example: It wastes the spirits, makes the understanding fottish, and the heart hard. We may, indeed, use the good things of life, as Abraham, Job, Daniel, David, and Solomon did. Though the house, table, and attendants, may bear some proportion to the circumstances of a rich man; yet, in the house of feasting, the widow and the orphan have their portion. Though the voice of pleasure be there, the voice of humanity is sweeter than that of pleasure. Though pride should shut its gates against the poor, no custom can excuse us for imitating the hardness of heart by which pride is generally distinguished and strongly marked. In these respects we are not to be conformed to this world; nor are we to follow a multitude to do evil.

Is it like one who hath only to account for his own actions, to use as an apology; I only do what other people of my opportunities do? If they be for me, I cannot be in the wrong. How childish is this reason? If that be right which is practised by the world, farewell virtue, farewell religion. "There is nothing  
" better

SERM.  
XIV.

SERM. " better for a man, than that he should eat,  
 XIV. " and drink, and that he should make his  
 " soul enjoy good in his labour." " Let us  
 " eat and drink, for to-morrow we are to die."  
 But, if there be something which is proper,  
 whether it has the general voice or not ; if we  
 are to mind the will of God, rather than the  
 humours of men, let us observe decency, and  
 train our children to it. The customs of the  
 world are nothing to us ; they form no excuse  
 for what is bad : And what is good is to be  
 pursued on its own account, and not on ac-  
 count of the opinion of the world.

The world has always taken its own course.  
 It has been wicked, it will be wicked : The  
 tide is too strong, the gale too violent, to be  
 opposed with success. Yet, if there be any  
 thing serious in the word of God, we are to  
 have better judges than the opinions of the  
 world. We are not allowed to banish serious-  
 ness, because the world abounds with flutter-  
 ing volatile creatures, who only think of  
 pleasing their palates, of adorning their bo-  
 dies, and of passing their time in laughter  
 and sport.

The opinion of the wise man about such  
 thoughtless people is expressed in these words :

" I

“ I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will  
“ prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy plea-  
“ sure, and behold this also is vanity. I said  
“ of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What  
“ doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give  
“ myself unto wine,—and to lay hold on fol-  
“ ly, till I might see what was that good for  
“ the sons of men, which they should do un-  
“ der the heaven.”

SERM.

XIV.

The heedlessness of mankind will not be sustained as an excuse, when an account is to be given of all the actions done in the body. But, if we are forbid to be conformed to this world in its thoughtlessness, we have to guard against another vice, which is more mean than the former, which is as epidemic, and as destructive. I mean,

2. Selfishness; a dangerous, a general and infective distemper, which has always prevailed, and prevails most in the worst times. “ This know also, that, in the last days, pe-  
“ rilous times shall come. For men shall be  
“ lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters,  
“ proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents,  
“ unthankful, unholy.”

These base vices are the attendants upon selfishness: It is the destroyer of friendship;  
the

SERM. the bane of sympathy ; the sister of injustice ;  
 XIV. the mother of oppression : The poor, in vain,  
 call for help ; friends for good counsel ; our  
 country for assistance. Selfishness deafens  
 every generous sound, silences every princi-  
 ple, estranges a man from his brother, and  
 banishes kindness from the face of the earth.  
 And, can we go where she doth not reign ?  
 She sitteth on her throne as queen, and her  
 power extendeth round the globe. It is an  
 inelegant selfishness in the cottage, a polished  
 selfishness in the palace. “ The heads there-  
 “ of judge for reward, and the priests thereof  
 “ teach for hire, and the prophets thereof di-  
 “ vine for money.” How much has selfish-  
 ness blotted the history of mankind ? How  
 many cities has it pillaged ? How many fer-  
 tile fields hath it turned into a wilderness ?  
 Fire, and sword, and blood, and havock, are  
 its servants ; tyranny, and false judgement its  
 body guards. This is a dismal fiend, a fiend  
 that haunts every quarter of the earth. Every  
 man’s hand is against his brother ; and the  
 only question is, How much profit am I to  
 make ? In the interpretation of selfishness,  
 generosity is folly, friendship a conveniency  
 for securing our interest ; public spirit gives

a handle for making private booty of the treasures of the people. SERM.  
XIV.

The world gives us these vile lessons, but we are not to be conformed to it. We ought to form ourselves upon the gospel, which gives us a feeling heart. With this guide our eye will not be always fixed upon our own houses. We will enter the houses of other men, and give relief to the children of strangers. We see that profit is not the greatest blessing; that poverty is not the greatest evil. A hard heart, and a narrow spirit are a greater evil. Though we, in the first place, love our family and friends; we look further than this narrow circle: for we belong to one great family, and have a claim upon the kind offices of every brother Christian, particularly every poor man, and every mother of fatherless children have this claim. Though there be many to bring tears into mourning eyes, we must not be as they are, must not wound a heavy heart. How lovely was the character of Job in this respect, and how did his former goodness support him in the time of all his trials? His words are, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and, when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered  
" the

SERM. " the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and  
 XIV. " him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

Whatever examples of coldness we may see in the world; unless we have hearts to feel for the distressed, and hands to relieve them, we cannot be Christians. We are to be kind and compassionate when " a brother or sister " is naked, and destitute of daily food," though the man of the world acts in another manner. The poor man has few friends; there are few to notice him who is at the bottom of the wheel, many to strike him when he is fastened in the mire. If your friend be helpless, you slight him, you visit not your brother in indigence, you pass by the door of your father, the grey hairs of age in want appear uncomely. As the worldly man hath no fixed principles, prosperity makes him hard-hearted and selfish. Little does it affect him, that he knows many a worthy family have not bread to eat. He finds thousands as cruel as himself, without bowels or mercy, he seeks no other vindication; a selfish contracted soul turns from the misery of others, and spurns at

at the request of poverty, and has to say, What SERM.  
is that to me? Let him suffer, I have no con- XIV.  
cern in his sufferings. 

When a man wants benevolence, his riches are for a heavy curse to him. He despiseth the poor in his heart, abuseth them with his tongue, scourgeth them with vipers; and, though he throw away his money by handfulls for a glittering bauble, he would not give a shilling to lighten the distress of a mourning widow and fatherless children. He may, notwithstanding, have the good opinion of the world; there may be three of his way of thinking, for one who is otherwise; but Christianity does not allow us to intrench our selfishness behind the practices of such men, however great their number, and whatever honour they may have.

If there be religion, a rich man is the guardian of the orphan, the stay of the widow, the physician of the sick, the comforter of the mourner. The virtues of that exemplary man make compassion be creditable. The old point him out to the young, his countrymen to strangers. He is the admiration of both. Happy are the servants of his house! happy

SERM. the tenants of his fields! happy are the people,  
 XIV. when he is their ruler!

Such disinterested men may be rare, and their goodness may be reckoned simplicity by those who look, on the one hand, to their own conveniency; on the other, to the customs of the world. But this is a simplicity beyond all art; no character can outdo it. It is the desire of this man “to undo the heavy burden, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.”

If we were to be conformed to the world, the only uses we could find for riches would be to gratify passions, or to flatter vanity. We would not give away any thing without value, and we might take every way of gain, if it even should be to remove the land-mark, or to be a false guardian to the orphan: “They drive away the ass of the fatherless; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.” Unmoved by such pernicious examples, the servant of the Lord “shall deliver the needy  
 “ when

“ when he crieth, the poor also, and him SERM.  
“ that hath no helper. He shall spare the XV.  
“ poor and needy, and shall save the souls of ~~~~~  
“ the needy.” When the worldly man hunts  
after honours, preferment, emolument: while  
every thought tends to himself, as to its cen-  
tre; the disciple of the Lord has his thoughts  
abroad in quest of happiness and ease to all  
the sons of men. He has no narrow design,  
no contracted desire, no partiality; but his  
whole life is formed on benevolence; his pri-  
vate wishes are directed to the general good  
of mankind. Would to God we were blessed  
with this disposition? May he open our hearts,  
and direct our tongues to honour charity,  
which is the bond of perfectness. Be thou  
my guide, O charity the daughter of faith.  
Do thou make my youth graceful, by adorn-  
ing it with mild compassion, and kindly af-  
fections. Do thou teach me to weep with  
him that is in trouble. Conducted by thee,  
may I enter the prison, to lighten the chains  
of the captive: May I pour balsam into the  
wounds of the broken-hearted: And, when  
I shall die full of years and honour, be thou,  
and thy sister devotion, the angels to carry me  
to the bosom of Abraham.

# S E R M O N XV.

Of NONCONFORMITY to the WORLD.

---

ROMANS xii. 2.

*And be not conformed to this world.*

SERM.  
XV.

**H**AVING encouraged you not to imitate the thoughtlessness, dissipation, and selfishness of the world, we proceed to observe,

3. That we are not to imitate its insincerity.

This is a shameful practice, though it be so powerfully recommended, that few avoid it entirely; and many are proud of it. An open countenance is thought to discover vulgar manners; and a man who speaks from the heart, is thought to be rude. Men have smooth words, without number; professions of friendship, without meaning; they have  
kind

kind looks, and cold hearts. This counter-  
feited coin passes current, though every body  
knows that it is made of base metal. Empty  
compliment is all the kindness you can expect  
from a man of the world; he squeezes your  
hands, though he does not love you; he smiles,  
when he wishes to ruin you.

SERM.  
XV.  
~

This false conduct brings no reflection against him. So many men of figure fall into it, that it is reckoned a mark of superior education to be able to shew great address in compassing whatever you have set your mind upon: And he is called a weak man who has any dependence upon fair professions or promises. These men are as far from the truth as earth is from heaven: Truth is turned out of doors; they make their addresses to falsehood, but she is dressed to such advantage, that, to appearance, there cannot be more agreeable company.

Yet after all this colouring, the speaking one thing, and meaning another, is dishonesty, base dishonesty, practice it who will. It must be shunned by every man who makes reason, and the word of God, and not the opinions of the world, the rule of his conduct. Though thousands should sacrifice

SERM. to falsehood, he will, to the end, be a man  
 XV. of steady integrity; and it is his character,  
 that his “ words do always agree with his  
 “ thoughts.” He considers himself as in the  
 presence of the Searcher of hearts. He fol-  
 lows the direction of the apostle, who says,  
 “ My little children, let us not love in word,  
 “ neither in tongue, but in deed, and in  
 “ truth:” Plain-dealing is the birth-right of  
 a Christian. There is nothing deceitful, there  
 are no wiles, no treachery about him. He  
 hath not kindness on his lips, while there is  
 poison in his heart. The manner of the world  
 does not polish him into insincerity. The eye  
 that sees him, sees the form of integrity; the  
 ear that hears him, is charmed with the voice  
 of truth. In his presence, crooked things  
 do not appear straight, nor straight things  
 crooked. He does not colour a base action:  
 He does not gild lying, or deceit. The ho-  
 nesty of the heart is seen in the openness of  
 the face: The strings of the tongue are deri-  
 ved from the heart. That is a true heart, that  
 is an artless tongue.

As the world deals much in deceit;  
 and, as our sincerity exposes us to it; we  
 should be much upon our guard: “ Be ye,  
 “ therefore,

“ therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. We ought not to be rash in speaking; our professions ought to be modest. Before we give a promise, we ought to consider what may be in our power; what may be proper to grant; and what the man, who applies to us, deserves. We ought, without reserve, to check an immodest request; neither to give assurance the reward of merit, nor to allow our bashfulness to be conquered by the importunity of forward solicitors. But, if our word be pledged, we must not draw back, unless the engagement be sinful. We will not plead for a breach of promise, though our interest, or our own consequence, or that of our friends, may suffer. The character of a sincere man is, “ He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” We keep chicane and duplicity from our engagements. A man of sound morals does not, afterwards, make exceptions, which he did not think of in the time of giving a promise; but he will say plainly, a second, and a third time, what he said plainly once. Skill and address are seldom required in common life; they are never honestly applied in explaining our duty. By address, we may stop the mouth of one who had reason to complain:

SERM.  
XV.

SERM. plain: Yet, falsehood must still be disgrace-  
 XV. ful, though she keep high company.

~ A man not hackneyed in deceit, is surpris'd at the duplicity of the mere man of the world. He smiles, and speaks fair, when he wants to put you off your guard, or do you an injury. His only concern is, not to tell a direct falsehood; but, an artful one is reckoned honourable, when the word is kept to the ear, though it be broken to the sense. Art and design play their tricks upon unsuspecting manners; and, a man whose heart moves his tongue is banished from cities, in order to take up his residence among labourers and shepherds. Truth, however, is not to be sacrificed to forms; and the practice of a million will not make deceit lovely, or excuse the deceitful. Let not our heart, which nature designed for the storehouse of truth, be the receptacle of lies, evasions, and double designs. "Let your yea, be yea; and your  
 " nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

Tho' we entirely reject insincerity, we are, by no means, allowed to have a disobliging manner. We ought to be affable from principle, not from a smoothness established by custom, nourished by selfishness, and reared up  
 by

by deceit. The man of the world says pleasant things to set himself off to advantage; the Christian to make his neighbour happy. SERM.  
XV.

Religion naturally hath this effect; for, it banishes pride, the love of money and power, which are the springs of harsh usage. It makes the brother of high degree speak kindly, and behave affectionately, to the brother of a low estate. Godliness engages the heart, and we understand how warm its affections are, from the opening of the mouth, and the motion of the eye; from its fearfulness to offend, and its earnestness to please. Real goodness is the most obliging thing in nature. By it masters become humane; servants trusty; fathers affectionate; children dutiful; and, all men become fruitful in good works. Therefore, though we do nothing in compliance with a sinful custom, we have a greater desire of being agreeable than the man can have, who is directed by the ordinary forms of conversation, in all which he may be exact, though his heart be cold, and his design selfish. Let us shew that religion forms a man for real plainness of manners, according to the description of the Psalmist: "Lord, who shall

SERM. "in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly,  
 XV. "and worketh righteousness, and speaketh  
 ~~~~~ "the truth in his heart." "Let integrity and  
 "truth preserve me, for I wait on thee."

4. If we are not to be conformed to the insincerity of the world, we are not to be conformed to its carelessness about religion, and to the infidelity that prevails with some, or the hypocrisy that prevails with others.

No custom excuses our indifference about the one thing needful. We are neither to be like the city, nor the country, where we meet men, in crowds, who have not a thought beyond this life. This world is the delight of their souls; their childhood, their youth, their advanced years, are spent in its service: They live without faith, they die without hope. The humour spreads, slackness in religion possesses men of every rank. They do not read the word, they do not worship the Lord in their families: Sunday is to them an idle day: They do not go to church, or they do it for amusement, in order to pass a heavy hour, in making observations upon the speaker, or hearers. Their eyes roam when the godly pray; their hearts wander, as they are too obstinate for being corrected; too proud

proud for taking advice; too giddy for attending to the concerns of another life. Negligent worshippers make up the body of a congregation.

SERM.  
XV.  
~~~~~

How little time is spent upon the duties of religion, even among those of greatest name! How coldly are these duties performed! How small a thing gets the better of them! There is a thing of that sort, that expects to be heard for its speaking much. It hath words without number, and freely passes sentence upon the corruptions that prevail. This zeal is hot, but, it is without knowledge; and, though it seem to be much engaged, it has its own interest in view, and the cause of godliness gives way to selfishness, to pride, and vain-glory. If some men of high rank neglect it, the fashion descends to ordinary men, who wish to be thought to possess the freedom of thinking, and liberality of spirit, which their leaders have acquired.

To return to sincere Christians, How far do the best of them fall short of the spirit of the gospel? Who minds religion as much as the covetous mind money, the ambitious praise, or the sensual pleasure? The more unfrequent sincere worshippers are spread through  
the

SERM. the world, the more must we be on our guard.

XV. The censures of the prejudiced, the sneers of the scornful, the unforbearing temper of the zealot, or the worldly mindedness of all, can form no apology for our heedlessness, or lukewarmness. We are not to be in a drowsy humour, when we are at church, or in our closet. Independently of the conduct of mankind, we ought to be regular, serious, and attentive, upon every occasion of that sort.

Give me leave to observe, that there may something prevail in the world, which is much worse than carelessness itself. I mean the infidelity which is every day gaining ground upon the men of this generation, and threatens to ruin thousands upon thousands.

We live in times, when Christianity hath many open, many concealed enemies. In the days of Pilate, it had not more numerous, or more inveterate foes, or, of more distinguished industry: Men who hate the gospel, and the Author of it: who, if they could, would pursue to death all who call upon the name of the Lord. There is no art, no stratagem they neglect, in order to serve their cause. How many arrows have they in their quiver? Arrows sharpened by malice, and stained with

with

with poison. “Lo, the wicked bend their SERM.  
“bow, they make ready their arrow upon XV.  
“the string; that they may privily shoot at ~~~~~  
“the upright in heart.”

They are not the lowest of the people, who are at the head of this band; but they are men of great eminence: and, there is a pride in following them. How many wish to serve as subalterns under such distinguished leaders! The legions of infidelity are filled with recruits from the four quarters of the earth. Volunteers crowd to that standard, and give in their names faster than the levy-masters can write them. They all serve without pay, or reward, and are well disciplined troops; for they never dispute the orders they receive. If their commanders should order them to build up Babel, or pull down Lebanon, they would rush to execute the enterprize. Nothing is absurd that infidelity commands. They always rail at the blind faith of Christians, while they implicitly believe a thousand incredible stories which unbelief dictates. “Presumptuous are they, self-willed,” who take the government out of the hand of God, and place it under the direction of Chance. They tell us how many thousand years were required  
before

**SERM.** before the world came into any form, how  
**XV.** many more before it assumed its present form;  
 as if they were the secretaries that wrote out  
 the records of fate, and had authority to say  
 to nature, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no  
 " farther."

In old times, if there were infidels, they were concealed, as spies are in the camp. But, at present, they do not skulk in hiding-places: They stand up at mid-day with an elevated countenance, boast of their cause, and openly beat up for followers: And young men engage to stand by them. The strength of the host consists of young men void of understanding. Infidelity gratifies their passions, and flatters their vanity: On these terms, they swear fealty to her, and never vassals were more obedient to their Lord.

Their leaders are often men of great skill and address, and have the art of making the right side appear to be the wrong. Surprising it is, that they should have so much success, when, in pleading for common sense, they take arms against it. They deny the evidence of sense, of reason, and of testimony. While they would have us to believe every one of their assertions, they would have us doubt of  
 every

every thing we see, hear, or feel. According to their tenets, we cannot affirm that fire is hot, ice cold; a stone heavy, water yielding; that these fields produce corn, that this sun gives us light. This scheme appears visionary in the eye of sober reason; yet these are the strong pillars upon which the whole fabrick of infidelity is supported. Many forsake the faith of their fathers, for the visions of these apostles of Antichrist.

SERM.  
XV.

My fellow Christians, be not conformed to those misleaders of the world. Their numbers, their rank, their power, may give them importance; yet we must stand firm, though they load us with reproach, and pursue us with deadly hatred. They have done this from the beginning, and we must have our share of the burden. They call our prayers, hypocrisy; our alms-giving, vain glory; our faith, weakness; our hope, mere fancy; our fears, idle apprehensions. Why should not we bear these things, on our parts, when, in former times, the cross was reckoned foolishness, and the preacher of righteousness a babler? Though they represent us as credulous designing bigots; or enthusiasts; and use every reproach which a wicked fancy can contrive,

SERM.  
XV.

trive, or a harsh tongue pronounce, we must defend our cause in the spirit of meekness, with zeal directed by forbearance.

When I mention zeal, I must notice the excesses of it, which must be guarded against, as much as the other errors we have spoken of. We must not pretend to have more of it than we are possessed of; for then we should be hypocrites, an odious set of men, who are great enemies of the faith. Let us not pretend to more goodness than we are possessed of, for that is lying to the Holy Ghost; nor conceal our attachment to it, for that has the appearance of denying the Lord. There are many occasions when we are obliged to witness a good profession.

There is the greater reason for this caution, that many make these appearances the subject of ridicule. We must not join in the laugh with them. We ought to have a decent profession, though the world gives us many lessons of that sort of levity.

But this must not be a lifeless, formal, insincere profession. We must not lay a stress upon that part of religion where the heart is not concerned. The Jews, of old, imposed upon themselves in this respect; and the prophet

phet dictates, that such a service could not be accepted, in these words; "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and of the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." SERM.  
XV.

In other places, and at other times, very many are regular in all the forms of worship, without being the better for them. We may pray when we get out of bed, we may pray before we lie down to sleep, and every Sunday may find us at church; but there may be such listlessness, coldness, and formality, that it might have been as safe for us to let these alone.

If there be places where this is the religion of a great part of the people, we must not comply with the world in such opinions or practices. We must not pray, go to church, or communicate for form. Have the walls of a church any charm, that we should value ourselves for spending two or three hours there? Many do no more. But, is this an excuse for us? If they should throw themselves upon destruction, are we the better for

SERM. their misery? Is it light to sink with a thousand, though it be heavy to perish alone?

XV.

If the world should part with substantial piety, we are not to be like them, whatever appearances they may have. And how many impose upon themselves by trusting in these appearances? Holiness is not easily practised; but a rich man can easily offer up a bullock, a poor man a turtle dove: Though they cannot, with the same ease, fear God, and keep his commandments. “ Will the Lord be  
 “ pleased with thousands of rams, or with  
 “ ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give  
 “ my first-born for my transgression, the  
 “ fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
 “ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;  
 “ and what doth the Lord require of thee;  
 “ but to do justly, and to love mercy, and  
 “ to walk humbly with thy God.”

It often happeneth, that men have a zeal, a furious zeal for small things: This zeal is not for the glory of God, nor for the happiness of mankind; but, it is for rising and falling with a certain set of men. It follows the leaders, through good and bad report. Good turns evil, evil good; when they give the word. This false zeal early found its way  
 into

into the church, as an apostle thus informs SERM.  
us: "For, it hath been declared unto me of XV.  
" you, my brethren, that there are conten-  
" tions among you. Now this, I say, that  
" every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I  
" of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ."  
There was not a bad thing in these days which  
has not been multiplied in ours. People,  
either take their religion on trust, or extract  
it from boiling passions; and, the more igno-  
rant they are, the more outrageous and un-  
forbearing. When ignorance prevails, one  
man kindles the rage of another; the fire  
spreads to hundreds, and to thousands; it  
spreads from the sea to the mountains, till  
the whole face of the land be covered with  
one blaze. Pride, obstinacy, revenge, and ig-  
norance brought forth faction; false learning  
nursed her; bigotry gave her education: She  
lived in darkness under ground, and had ne-  
ver opened her eyes upon the light, till she  
had sallied forth for the destruction of the  
sons of men. Blood, and slaughter, and fire,  
and faggot, were her privy counsellors, and  
the executors of her will: Fathers, and sons,  
and uncles, and nephews, were chained to  
the

SERM. the stake, and expired by the destroying  
 XV. flames.

~ A persecuting church is the most frightful of all societies: And blind zeal is the mother of persecution. Her eyes sparkle with joy, when the rage of the people brings destruction upon a city, or devastation upon a nation. Though this false zeal may be infectious, we are not to yield to the voice of the people, when they cry out for wickedness. If we gain not men by mild argument, we never can do it by chastisement. We may silence their tongues; but the cross, and the torturing wheel estrange their hearts. True religion is forbearing in its temper, is calm, and not dictating, in regard to its opinions. Therefore, if zeal for uncharitable opinions should get abroad into the world, we are not to be conformed to it, but to do what is right, whatever may be the practice of our countrymen.

If we were less set upon the praise of men, and more upon the praise of God, there would be more peace in the world, and true religion would be more noticed. A man strives to have the leading of the people: His brow is clouded, his manner severe, his language bitter:

ter : He says in wrath, This and that man are enemies of God. The people are easily beguiled ; words of reproach are tossed about, passion takes the place of reason. The trumpet sounds, discord calls to arms ; folly musters the band ; interest gives the word ; uproar and disorder are on the right and left ; men move to battle with weapons they cannot wield ; and, every body's hand is against his brother.

If this, or any other bad thing, should, at any time, prevail in our land, we are manfully to oppose it. God forbid that religion should be thought a thing of fashion, which the multitude may cherish in one place, and stifle in another. She appeals to the tribunal of calm reason, from the vociferation of the uninformed crowd. Conscience does not depend upon the votes of the ignorant ; nor does it change with the customs of the world. To have satisfaction in health, in prosperity and adversity, we must act upon our own principles, and not upon those of the world. It has often done honour to a base man ; but, still he was a base man ; base in the sight of God, and of a well informed conscience. Haman was a base man, at the very time his  
vice

SERM. voice was heard, and the motion of his finger  
 XV. perceived "from India even unto Æthiopia,  
 "over an hundred and twenty and seven pro-  
 "vinces."

What reason have we to be conformed to the world? If we should be so, we would become the slaves of money, and of impure passions. The history of mankind gives us many proofs of this assertion. In the reigns of Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh, the king was wicked, the nobles were wicked, the people was wicked; and all Israel was made to sin. At other times there hath been as great a falling off: And, if we should see such degenerate manners, we ought not to be damp'd; we rather should bear hatred and reproach that wound our consciences by sinful compliances. A good man mourns for his countrymen, and prays for their conversion; but he keeps from the vice that defileth them.

Why should a man be conformed to the world, though the wicked should be as a hundred to one? Is he to run above a mine, that he may be blown away with a thousand? Would it be any comfort to him to be swallowed by an earthquake with ten thousands, or to be cut off by the pestilence with a hundred

dred thousands? Misery extends to many, SERM.  
XV.  
but it does not become lighter; it rather becomes heavier, as there is no comforter to soothe the sick, none to close the eyes of the dying.

Why should you follow the world, for the advantages it promises are uncertain? You want to draw every thing to yourself, thousands have the same wish; but hath one of ten success? We jostle one another: He disappoints me, I disappoint him. His interest, his prejudices, his passions, are against mine; our folly, our extravagance interfere. Distresses may also come from the hand of providence. Torrents may come from the clouds, our ships may be dashed on the rocks; disease may empty our folds; fire may destroy our storehouses. What has the mere man of the world to trust to? "Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion thereof perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade in all his ways."

Need I reason against following the world? For though good fortune should continue with

SERM. us ; the sun shine all the day, without a cloud  
 XV. to overcast it ; what does it turn to on trial ?  
 Many years we toil for it : It seems charming  
 at a distance ; it seems charming to the stranger ;  
 but the possessor may have no taste for it. “ Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain : ”  
 Fame is changeable, and pleasure vanisheth.

A poor nan envieth him who rideth in a chariot, ordwelleth in a palace. When we see a rich man, we say within ourselves, How happy should I be, if I were as he is ? Is this admiration always well founded ? Is not providence more equal than we are disposed to think ? If the man of the world hath few real trials, both not fancy, combining with pride, bringhim many imaginary ones. A mean man lyes his account with contradiction, and bears it easily ; but what a hurricane does contradiction occasion in his house, before whom men used to bow the head ? May not a thing of nought take away the enjoyment of all his riches and honour ; as Ahab took to his bed, because Naboth would not give him the inheritance of his fathers ?

We may add, that the hand of God may touch the great as well as the small. Disease may seize their bodies, their children may die,  
 their

their friends desert them, or they may act dishonourably. The tyrant trembles on his throne. Neither the armed guard, nor a full treasure, avail his fainting heart, nor can they remove care from his mind. He has also to answer to his own conscience, and may be the most miserable, while his attendants think him the most happy of men. Could Jezebel, Manasseh, or Herod, have been happy? Conscience finds its way into a fortified castle. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion."

SERM.  
XV.  
~

And though the world should give full satisfaction, how short is our time in it? The flower of youth is soon blown away; old age succeeds, and brings with it a weak body, and impaired faculties. And what is the value of every thing we doat upon, when we want health? Does fortune secure health? It often destroys it. The pampered body hath not that activity, which labour and temperance bestow upon the poor. "Sweet is the sleep of the labouring man, whether he eat little, or much; but the abundance of the rich doth not suffer him to sleep." "The full soul lotheth the honey-comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

T t

Why

SERM. Why should we be conformed to the  
 XV. world, when death may blast the projects of  
 the worldly man, and relieve the cares and  
 burdens of the poor? “There the prisoners  
 “rest together; they hear not the voice of  
 “the oppressor. The small and great are  
 “there, and the servant is freed from his  
 “master.” Miserable comforters are the  
 things of this world to a dying man.

Besides, the length of our race is not measured by the span of this life. If “there remaineth a rest for the people of God;” a place where mourning, or pain, or an anxious spirit, are not to enter: If the seats of the wicked be loathsome, and full of misery, let us avoid that misery; and “let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

Every thing on this earth is to undergo a change. The lofty city shall be made desolate. The palace of Nebuchadnezzar is in ashes: There is no tongue to flatter in it; no false man to deceive. “I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.”

Since

Since the things of this life are so uncertain and unsatisfactory, we are not to be conformed to this world; but are, upon every occasion, to be preparing ourselves for that place, where we shall not be exposed to these crosses and changes. “For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

SERM.  
XV.  
~~~~~

SERMON

# S E R M O N XVI.

The EXCELLENCY of RELIGION.

---

PROVERBS xii. 26.

*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

SERM.  
XVI.

WE are so fond of the satisfactions of this life, that we measure a man's happiness by them. This thought enters into our minds very early, and it seldom leaves us entirely, till our last breath. When any man is much favoured by fortune, we envy his condition, and wish for no greater happiness than to be as rich, as much respected, and as little contradicted as he is.

This fondness is not to be wondered at, for every son of Adam wishes to have an overflowing cup, a full table, the possession of  
fine

fine fields, authority over his household, and SERM. respect from all his neighbours. Prosperity XVI. is so bewitching, that every man aims at possessing it. Praise is sweet, and flattery is beguiling. The pampering and adorning the body, the having the great and high-minded for companions, and the issuing orders to many dependents, are very soothing to the heart of man, and make us imagine that nothing can be wanting to him, whose corn and oil abound. Yet distress enters the houses of the great, she sits upon the brow of the conqueror, wields the sceptre of kings, passes the battlements of the strong castle, and forces through the spears of ten thousand guards.

How fortunate is it for the generality of mankind, that happiness doth not depend upon the extent of possessions, the fullness of coffers, or the splendour of appearance. We bless God that happiness is as much within the reach of the poorest as of the richest; of the most despised, as of the most honoured of mankind. Religion puts the rulers of kingdoms upon the same level with the labourers of the field. Though the labourer be poor, godliness gives him such satisfactions, as a wicked man, in no condition, did ever experience.

SERM. experience. The favour of God, and a clear  
 XVI. conscience, give him such peace and comfort,  
 as prosperity never gave to wickedness.

I beg leave to address myself to you on this subject, in order to fix your minds on these advantages, which make the righteous more excellent than his neighbour. This is an interesting subject, as it determines how much the labours of the godly are to be preferred to the comforts of the ungodly. The good and the evil have an interest in this subject. In order to confirm the former in their resolutions, and to shew the latter the necessity of repentance,

I beg for your attention, while I consider the four following branches of this subject.

I. The EXCELLENCY of RELIGION appears from the consideration of its principles.

II. It enables us to ACQUIRE and to PRESERVE a GOOD CHARACTER.

III. It makes us PROPERLY DISCHARGE every DUTY, in every relation of life.

IV. It either SAVES us from DISTRESS, or FITS us for every TRIAL, and prepares us for death and eternity.

I. The

I. The EXCELLENCY of RELIGION appears from the confideration of its principles.

SERM.  
XVI.

To have fuccefs in any thing, we must have some kind of principles ; something to make us direct our eye upon one fixed point. The labourer has his thoughts upon the fruits of the earth ; the foldier on the fpoils of his enemies ; the artift on making his defign anfwer the model he has formed in his own mind. The covetous man places his heart upon riches ; the ambitious on praife ; the intemperate on bodily pleasure. Some of thefe principles are bad ones, yet they make the children of this world wife in their generation.

There is, alfo, a principle which makes a great noife, which, fometimes, hath made faithful friends, lovers of their country, men gallant in action, trusty in counfel, fteady to their engagements. However, as it does not proceed from religion, and is not connected with it, there is no depending upon it, though it may, at times, be ufeful to the world. It is a houfe built upon the fand, which muft fall to the ground, becaufe the bottom is falfe.

The morals of thefe men are built upon the public opinion, and, on that account, they are

SERM. are different in one age, from what they were  
 XVI. in another : And, there was no age in which  
 public opinion has not given countenance to  
 actions that were highly vicious. Under the  
 direction of this principle, the posterity of  
 Ishmael believe that their honour consists in  
 driving off the oxen, or the asses, the sheep,  
 or the camels of their peaceable neighbours.  
 These actions are kept on record for many ge-  
 nerations, and are as much boasted of, as o-  
 thers boast how their ancestors forced the ene-  
 my from their walls, how they mounted the  
 breach, and carried off many captives. Pub-  
 lic opinion makes one set of men plunderers  
 at land, and another pirates at sea. In one  
 country it is honourable to torment prisoners,  
 in another, for a slight quarrel, to shed the  
 blood of a friend.

In such situations it is, by accident, that  
 a man does any thing commendable ; he does  
 it only to be seen, and would do a contrary  
 thing, if that were customary for people of  
 his condition. If this principle is nice in one  
 case, it allows great latitude in others. How-  
 ever specious its name may be, and however  
 pride values itself upon it, it is a false light,  
 which, instead of directing us to safety, makes  
 the



SERM. that has not these principles ought to be de-  
 XVI. nominated superstition. Now, superstition  
 enters weak minds, raises gloomy thoughts,  
 delights in frowns and severity; makes the  
 forehead wrinkled, the eye heavy, and holds  
 the lash over the heads of fearful, melancholy,  
 desponding worshippers. Men mangle their  
 bodies before the altar of Baal, or throw their  
 children into the fire before the image of Mo-  
 loch; but they do not worship "the God of  
 " peace, that brought again from the dead  
 " our Lord Jesus." Cheerfulness is banished  
 from that society, for they always have the  
 look of men condemned to die. Superstition  
 is a cruel, bloody thing, which rattles its  
 chains, double locks its dungeons, prepares  
 its rods, sharpens its axes, puts fire to the fag-  
 gots, and drives to the feet of the idol, bands  
 of trembling slaves, who, every moment,  
 dread that they shall be stretched on beds of  
 iron, or have their limbs broken on the wheel.  
 Away with such religion, nothing lovely at-  
 tends her; she is unfriendly, forbidding, and  
 hard-hearted; always beating on her breast,  
 always weeping, and refusing to be comforted.  
 Let us be introduced to Christianity, for she  
 breathes a most generous spirit; she gives  
 elevated

elevated hopes, benevolent sentiments, proclaims peace on earth. She instructs us to draw nigh to God with thankful hearts, uplifted eyes, vows of love, and transports of gratitude. Sometimes, indeed, she weeps, but she is lovely in her tears; she mourns for her children, when their faith, or repentance fails. Her eyes are moistened, but her look is kind: The tear of devotion falls upon the bosom of charity.

Our principle is to love God, who “loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” There was no ear to hear us, no heart to pity us, no kind hand to relieve us: Our destruction was certain, if the Father Almighty had not sent his Son to procure our pardon, to give us peace of mind, and to bring us to the inheritance of those who are sanctified. “For, when we were without hope, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

These distinguished obligations naturally enflame our gratitude; and it follows, if we love him, that we keep his commandments: And, when a great temptation presents itself, our language is, “How then can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?”

Love

SERM.  
XVI.

Love to God will give strength and steadiness to all our resolutions. This is a solid foundation; the works are sound, the building stands firm, the winds and floods will not undermine it, because it is founded on a rock. As we are established in the love of God, we do every thing to procure his favour, and before we engage in any undertaking, we anxiously consider whether it be as complete as he would have it to be.

This principle makes us as cautious when we are by ourselves, as when we have many witnesses; for we know, that “the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day.” “His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.” How could he who loves God, love sin? If we do justice to this principle, we always shall walk in the way of uprightness. We shall love the poor, because he loves them; we shall relieve the widow, because he is the husband of the widow; we shall protect the fatherless, as that is good and acceptable to him; we shall do justice, as he is a righteous judge; and we will be merciful, because he is merciful. Our love of God discovers itself in every thing which adds beauty or dignity to our characters,

ters, sweetens our tempers, softens our hearts, SERM.  
and enlarges our charity. If we love the Lord, XVI.  
we must have faith in all that he has disco-  
vered to us by the light of nature, and of re-  
velation: And, if we have that faith, we shall  
be known for every thing that is lovely and  
of good report, agreeably to the injunction  
of the apostle, where he addresses Titus,  
“ These things I will that thou affirm con-  
stantly, that they which have believed in  
God might be careful to maintain good  
works.” Love of God, and faith in Jesus  
Christ, walk hand in hand, attended by all  
the graces, and conducted by happiness. Par-  
ticularly we are formed by them,

2. To love our neighbour as ourselves, and  
to practise every duty of charity, and every  
office of kindness.

This, also, is an amiable principle, upon  
which every sincere Christian directs his con-  
duct; and, upon it, the most happy society  
is formed. Under the gospel, the love of  
mankind is high in degree, generous in its  
motives, extensive in its operation, uncon-  
fined to countries, or to particular sects of  
men: Wherever the sun travels, Christian  
charity travels: She enlightens the globe, and  
drives

SERM. drives malice, envy, and a narrow spirit, into  
 XVI. caverns of darkness under the earth; where  
 they plot mischief against the sons of men.

This lovely principle declares the excellency of our most holy faith. Men always have a prejudice in favour of any opinion which makes society peaceable and happy. When an opinion promotes benevolence, we think it worthy of God: If it promote animosity, and ill-will, we are sure it did not proceed from the Father of mercy: "For love is of God." The love of the brethren makes an end of strife between man and man: You do not hurt the good name of him for whom you have an affection; you do not misconstrue his words or actions; you do not take advantage of his ignorance or weakness; you do not despise him because he is poor, or envy him because he is rich. Love makes friendship stronger than money, settles the rage of war; and, if he were to give the word, and men were to obey him, our dwellings, in this earth, would resemble the peace that reigns above.

If we have the spirit of Jesus, our affection will not be narrowed within a small compass, nor will our partiality to a few make us cold to the interests of many. But this general benevolence

benevolence does not weaken the ties of nature, by which parents love their children, and brothers their brothers. Family affection is the cradle where kindness is fostered, when her joints are weak, and her bones soft. Before the child can discover his wants, the parent watches his bed in sickness; strengthens his joints in health; secures him from injury, from hunger and cold. God forbid that our religion should weaken this principle; it strengthens it, by our making provision for the soul, as well as for the body. The corrected affection of a Christian parent makes him love his children more than a mere man of the world can do.

Consistently with the genius of Christianity, we ought to have great sincerity in friendship. Our friendship should be warm, should deny its own advantage, should bear trouble and hardship, crosses and disappointments. It will be constant, and proof against the designs of him who wants to make a breach between those who love one another. It has joy upon the good fortune of a friend, pain upon his bad. True Christians are the most faithful, the most generous, and the most open-hearted, in all their attachments.

We

SERM.  
XVI.

SERM. We must love our country above other  
XVI. men, because we have the most benevolent  
affections. Our country is a tender name. We have breathed its air, we have eaten its bread. Here we have grown from our infancy to manhood; here our fathers, our children, and grandchildren were born. Its laws have protected us, its arms have defended us. Every tender tie engages us, and every good man has always been a friend to his country. Our religion does not oppose this noble spirit, only it does not allow our good offices to be confined to one spot. Under the benevolent establishment of the gospel, our affections take a wider range than the walls of our house, than the borders of our village, than the bounds of our acquaintance, than the limits of a province, or that confined division of the globe we call our country. If we be inhabitants of this kingdom, or of that, we are citizens of the world at large. We are all of one race, though we be separated by seas, mountains, forests, or deserts.

No man can read a single leaf of the New Testament, without observing how much this lovely principle enters into the character of a Christian. Charity is the distinguishing  
mark

mark of one who calls upon the name of Jesus. **SERM.**  
**Charity is the door-keeper of the church; she** **XVI.**  
**admits no selfish, imperious man, no striker,**  
**no brawler, no servant of mammon to enter**  
**these gates. They are all kept out, because**  
**they are unhallowed, and nothing profane is**  
**admitted to that society.**

When I speak of charity as our principle, I mean that charity which is described in the word of God; and not that thing which passes in the world by this name. Alas! How little forbearance have many who call themselves Christians? Brotherly love does not prevail, but selfishness and uncharitable opinions rule the people. Men condemn each other for a small difference in opinion: A difference, perhaps, arising from fanciful notions, which are not countenanced by the word of God; and makes them violent in proportion to their ignorance. Many pursue their interest with partiality, pride, or ill nature: They jostle against their neighbours; they change sides without conviction; they change again without principle. These men, however, are confident they are Christians, and are much offended if we should call in question their title to that name. Yet, if there be any faith in

SERM. the oracles of truth, they have not a shadow  
 XVI. of a claim upon that benevolent character.  
 Can a Christian be uncharitable? It is impos-  
 sible. Can the dove appear as a vulture, or  
 the lamb as a wolf? Can the friend of the  
 poor be their oppressor? Can the tender-  
 hearted be cruel? Can the good-hearted be  
 an evil-speaker? Or, shall the mild pass a  
 harsh judgement?

The gospel informs us, that, every man is  
 our brother. This consideration gives rise to  
 sympathy, command of temper, plain-deal-  
 ing, and a love of truth. Though one should  
 load us with bad treatment, we must do good  
 for evil; and, by harbouring a grudge which  
 lies rankling at our hearts, we know that the  
 face of God is turned against us.

Is not this a noble principle of our religion?  
 Is not the man who has it, more excellent  
 than his neighbour? He has the ornament of  
 a meek spirit, and is always employed in do-  
 ing good. Yet, we have seen men, religious  
 in appearance, who were sour in their tem-  
 pers, uncharitable in their opinions, harsh in  
 their censures; fickle friends, and cruel ene-  
 mies. But, by what rule is this called reli-  
 gion? Certainly not by that of the gospel.

For

For the gospel demonstrates, that every man SERM<sup>o</sup>  
wants religion, who is uncharitable in prac- XVI<sup>o</sup>  
tice or opinion. “Pure religion and unde-  
“ filed before God and the Father, is this:  
“ To visit the fatherless, and widows, in their  
“ affliction, and to keep himself unspotted  
“ from the world.”

If we have charity, our friendship is steady,  
our opinions are guided by good nature, our  
manners are obliging. “Charity suffereth  
“ long, and is kind; charity envieth not itself,  
“ is not puffed up, doth not behave itself un-  
“ seemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily  
“ provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not  
“ in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

A Christian has that goodness, that he would  
not offend the least of the servants of his Mas-  
ter; he smiles upon a beggar, who prays for  
his assistance; he turns in his bed the man  
who is made loathsome by disease; he breaks  
the force of famine; he visits the wounded  
in the hospitals, the prisoner in his cell; he  
relieves those who have suffered shipwreck;  
wherever there is misery, he is at hand to as-  
sist it. This is an excellent principle of our  
faith; this is the test of our sincerity. May  
we all have this temper; be the benevolent  
servants

SERM. servants of a benevolent Master. Then,  
 XVI. contention and an evil heart would be ban-  
 ~~~~~  
 nished from the face of the earth, the golden  
 age would be brought back, and happiness  
 would constantly reside in the houses of men.  
 “ The wolf, also, shall dwell with the lamb,  
 “ and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
 “ and the calf, and the young lion, and the  
 “ fatling together, and a little child shall  
 “ lead them; and the cow and the bear shall  
 “ feed, their young ones shall lie down to-  
 “ gether; and the lion shall eat straw like  
 “ the ox; and the sucking child shall play on  
 “ the hole of the asp, and the weaned child  
 “ shall put his hand on the cockatrice den.  
 “ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my  
 “ holy mountain.”

3. In mentioning the principles of our faith, the purity of a Christian cannot escape from us.

In this respect, we have reason to condemn the worship of the ancient heathens; at the time that we condemn the lives of many who pass for Christians. Nothing is so impure which is not to be seen among ourselves. Modesty is put out of countenance at the bare-faced worthlessness that prevails among people

ple of all ranks. The wild stare of vice makes decency hang down her head, and puts bashful virtue to the blush. Innocence hides herself from such licentious eyes, she flies from such licentious words. A coarse sort of profligacy rules the common people, a polished one the great and the powerful. It is reckoned vulgar to redden at vice. Youth is trained to laugh at it; and age brings to ripeness the sins of youth. Though we live in a Christian land, many of us are as corrupted as ever the heathen were.

Remember that we have more to answer for than they had; as the principles of our religion are the best that ever were, and their principles the worst. They followed the genius of their worship, we fly in the face of ours. What vile scenes of licentiousness were to be seen in the temples of their gods! Men were initiated in the mystery of iniquity. But, "it is a shame even to speak of those things which were done of them in secret." What havock must there have been of morals, when the house of God was the house of licentiousness; and the altar the sanctuary of impurity! Of such things the apostle speaks, in these words, "The time past of our life  
"may

SERM.  
XVI.  
~~~~~

SERM. XVI. “ may suffice us to have wrought the will of  
 “ the Gentiles, when we walked in lascivi-  
 “ ousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings,  
 “ banquetings, and abominable idolatries.”  
 “ This I say, therefore, and testify in the  
 “ Lord, that ye, henceforth, walk not as o-  
 “ ther Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their  
 “ mind.—Who, being past feeling, have gi-  
 “ ven themselves over unto lasciviousness, to  
 “ work all uncleanness with greediness.”

Justice obliges us to own, that their wise men condemned these horrid practices; and spoke in such a manner as will always do them honour. But to what purpose did they speak? What good did they with all their eloquence? What good could they do? They had no authority; the people were wild, and would not hear them. A superstition that had been increasing for ages, and which had been raised upon the wings of passion, soon got out of their sight. Headstrong, licentious men, were deaf to the weak voice of these feeble counsellors.

The gospel gives no encouragement to sins of that kind: for we must have pure hearts and clean hands. If our religion be any thing beyond the dead letter, we will not, on any pre-  
 text,

text, lay a snare for unguarded innocence, or seduce to destruction a poor creature whom we had deceived by flattering speeches, broken promises, or breach of vows. Our youth, and our advanced years, will be guarded by decency, and by a regard for the authority which declared, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

SERM.  
'XVI.  
~~~~~

These are our principles, and to give them strength, we have faith in Christ, and the assistance of the Spirit. Though, on account of the power of temptation, and of our own weakness, we are unable to follow out these principles, yet his grace is sufficient for us, his strength is made perfect in our weakness.

# S E R M O N XVII.

## The EXCELLENCY of RELIGION.

---

PROVERBS xii. 26.

*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

SERM.  
XVII.

WE proceed to observe,

II. That the excellency of a righteous man appears, as he has taken the proper method of ACQUIRING and PRESERVING a GOOD CHARACTER.

I. By its means we ACQUIRE a good character.

Next to a good conscience, a good name is the most valuable possession. In this respect “the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.” Integrity of every kind is the only firm foundation upon which a character can

can be built. Indeed, ornamental things make a man appear to advantage; and, in their own place, they deserve that we should take pains about them. They adorn the servant of the Lord, as a beautiful face gives gracefulness to a lovely action. They give a certain polish and a finished look to virtue itself; recommend it to those who are charmed with elegant, or pleased with smooth language. When attended by easy manners, an insinuating address, and extensive knowledge, religion comes forward in the beauty of holiness, commands our good opinion, and engages our hearts. Therefore, in a secondary view, the character we acquire for ornamental things, may be connected with our most essential interest. The graces of conversation become the faithful handmaids of godliness; and, by their means, she gains the affections of many thousands.

But what is the value of ornamental things, where there is not a good life? They are mere tinsel; they are bright like gold, but when put in the balance they are found wanting. We may be amazed at the brilliancy of a man's parts, at the solidity of his judgement, or the quickness of his fancy: His memory may

SERM. confound us ; his knowledge may raise our  
 XVII. admiration ; his eloquence may overpower  
 us : yet, if he has broken his word, deceived  
 his friend, or betrayed his country for money,  
 or from revenge, would you wish to be like  
 him, though he should shine like the sun in  
 the firmament ? If you love the law of God,  
 and be the friend of man, you will spurn at  
 the thought, and will not gain the world at  
 the expence of having a bad conscience ; you  
 will despise the praise that is connected with  
 the self-condemnation of a corrupted heart.

You aim at a character different from that  
 which follows ambition. She loves praise, in  
 the first place, and makes men bear heat, cold,  
 hunger, nakedness, hard labour, sickness, po-  
 verty, and loss of blood. Praise is the idol  
 to which ambition sacrifices ; but she makes  
 her approach to the altar over the bodies of  
 thousands, who are laid “heaps upon heaps,”  
 in her sight. It would be the praise of wolves  
 to break into many folds, to tear the flesh and  
 drink the blood of many lambs. As a wolf  
 is to the lamb, so is the ambitious to peace-  
 able men. Though the voice of ambition be  
 heard round the globe, it is disgraceful, as it  
 depends upon making many widows, and de-  
 priving

priving many orphans of their inheritance. SERM. XVII.  
And, though flattery, and a certain glare of actions, have raised on high the destroyers of mankind, yet, religion does not approve of them with the crowd, but condemns unnecessary bloodshed, however many voices it may have to applaud it.

We are to aim at the character which integrity supports. We ought to have the tender wishes of a sympathising heart, the soft tear that falls upon the distress of a fellow-creature, and the kind hand that relieves it. The condescending goodness that does justice to merit in a cottage, forms a character that attends us through life, supports us at death, and shall be remembered after death. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." The friend of the poor is always respected. Even the selfish respect him, though they cannot follow him. During his sickness, many enquire at his gate, and many earnest prayers are offered up on his account: and, when he gives up the ghost, there is bitter lamentation made as for a father and brother. His good name is not confined to the bounds of this life, but he shall have the praise which God bestows on them who feed and cloath  
the

SERM. the poor. If the man in purple had befriended  
 XVII. ed Lazarus, he would not have raised his eyes  
 in torment.

Abstracting, for the present, from futurity, if we ever wish to have temporal praise, we should be righteous men: And, what is life without a good name? The most abandoned of the sons of men wish to have a respectable character. They may brave it out in regard to some breaches of duty, and glory in their shame: But, where is the man that is willing to be thought an enemy of truth and fair dealing? Bad men use every shift, they strain every joint, to make us think favourably of their principles. No man pleads openly for fraud or violence. Who boasts of being an oppressor, or breaker of promises? Judas covered his covetousness with the pretence of concern for the poor. The brothers of Joseph had an excuse for themselves; and, even Pilate wanted to remove the guilt of blood from himself to others.

There is a natural prejudice in favour of virtue, which obliges, even the worst men, to give testimony in its behalf. It appears to deserve praise, even when the wicked are the judges. Envy, malice, or selfishness may lead

lead them to slander this or that man; but, SERM.  
XVII.  
the praise they deny to particular persons, they freely bestow upon virtue in general.

But, if the wicked should declare for barefaced worthlessness, can we be the worse for their mean opinion? They are enemies of every thing that is good: "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." It is an honour to suffer in such a cause. It was the situation of the first disciples, and a blessing was promised them for these severe trials. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." Since the servants of the enemy have been prevented from having the temper of the upright, the next step is to bring the upright down to the level of their own worthlessness. If they cannot look the sun in the face, they give out that he is covered with spots, obscured by clouds, eclipsed in the shade, or set in darkness, never to rise again.

If men of bad life should speak ill of us, to balance this loss, we shall have the approbation of all good Christians: And it is a happiness

SERM. pines to have their good opinion. A virtu-  
 XVII. ous man discerns these sentiments which are  
 too fine for the observation of a man of a de-  
 praved heart. He, also, observeth the accurf-  
 ed thing which defileth the congregation: He  
 knoweth what is proper, and giveth it due  
 praise; he knoweth what is evil, and deter-  
 reth men from it. The praise of one man of  
 this sort is before the flattery of a thousand.  
 The approbation of Hezekiah or Jehoshaphat  
 was better than that of many like Ahab or  
 Hazael.

Though there were a combination against  
 us of both the good and evil, yet we still  
 would have the comfort left, of having the  
 praise of God, who cannot be deceived. The  
 best men may be misinformed; they may take  
 a bad character for a good one; and conse-  
 quently may honestly praise the worst men.  
 Their eyes see the surface only; they observe  
 not the treasure which lies under ground, or  
 what poison may be mixed with precious me-  
 tals. They may be pleased with the false simile  
 of treachery, or condemn the blunt freedom  
 of honesty. They cannot trace hypocrisy, nor  
 discover the real goodness which may be over-  
 whelmed by the tide of popular hatred.

The

The Searcher of hearts alone can judge a SERM.  
righteous judgement: He lays open the breast XVII.  
of the deceiver, and answers the prayer, which  
ascends from the dungeon of the man persecuted for righteousness. His praise is bestowed upon the man of unfeigned devotion, of goodness of heart, and humanity of conduct. It was bestowed upon Abraham the father of the faithful; upon Moses the leader of his people Israel; upon the integrity of Samuel, the patience of Job, the zeal of Paul, the resolution of Peter, the charity of John. Let us be sincere Christians, and we shall gain his favour: Let us be doers of his will, and he will not forsake us.

Indeed, in every age, some have expected that they would gain his countenance, and good opinion, without bestowing any pains upon their lives. Of old, they thought they might recommend themselves, by expensive sacrifices, by magnificent processions, by the solemn concealment of their mysteries, and by many other methods which superstition contrived, in order to loosen the obligations to virtue. But they have taken all this trouble in vain; for it is a maxim of reason and scripture, "To follow peace with all men, and  
"holiness,

SERM. "holiness, without which no man shall see  
XVII. "the Lord."

The approbation of God secures the peace of our own consciences. And, though we had all the treasure of the bowels of the earth; though we had the produce of many fertile fields, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, we should be miserable, if we were self-condemned. "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" This is the greatest distress of this life; it is the forerunner of the misery of another life: "For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." But, if we walk in the statutes of God blameless, we are sure of having that peace of conscience which he bestows upon those who love him. This will make us happy while we sojourn here, and, after death, we shall enter into the land of promise, and enjoy happiness to all eternity. We proceed to observe,

2. That, as by the means of religion we acquire a good character, by the same means we PRESERVE it.

Though a man should have fortune at pleasure, yet, if he be always veering about, and condemning, one day, what he supported another,

other, he betrays such an air of meanness, SERM. that, putting religion out of the question, a XVII. man of spirit would avoid this inconsistency  for the poor look it has. Now, as a wicked man aims at some selfish design, or the gratifying of some unruly passion, he must be subjected to great inconsistencies of conduct; and then his character must be much degraded. He may have an appearance of consistency for some time, but bad principles, sooner or later, will lead him into a snare. He may, perhaps, stand by his friends, when his own interest does not interfere, when passion or humour keep away. When interest, however, comes on the field, or when you hurt his temper, by opposing him in an unreasonable demand, friendship and every generous sentiment take their leave, and the man appears in the blackest colours of selfishness. Such a man has no allowance for difference of opinions; he has none for the mistakes of his friend; but he pursues with malice the very man whom he formerly cherished in his bosom. Your experience is very small, if you have not had many, very many opportunities of observing how vice makes the same man appear with different faces, and in different

SERM. characters. His old friend is put down in the  
 XVII. list of inveterate enemies: His old enemy ap-  
 ~~~~~  
 pears as an intimate friend.

How different from this is a good man? He is steady in his attachments, and firm in his resolutions. He does not sit as a dictator, to proscribe the name of every one whom he does not love. Even to those who offend him, the road of reconciliation is always open. You will not this day be received by him, with a kind heart and an open countenance, and to-morrow with coldness and reserve. He will not have a heart to feel for you, and an eye to weep for you, at one time, and, at another, a tongue to abuse you, and a forehead to frown upon you. He never will make light of the disease of your body, of the ruin of your fortune, or of the death of your children. He holds his face one way, he stands on firm ground; neither pleasure nor profit can make him inconsistent; and the man who trusts him, never will have reason to repent of the confidence he has placed in him.

It is true, he may alter his opinions. Advanced years, and greater experience, may make him observe, that, in his youth, he took up some notions too hastily. Pride, interest,  
 or

or party connections do not force him to fight for a cause, which, his own reason convinces him to have been a wrong one. As soon as he discovers his mistake, he acknowledges it, and never will defend an opinion which he does not approve.

SERM.  
XVII.

With this single exception, a good man will be always consistent. He may, notwithstanding, have peculiarities of temper: for, we do not speak of a perfect man, but of such mixed characters as we may see about us. No character is so fair, but it has some specks upon it. A good man may have a weakness in his temper, but he never can have a single spark of malice. He may be hastily out of humour with his friend, but he never will betray his secret, or lead him into a snare. He uses no shuffling arts, no subterfuge of iniquity, no mean enticement, no bait of seduction; but he is fair in all things, fair upon every occasion. The ordinary practices of the world, his own profit, the interest of his friends, or the designs of crooked politics, will not make him turn aside from the accustomed consistency of his life.

But, if we admit bad principles, we shall be the most inconsistent and the most unaccountable

SERM. countable creatures on earth. We are fur-  
 XVII. prised at observing the inconsistency of a man  
 who is, one day, keen for a thing, which,  
 from change of interest, he opposes as keenly  
 the next. This, however, is a short-sighted  
 policy: They are very weak men who are to  
 be deceived by this common trick. Is our  
 memory so bad, that we cannot remember  
 this year what you said or did the last. These  
 changes bring on dark stains upon your cha-  
 racter, and, it is plain, palpable vice, that oc-  
 casions them. An unprincipled man thinks  
 with two souls, speaks with two tongues, blows  
 hot and cold out of one mouth. When it is  
 his interest, he forgets all past favours, but  
 magnifies every slight offence. The mote in  
 the eye of an old friend, appears as a beam  
 when viewed in the eye of a new enemy. It  
 is a vile interest that causes these changes, and,  
 if you follow not religion, you will always  
 follow interest. If the wind blow from the  
 south, you sail to the north; if from the north,  
 to the south. You never strive against the  
 gale, but always bear away before it.

When a man serves us, we discover in him  
 every quality which men esteem honourable;  
 we find him a trusty friend, a pattern of in-  
 tegrity,

tegrity, one whom money cannot corrupt, SERM.  
whom evil communication cannot seduce, XVII.  
whose honour has been tried like gold seven  
times proved in the furnace. When a new  
interest comes in the way, your old friend, at  
once, is declared to be covetous, false, de-  
signing, the most treacherous, the most worth-  
less, the most dangerous of the sons of men.  
Have you never heard of these changes? You  
have heard of them a hundred times. In  
what country do you not hear of them? What  
do they mean? They speak a plain language;  
that selfishness is the god of this world: It  
is the idol to which hundreds bend the knee;  
hundreds of those who have not God and a  
good conscience before their eyes.

How poor a figure do these inconsistent  
creatures make, though they should have sil-  
ver and gold, flocks, and herds, and wide pos-  
sessions? But, if we love goodness for its own  
sake, our conduct will be steady, our opi-  
nions consistent, our friendship lasting; we  
shall be candid when we blame, candid when  
we give commendation. We proceed, to  
observe,

III. That religion makes us PROPERLY DIS-  
CHARGE every DUTY, in every state of life.

SERM. It is of advantage, even in childhood; for  
XVII. the devotion of the father descends to the son,  
from the son it descends to the grandson. From his infancy a boy learns to fear God, hate lying, obey his parents; he learns modesty, humility, sobriety, and integrity. He is exemplary to those of his own age, for tractable dispositions, for an openness of countenance, and for a sincerity of heart. He honours his parents, loves his kindred, behaves softly to the young, respectfully to the old. The sweet blush of childhood is upon his face; a blush that proceedeth from innocence, and warneth him of the first approach of sin.

Religion is still of greater service in the days of our youth, when the passions become headstrong, and the storm drives the vessel upon the rocks. Religion is her anchor of hope: If the storm continue, and this anchor fails, the young man, void of understanding, must make shipwreck of the faith.

On the other hand, a pious young man looks towards his Maker, fights the good fight of faith: He gives his orders with a firm look, and his passions dare not rebel. They are obedient, and he is happy.

Religion gives a young man an adviseable temper,

temper, a heart without guile, without over-  
bearing manners. He is not apt to take of-  
fence; he is apt to ask forgiveness, when he  
has given any body reason to complain. The  
fear of God checks the vanity of bodily ac-  
complishments, the dreams of ambition, the  
temptations of pleasure, or the seduction of  
interest.

When a heedless young man pursues the  
ruinous designs of dissipation, how poor a  
figure is he, when placed by the side of one  
who remembers his Creator in the days of his  
youth. The former sets his face against god-  
liness, the latter makes it his first and last care.  
The one is the worst of all slaves, the other is  
his own master, rules his appetites, but is not  
ruled by them. It is a charming thing when  
the gaiety of youth is subservient to the com-  
posure of religion, and when religion gives  
sweetness to youth. The smile upon the  
cheek, is a sign of innocence of heart. The  
cheerfulness of a good young man, proceed-  
eth from a conscience at ease; his prudence  
from a sense of the divine direction. The  
God of his fathers is his God, Jesus is his Sa-  
viour, Christians are his brothers and sisters;  
and the house of God is the place, where,  
with

SERM. with united hearts, the prayers of a congregation are offered to the most High.

XVII.

If godliness adorns the young man, it adorns him also in the more advanced period of his life: If you serve the Lord in your family, you will be the ruler of a sweet little company, formed, by your example, for every thing that is engaging to the heart. It is delightful to observe, in his own house, a man who is religious without shew, and warm-hearted from principle. The sight is so primitive, that it brings into our mind Abraham, or one of the patriarchs, who are so much celebrated for the goodness of their lives, and the simplicity of their manners. Every thing is so regular, so decent, so guarded; every body knows his own duty, and performs it so willingly; every thing is so nicely adjusted, that it is a high pleasure to enter that house. Who would not be pleased when hand answers to hand, eye to eye, and heart to heart? The father so affectionate, the children so dutiful: There are such peace and contentment within these walls; the words of one and all are so engaging, their looks so attentive, their whole manner so taking, that our hearts beat with joy, upon observing so many lovely objects,

jects, and so much happiness as appears in every corner of that house.

SERM.  
XVII.

The advantages of godliness are not confined to the flower of life; it is also of great use to old age, in many respects, particularly in respect to health. A virtuous old man hath a fair prospect of enjoying this great blessing; as he hath not to drink the sour dregs of the corruption of his youth: Therefore he hath reason to hope, that he may be a chearful and vigorous old man. Or, if, from a weak constitution, or accidental causes, his health be broken, his principles secure him from peevishness, the ordinary companion of a bad-hearted old man. The aged servant of the Lord will not frown upon the young, or check the openness of their hearts, or their innocent chearfulness; in course, he must be respected by them, and his company sought for. He has, at seventy, the obligingness and good nature of a man of thirty years of age. His experience is trusted, his sayings are kept on record, and the young form themselves upon his maxims. A good conscience brightens the face, and sweetens the looks of this venerable man. Though his body be weak, his mind is vigorous. His children

A a a

and

SERM. and grand-children prefs about him, and have  
 XVII. joy in doing kind offices, though his eyes be  
 dim, and he cannot move himself in his bed. Though his voice be faint, his breathing laborious, his weak and interrupted words convey tender love. In his last sickness, the eyes of all are in tears, but there is a pleasure in observing the tears that fall upon the bed of one who is about to be transported to glory. Like Jacob he gives up the ghost in blessing his family. The parting of such friends is affecting: Every man of feeling conceives how affecting it must be. Heart is joined to heart; the heart of the living is upon the dying, and of the dying upon the living. It is a most interesting event to both: To the dying, as he departs in peace; to the living, as he is taught to prepare himself for death. “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.”

A good life supports you in every age and condition. If you be rich, you are a blessing to your poor neighbours, to your servants, and dependents. If you be poor, you do not envy, or over-reach those who are more fortunate

tunate than you are. If you have to labour SERM.  
for your daily bread, religion gives you the XVII.  
industry and application your situation re-  
quires. For vice is the mother of idleness,  
and idleness is the sister of poverty. A good  
man minds his own affairs without disturb-  
ance from his passions, or danger from the  
seduction of temptations.

If you have a thirst for knowledge, righte-  
ousness promises to be your guide. It is with  
great difficulty that a vicious man cultivates  
his understanding: For vice confounds the  
judgement, straitens the imagination, destroys  
the memory, and disqualifies him for diligence  
and perseverance, without which no man can  
make great advances in wisdom; or, if through  
the strength of extraordinary parts, he has  
made some progress, he certainly would have  
succeeded better, if he had not had so violent  
a struggle from his passions, driving him first  
into dissipation, and, in consequence, into  
ignorance.

It is an important branch of knowledge,  
which regards our neighbours, friends, coun-  
try, and the world at large. A good man has  
this work half finished, when others begin it.  
He does not study merely to store his head,  
but

SERM. but his first design is to regulate his temper,  
 XVII. and reform his heart. He easily becomes  
 wife, because he is good; and good, because  
 he is wife.

We cannot figure a situation in which godliness is not of service to us. Is a man of Belial, or a servant of God, most trusted as a magistrate? A servant of God, without doubt. Is he a just judge who hath not the fear of God before his eye? It is impossible he should. Who is the most dutiful subject? He who knows that he has to answer for his orderly conduct. The defence of his country is safely confided to him, because something more powerful than the opinions of men gives him courage in the field, and fidelity in the closet. The captain of the host is strong in battle; the soldier hath a bolder heart and a firmer hand, than he can have who loves not the Lord. He stands in defence of his country, and of the religion of his forefathers, and, in the time of severe trial, the word goes round, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon."

You wish that your friend, your brother, your son, would be godly. Are you masters? Let your servants shout for joy, for belonging  
 ing

ing to a house, where they have a kind patron, instead of a surly taskmaster. How are we charmed with the mild and affectionate behaviour of Abraham to Eleazar, and with the return of gratitude and fidelity from Eleazar to Abraham. The servants of the servant of God live in the midst of kindness: when they are sick, they have one to protect them; when they mourn, one to comfort them.

Are you servants? Your masters may sleep in peace; their interest is in safe hands. Your duty to God obliges you to be faithful, "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ." There are no pilfering, no purloining, no schemes of fraud, no conspiracy for deceit, that enter the heart of a servant who obeys the law of Christ.

Are you a father? Your children are happy. The noise of strife, the discontent of peevishness, the taunt of the sneerer, the roughness of the passionate, the fullness of the morose, the swearing, and the boisterous language of the profane enter not your house. You address your children with mildness, with cheerfulness and confidence. Your face is serene, like the face of the morning, when the dew falls to refresh the fields.

Are

SERM.  
XVII.  
~~~~~

Are you children? Your parents are honoured at all times: You are doubly dutiful to them when they become old, diseased, or have fallen into poverty. These fathers and sons deserve to be imitated. Religion is the bond of family happiness, the cement of society. Under the direction of religion, men behave properly in every state of life; and act with credit in every relation. We proceed to observe,

IV. That religion either SAVES us from DISTRESS, or FITS us for every TRIAL; it repairs us for death and eternity.

I. It saves us from distress.

Much of what we suffer falls upon us in repentment for injuries we have done, or men believe we have done. Indeed, some men may be so wicked, as to run down goodness, merely for the pleasure they have in the chase. Yet, bad as the world is, few are so abandoned as to serve Satan for nought. If we meet any of them, let us not be afraid, their number is small, their power confined; and a wise man can easily make his escape from the nets, which they spread for him.

A righteous man is covered in armour against the shafts of repentment. He gives no cause of anger; therefore, he hath few eminent.

enemies. His actions may be misrepresented-SERM.  
ed for a time; yet, in the end, he usually XVII.  
gets the better of misrepresentation. He is  
out of the way of severe antipathies, for, “he  
“ backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth  
“ evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a re-  
“ proach against his neighbour.” Innocence  
is a shield which the weapons of the wicked  
cannot pierce. “Who is he that will harm  
“ you, if ye be a follower of that which is  
“ good.” Add to this, that, a good man  
has the promise of the interposition of the  
providence of God. “When a man’s ways  
“ please the Lord, he maketh even his ene-  
“ mies to be at peace with him.”

Religion roots up the occasions of evil. In-  
temperance does not come near a good man;  
therefore he is far from broils and quarrels.  
An unruly tongue does not make him “scatter  
“ firebrands and death about him.” A strict  
conscience restrains him from every thing at  
which a man can take offence. His looks are  
not insolent, his words are not provoking;  
he does not undervalue his neighbour, or  
overvalue himself; he does not covet his  
neighbour’s house, or his ox or his ass. He  
does not thrust himself into the crooked ways  
of an interested world, or the confined views  
of

SERM. XVII. of party work, and, on that account, he does not suffer the mortifications of a partial, narrow-minded policy. He does not foment the quarrels of neighbours; he does not stir up strife among relations. He does not thrust himself into the affairs of other men. From how many rude attacks does this conduct save him? What security does plain-dealing give him? With these qualifications he gives no handle for resentment, no grounds for animosity and ill-will.

It is indeed true, that a good man may fall a sacrifice to the cunning of the designing, who may wish to take advantage of him. But in this respect he is not in a worse situation than others, but in a much better. As he is "a companion of those who fear the Lord," he avoids all connection with men of a worthless life. They seldom meet, and there is no intimacy between them, if they should meet at any time. Upon these accounts, with an equal degree of diligence, he bids fairer for temporal prosperity than a man of slack morals can do. The integrity of his life creates a confidence in him that is very serviceable even to his temporal interests. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having  
"ing

“ing promise of the life that now is, and of SERM.  
“that which is to come.” XVII.

Vice, indeed, is best calculated for raising a sudden fortune. She plays a bold and deep game, and, if the die turn up fortunate, she may gain a great prize. A man may become rich in a few days, by receiving a bribe, by opening the gate to the enemy, by oppression, pillaging, or piracy: Or, if his conscience be entirely depraved, he may gain a fortune by using the poinard or the poisoned bowl: Yet for one who raises a fortune in this way, a hundred lose their character, without making rich. They live in dishonour, or die a shameful death.

2. If religion does not save us from misfortunes, it enables us to bear them.

In the morning of our day, when every prospect looks gay, we think not on the storms which may assault us before the sun be set. Therefore, when trouble approaches, it falls heavy on us, as we are not prepared for it. On that occasion religion offers her hand to hold us up, when we are about to sink. Though our heart be sick, though our friends forsake us, though we be poor and helpless, we know from what quarter our relief is to

SERM. come: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the  
 XVII. "righteous, and his ears are open unto their  
 "prayers; but the face of the Lord is against  
 "them that do evil." You may lose your children when you have the fairest prospect of comfort. This is a severe stroke, a very severe one; yet severe as it is, the godly man behaves under it with resignation; and can say from the heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

If religion teaches us to bear our misfortunes, she also teaches us to die in peace. This is a most necessary lesson for men of every condition. Though our hearts be greatly affected at the sickness or pain of a good man; and though the voice of bitter mourning be heard, yet his death informeth the living how they are to die the death of the righteous. The prayers he has offered in faith, the poor he has relieved, the widow whose cause he has pled, are precious comforters at that dark hour.

On the other hand, how melancholy is the death of a sinner? Though his eyes be sunk, his limbs palsied, his heart faint, and ghastliness be on his countenance, how light is all this to the misery of a disturbed conscience?

How

How is this misery described in the word of SERM.  
God? How forcible the words, how strong XVII.  
the painting? “I am afflicted and ready to die,  
“ from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors  
“ I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over  
“ me, thy terrors have cut me off.” The pangs  
of conscience on a death-bed are aggravated  
by the prospect of complete misery, from  
which there is no escape.

The righteous is saved from these thoughts.  
He passes to the joys of eternity, through the  
gates of death. We are not amused with a  
fanciful story about the fields of Elysium, or  
the Islands of the Blessed, as the old Heathens  
were; nor are we allured by a paradise of sen-  
sual delights, with the disciples of Mahomet;  
but we are assured of being admitted to a pure  
heaven wherein dwelleth righteousness.

How excellent then is the righteous? How  
much does this temper surpass that of the  
man of the world? How much happiness does  
it afford, and how long is it to continue. Let  
this determine us to make that choice which  
is best for time and for eternity.

# S E R M O N XVIII.

## The FOLLY of SPIRITUAL SLOTH.

---

I THESS. v. 6.

*Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but, let us watch and be sober.*

SERM. XVIII. **C**AN a man think so meanly of himself, as to believe the chief business of his life is to pamper the sluggish body, while he allows the active spirit to be entirely neglected? Yet there are many, whose thoughts are taken up about the appetites of the body, though they have little concern about the soul. Our soul hath vast expectations which ought not to be disappointed. Though all that the earth and sea contain were subjected to our will, they could not of themselves make us happy. The approbation of God, and the practice of virtue, are the only things to make us happy, whether

whether we look backward or forward. We SERM.  
are stationed here to be in the way of prepa-XVIII.  
ration for another life. And, when we act  
upon another plan, we are found to doat up-  
on baubles, and entail misery upon ourselves.

Though this be our first employment, how trifling a thing can turn our minds from it? A thing light as air, and fleeting as the mist upon the mountains, engages our minds, though we slight the happiness of our souls. Why should we act in this manner? The real difficulties of religion give us sufficient employment, though we do not make the thing worse, by creating difficulties for ourselves.

As long as we are in the body, we have trials which a mortal arm could not surmount, if it were not endued with a power from on high. We have the enticement of bad company, the force of powerful temptations, and the solicitation of headstrong passions. We are corrupted by money, enervated by pleasure, or flattered by praise. Every thing must fall to ruin, if we think seldom, or think heedlessly of our duty.

A heedless behaviour admits of no excuse; it opens a door for much wickedness. Alas! Where is the man who can, at all times, free himself

SERM. XVIII. himself of this charge? Is there one who draws in the breath of life, and who eats the fruit of the earth, who can put his hand upon his heart, and safely say, I did every thing in its own season? I never put off till to-morrow what I ought to have set about this day?

All feel the power of sloth, the determined enemy of goodness, the faithful confederate of sin. From sloth the half of our vices proceed; more than the half proceeds from it. Though dangers threaten, passions inflame; bad men seduce; though enemies be on the right and left, before and behind, yet sleep closes our eyes, a deep sleep chains us to rest. No danger gives us warning, a drawn sword is at our breast, yet we cannot bear the fatigue of lifting up our eyes, or of stretching out our hand to ward off the blow. We sleep on the brink of the precipice, though if we move our body a handbreadth, we fall down the hideous rock. Great is that fall! Yet any excuse, the poorest pretext puts us off our guard, and we lay ourselves open to every surprize, or night attack. Sloth, that enticing forcerefs, enchants us by her smooth promises, and softly whispers in our ears; “ Yet a little  
“ sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the  
“ hands

“hands to sleep.” She administers a poisonous draught, which is drunk with greediness, and is no sooner swallowed than the head turns giddy, the feet stagger, the joints are without strength, the eye-lids close, the body is without life, an useless burden to the earth. SERM.  
XVIII.

As we have all felt less or more of this lethargy, it behoves us to leave nothing undone, in order to get the better of it. Sloth becomes serious in its consequences, and has many ways of beguiling us. At one time she decoys us, by softening the features of vice, at another, by concealing her under the mask of virtue. If we make a day do the duty of a week, or a month of a year; if we run from prayers to riotous company, or from riotous company to our prayers, sloth is as effectually encouraged by this sort of service, as if we had shut out the light, and composed ourselves for rest. A man may be always in a hurry, who is always idle; in a hurry about trifles, idle in great affairs. He travels forward one hour, he falls back another: He first puts himself out of breath in running uphill, then in running down; and, when the sun is setting, he does not find himself one  
mile

SERM. mile advanced in his journey. Though he  
 XVIII. be the most indolent creature, he has the appearance of a man of activity. His face has the flush of one running a race, his veins are swollen, his heart beats quick, he pants for breath, yet it is the race, or violent motion of a man in a dream. In the twinkling of an eye, he travels to the end of the earth, rides upon the clouds, observes the fountains of the great deep, turns the fortune of battle, and makes the conqueror conquered. When he awakens, he is listless and languishing, as if he had finished the labours of a strong man, yet it hath been an idle and incoherent dream.

You may, to as little purpose, be busy in matters of religion. You may be a fluctuating, fluttering, volatile worshipper, who first enter the tabernacle of God, then leave it to dwell in the tents of sin. You go astray in your journey through the wilderness, and, after the labour of forty years, you are not nearer the land of promise.

But we ought to have attention in every thing, both when we are by ourselves, and in the crowd; in serious affairs, and when we unbend ourselves for mirth. We are to have it this day, to-morrow, at the end of the week,

week, of the month, and of the year. Neither the soothing of friends, nor the threats of enemies; neither pleasure nor pain are to keep our hands from labour, nor our feet from moving nimbly in running the race set before us.

This is the meaning of our text, “Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” This subject I propose for your meditation, and I hope you will make the proper use of it.

From our fickleness sudden changes happen: Wrong notions of our duty lead us to make earnestness at one time, an excuse for neglect at another. If we trust in our professions, or think, by them, to atone for a life of wickedness; or, if we be so proud as to believe that a hundred temptations cannot make us break our engagements; we take no pains, because we believe we are in no danger. We take sloth to our bosom, without knowing that it is sloth. We think her a friend to be trusted, a counsellor to be advised with; a guardian to take the burden of our affairs; and, resting in the lap of ease, we take no thought about to-morrow, for we fancy, “that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.”

The forms of godliness give a man a ground-

SERM.  
XVIII.

less confidence in himself. They bring security: Security has not a guard before or behind; she hears the soft voice that hushes to sleep, and not the shrill trumpet that rouses to arms. The enemy approach at midnight, the heads of the sluggards are at the pillow; their arms are rusted, they are loaded with wine; they are cut to pieces in their beds, because all the camp had fallen asleep; and the edge of the sword, the points of the spears, and the gashes of their own wounds, were the first warning they had of the destruction that had fallen upon the host. Trust not in forms, for this will make you believe you are the servants of God, when you are the slaves of sin. Self-righteousness makes us despise temptations, and our boast is: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Then trials will come at an hour in which they were not looked for, and the irresolute, improvident sinner, is altogether disconcerted.

But we are called upon to watch in every place, and at all times. Our concern in this place ought to follow us to our houses, to direct our family, and to assist us in every trying situation of life. From the house of God

we

we will go to giving alms, and from almsgiving, we will return to the house of God: We will pass from private prayers to private charity, and from communicating to open-dealing. The devotion of a day is to be the devotion of many years, and the charity of this hour is to continue with us through life, and to comfort us when we shall lie waiting for our change. "Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

SERM.  
XVIII.

In discoursing at more length on this subject, I am,

I. To shew the FOLLY of SLOTH, by considering its nature, and the manner in which it discovers itself, and the pretexts it uses to deceive us.

II. To give some additional REASONS for making us AVOID it.

III. To give some DIRECTIONS.

In entering upon the first of these topics, give me leave to observe, that spiritual sloth and indolence in worldly affairs have a strong resemblance in many striking features. In both, the love of ease is the source of all a man's misfortunes. The indolent labourer looks upon it as a drudgery to fence his field,

SERM. XVIII.  to plough the ground, to sow the grain, destroy the weeds, or to put in the sickle. Tho' the maintenance of his children, and his honest name depend upon diligence, he cannot put his hand to hard labour. He would rather starve, or be naked, than work for food or raiment. The sun is in the south before he can awake from sleep; and, before he has got to the west, the sluggard is again in the arms of sleep. He hates labour as he hates the face of any enemy, or the gates of death. He fondly flatters himself that all his affairs will come to a happy end, though his days pass in idleness, his nights without foresight. At the worst, he would bear multiplied distresses next year, in order to avoid trouble this year. Let the land-floods carry off the soil, rather than he should make a trench to drain off the water: Let his fields be covered with thorns, rather than he should be at the pains of rooting them up. Weeds grow for corn, the trees yield sour fruit, his barns are empty, and his children are hungry. Under his hands, the vine becomes a wild vine; the olive, a wild olive tree; the wheat and barley fail; the rain falls, and the sun shines in vain, as the labourer did not plow, and the sower did

not sow. He faunters and he sleeps, he sleeps and he faunters again and again. When others are at the plough, his excuse is, that his ground is bound with frost; when they bear the heat and labour of the day, he lies down to sleep in the shade. “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.” When the son of industry is feasting upon the fat of the land, the son of indolence is starving. His house lets in the rain; the snow covers his bed; his raiment is in rags, and he is shivering for cold. “The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.”

This observation applies with greater force to spiritual than to temporal things. A sluggard in religion has a fancy the most fruitful of excuses. No man can be a proficient in godliness, without perseverance in labour. We must either part with idleness, or with the fear of God. We must have diligence, as we have many rubs from our passions, many checks from our consciences. We have to go through a long course of discipline; we have to encounter with mortification, repentance, watching, and much anxiety. What

SERM.  
XVIII.

a struggle is this for a lover of ease? What a trial for a lover of pleasure? How can indolence and religion meet in one person! Religion thinks of many years, thinks of death, judgement, and eternity: Indolence does not think of to-morrow, much less of another world. Religion is regular in praying to God, in giving alms, and in judging charitably: Indolence takes no concern, at one time or another, about any duty of Christianity. The maxim of indolence is, Give me ease to-day, though I should have trouble to-morrow. This day is not for serious things, this day is for trifling and amusement. Away with the affairs that require thought. Give me sleep all the day. Let me sleep during my life, though I should lift up my eyes in torment.

After this general account, give me leave to be more particular.

I. We have to observe, that sloth keeps us from acquiring knowledge; and it is impossible for a man to practise what he doth not know. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion: She is the mother of superstition, enthusiasm, and bigotry. An ignorant man may look at the flight of birds, or to the entrails of sacrifices; may become pale upon meeting

an ominous creature, or at beginning his work upon an unlucky day; but he can know nothing of worshipping the Deity in spirit and in truth. An uninformed, credulous mortal may have that part of religion which enters by the eye; he may have the forms, the ceremonies, and all the trick of an infatuated superstition; but he cannot perform a service acceptable to God. As this knowledge is too intricate for a lover of ease, he takes his leave of it, and resolves to sleep upon the bosom of ignorance.

The same indolence that makes us ignorant of devotion, makes us ignorant of charity, and of every duty whatever. One unacquainted with the nature of man, may, from indolent good nature, do many obliging things; but he cannot have that warm glow of affection, that sensibility of nature, that forgiving spirit, that inflexible honesty which the gospel recommends. He may have a clumsy sort of charity, a lazy sort of integrity; that unfeeling good nature which may answer in ordinary cases, when no suitable bribe is proposed, and when no nicety is required. But, when it is a case of difficulty, what can the lazy creature do, who is ignorant of reason and revelation?

SERM.  
XVIII.  
~

SERM. revelation? If he be ever in the right, it is  
 XVIII. entirely by accident; he deserves no praise for  
 it, he can expect no reward. He may have  
 some sort of meaning of his own, some slovenly  
 resolution which is floating in his mind; but he does not know whether he ought to turn to the right hand, or to the left.

If we take no pains upon the knowledge of our duty, we are at the mercy of every impostor who wants to mislead us; and we shall, to the end, be the slaves of error, and shall stumble on from error to error all the days of our lives. Keep away indolence, otherwise you must grope in the dark, and must be driven like cattle. Industry is the faithful handmaid of wisdom. Wisdom allows no body to come into her presence that is not introduced by this favourite, who attends her at the dawning of the morning, observes her eye, and the motion of her hand, by the shining of the evening lamp.

What knowledge can a lazy man possess? His own heart is unknown; for he is always rambling abroad, but he never rests an hour at home. He, indeed, would desire to have knowledge, if he could acquire it by a simple wish, or by a motion of his finger, for the  
 sake

fake of the name it would give him. But, if it should require the application of many years, the lover of ease would never make a purchase at that expence. Though his station and opportunities give him leisure, and though nature may have given him great abilities, yet, except on a few superficial things, he has no desire to spend his time, or to employ superior abilities in searching the records of nature, in tracing the history of his own mind, in defining what is the duty which God requires of man; “till we might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven, all the days of their life.” A man travels through life, as a stranger does in a foreign land, of whose laws, customs, and constitution he is ignorant. He may run through many cities, yet he is no wiser, nor can he make other people wiser. He has been destroyed by indolence, that covers with rust every thing that comes near it. Sloth ruins the greatest parts, confounds the clearest judgement; and, under its management, the most vigorous understanding becomes weak and childish.

In how slovenly a manner does the drowsy creature apply to the study of wisdom? The

SERM.  
XVIII.

damp of the morning, the heat of mid-day, and the chilness of the evening, make him fold his arms to sleep. “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of sleep?” What can make him leave his bed, and begin with spirit to examine divine or human things? If he should set out in search of knowledge, he amuses himself with what is showy, in order to satisfy a sort of curiosity, or to find a subject for petulant observations. The value of the thing is not attended to, his thoughts are not digested: If he can find many founding words he is satisfied. The leaves upon a barren tree are many, but it bears no fruit. This empty talkative knowledge is the only thing that sloth delights in. One of these pretenders can talk easily for many hours, and when he gives over, you cannot guess at the meaning of a single sentence. He picks up the thin gleanings, but he never did put his sickle into the field. Sloth humours a fickle freakish fancy, that cannot be two days pleased with the same object of enquiry.

It would have been as happy for the negligent enquirer, that he had been entirely ignorant, as that he had perplexed himself about trifles, which did not deserve the third part  
of

of the pains they cost. He amuses himself with things which are of no consequence, in regard to this life or the next, but which, light as they are, fill him with an empty conceit of himself. He doats upon that airy thing where the fancy only is entertained, and where he can roam through an hundred pages before he can meet one serious thought. It is troublesome to search the heart, to class the passions, to enquire into the works of nature; to correct present mistakes from the history of past ages; to vindicate the ways of God to man, and to be wise unto salvation. Indolence avoids this study, or it dwells upon idle or captious questions which do no good. How slow are many in acquiring the knowledge of the one thing needful? the knowledge that makes a good man, and a good Christian. How often does sloth break in, and what havoc of principles does she occasion? The charmer sings sweetly; her voice enfeebles the heart, she invites us to pleasure, she invites us to peace: Though cruelty be in her soul, music is on her lips, insinuation in her eye: If we are not bound so that we cannot move, or if our ears be not sealed up, we obey that enchanting sound, though we have seen many hundreds perish for trusting her promise.

Sloth

SERM. XVIII. Sloth is always sounding in our ears that  
 XVIII. “much study is a weariness to the flesh;” and,  
 that no man can bear to have his thoughts always upon the stretch. The conceit of gaudy trifles banishes substantial knowledge; “and in the multitude of words there wanteth not fin.” This is the refinement of indolence, to be ignorant with the air of wisdom.

The right way is always rugged at first; it may be so for a long time; therefore, our hearts fail us, as, in this up-hill road, we do not find every thing smooth as on a plain. Since we cannot be wise and indolent at the same time, we are resolved to be indolent in defiance of wisdom. The love of company, and a light heart, make laughter to be preferred to seriousness, ignorance to knowledge.

If heedlessness prevent our advances in other things, it does it more in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To find an apology for neglecting the scriptures at one time, we flatter ourselves that they are clear as light, transparent as polished glass; and, that we ought only to trouble ourselves about a few obvious advices; that, in regard to the remaining parts, we may study them if we please; we may safely let them alone; we may understand

derstand them without advantage, or be ignorant of them without loss.

What a happy thought is this for indolence? A man who has these notions, only bestows a few minutes at one time, when he is between being asleep and awake. Then he closes the book for that day, perhaps for a whole week. The consequence is, that he knows nothing to purpose, though he imagine that he knows every thing worthy of being understood. Being shallow and misinformed, he believes himself to be eloquent in the scriptures, as he picks and culls a sentence here and there without any arrangement, plan, or connection. He thinks himself very wise, if he can speak about any thing that is a matter of curiosity. If he can raise any puzzling difficulty, there is no bearing his vanity, or the pertness of his remarks. Though he blow himself up to a great size, he is a poor thing, notwithstanding. How could he be otherwise?

If sloth recommend herself to this man in one way, she does it to that in another: Or the the same man, at different times, may plead for either excuse, as he may be in a gay or melancholy humour. The second man, I say, represents

SERM. XVIII. represents the scriptures as full of perplexing objections, which the learned cannot solve, and of course, are far beyond the reach of ordinary men. He pores upon some crabbed passages, or upon such as have been made crabbed by the glosses of false learning. A gloomy temper, and a confused head, perplex these passages more and more: Indolence speaks up, he drops the study, and sloth is gratified by the intercession of despair. He thinks this subject is so deep that he has not a line to found it: He sits down with his arms across, without attempting what he believes impracticable.

The first reason makes men indolent, because they think the word of God is so plain, the second, because they consider it as very hard to be understood. In both cases, they bestow no pains, or they run along the page, and turn over leaf after leaf, without understanding what they read, or being the better for it. They are almost as ignorant of the scriptures as the heathens. Though they have an interest in the life, death, doctrine, and precepts of the Lord; yet, by the mediation of sloth, his life, death, doctrine, and precepts, are neglected.

Whether

Whether we apply to useful or ornamental knowledge; whether it concern the duties of a good life, or the principles of the faith, if indolence shew her face, ignorance is more than conqueror. Her throne is raised high, the people do homage to her, the prince and the peasant are her slaves. The castle of indolence is the head quarters of ignorance. Indolence brings blindness on the sharp-sighted, the sun labours under an eclipse, and mid-day has the darkness of midnight. A spirit of delusion makes men believe a lie. Sloth makes the wisdom of the counsellor become childish, and he believes every childish thing, and every thing is mismanaged in his hands. “ I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down.”

I do not mean that labourers and artists should be men of deep knowledge. The necessity of their condition puts this out of their power. However, if they have the inclination, they may easily acquire all the knowledge which is required of them. It is not expected that they should have great alertness, or that

they

SERM.  
XVIII  
~~~~~

they should be able to answer the objections or cavils which pride, curiosity, or infidelity, bring forward: much less is it expected, that they should have polished learning. Our Master never asks of us to work impossibilities; "for the yoke of the Lord is easy, and his burden light." A man without knowledge of letters is equal to his duty, as well as the most learned. Each ought to improve the opportunities providence has given him. The strong man has to answer for his strength, and the weak for his weakness.

Though ordinary men have not much leisure for studying the scripture through the week, they have it on the Sunday. The Sunday industriously spent, would soon give them a considerable degree of the knowledge necessary for them. Besides, many hours through the week might be easily applied this way, if we were as ready to seek for the opportunities of improving our mind, as we are for the occasions of enlarging our fortune: Or, if a part of the time spent on amusement, were bestowed on adding knowledge to virtue; and, if banishing sloth in word and deed, we gave all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

S E R M O N.

# S E R M O N XIX.

## The FOLLY of SPIRITUAL SLOTH.

---

I THESS. v. 6.

*Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but, let us watch and be sober.*

**H**AVING given a general account of spi- SERM.  
ritual sloth, and having shewn the con- XIX.  
nection it has with ignorance, we proceed to  
observe,

2. That, if it interferes with the knowledge of our duty, it interferes more with the practice of it. “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

Though our knowledge be ever so mean, our practice is much meaner. How different is a man's life from the culture of his understanding! How often does a polished mind

SERM. conceal the base manners and wicked heart of  
XIX. a libertine; the deep deceit of a hypocrite,  
or the cruel heart of a tyrant. We see men  
wise in theory, foolish in their actions: Their  
heads are well stored, their language is elegant,  
their judgement clear, their fancy correct, their  
memory improved, their eloquence commanding;  
but their friendship is insincere, their  
manners are wild, their conversation ungodly,  
and their company dangerous. They can  
speak fluently of religion and morals, as a  
spendthrift can speak of frugality, or as an  
usurer of generosity. They pronounce words  
which are at the utmost distance from their  
hearts. They have fallen into a habit of dis-  
sembling, which makes them known for dis-  
ingenuity, for rottenness of dispositions, and  
corruption of manners. They may have with-  
stood temptations for a long time, but sloth  
makes them yield at last. The soldier who  
has been hardy in the field, is enervated by  
the loose example of a few months in easy  
quarters, his joints lose their strength; he  
flies before the enemy whom he used to  
chase, and is defeated on the ground where  
he used to conquer.

It is a maxim, that no man can be good  
without

without great exertion: But he becomes wicked by sleeping when he ought to labour. SERM.  
XIX.

The connection between indolence and vice hath subsisted from the beginning of the world, and will subsist to its end. Sloth cherishes every unruly desire, and makes pleasant the way of vice. This road is covered with flowers; we lie on beds of roses; our heads are bolstered up; every noise is removed; the light is shut out; yawning and drowsiness seize the heavy head; the body becomes motionless; the soul has no vigour, except what arises from confused dreams, and sleep becomes the brother of death. Vice grows all the time, its strength is founded on our weakness: "For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night." The enemy sows the tares, the dews moisten them; they grow quickly, and possess all the soil; the few thin ears of corn come up dwarfish, and are blasted by having the strength of the ground drained for supporting weeds.

When sloth prevails, if one passion appear, the man gives way to it, as he cannot mortify it without a struggle: If another present itself, he yields also to it; a third, and a fourth

mult

SERM. must be humoured : A man may be tossed by  
XIX. a score of them ; and, in a listless temper, he  
may be ruined without attempting to make  
any resistance. The angry passions push us  
to revenge ; the interested ones to deceit ; the  
impure passions to sensuality : We indolently  
move to revenge, deceit, or sensuality, as the  
winds blow, or the tide runs. We yield ea-  
sily to every impulse, follow every desire,  
make no effort, can make none, though it  
were to save our bodies from the fire. It  
would be impracticable for a sluggard to resist  
temptations to purpose. How could he who  
cannot open his eyes, or raise up his hand,  
wrestle with a champion. The strong man  
throws down the gauntlet, the weak takes it  
up ; the spear is thrown from a feeble arm, and  
falls down without force ; he surrenders at  
once, rather than renew the combat. Vice  
at first uses her authority easily, as a prudent  
leader rules the conquered nations softly, till  
their necks be accustomed to the yoke. The  
beginning of vice is pleasant to the heedless  
man, because he travels down hill without  
any trouble : Virtue is avoided, because the  
road is steep, is interrupted by precipices, by  
torrents, by desarts, or infested by tribes of  
savages.

The drowfy finner has an antipathy to religion, because he can bestow no care. He avoids industry, more than he does sickness or pain. Can indolence meddle with the duties of religion, some of which are unpleasent. We must repent, we must mortify the body; we must make war against our own appetites, against the example of bad men, the power of custom, and the allurements of interest. These duties are harsh to flesh and blood. The appetites of the body, the pride of life, and the deceitfulness of riches, are the ministers of sloth, to defend her cause against these severities, and mortifications. She has a genius for finding excuses and evasions to answer any emergency. Those which have deceived us a thousand times, are trusted with the most implicit faith; and, under this delusion, we make no serious attempt to emancipate ourselves from slavery, from the bondage of iniquity. For, can he, who does not take his head from the pillow, bear days of labour, and sleepless nights?

The love of pleasure makes sloth yield without resistance. Pleasure is the bosom friend of sloth: It is sweet at first, though afterwards it becomes bitter. But though we be disappointed,

SERM. pointed, a second, a third, a fourth time, we  
 XIX. renew the experiment. “ Though wicked-

“ nefs be sweet in his mouth, though he hide  
 “ it under his tongue; though he spare it,  
 “ and forsake it not, but keep it still within  
 “ his mouth, yet his meat in his bowels is  
 “ turned; it is the gall of asps within him.”

In particular, sloth and pleasure allure to his ruin the young man void of understanding. “ With much fair speech she causeth him  
 “ to yield, with the flattering of her lips she  
 “ forceth him. He goeth after her straight-  
 “ way, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as  
 “ a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a  
 “ dart strike through his liver; as a bird hast-  
 “ eth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is  
 “ for his life.”

If sloth makes us weak, in regard to the appetites of the body, it does so in every other respect. Though the love of money be the root of evil, yet, in opposition to the experience of five thousand years, we pursue money through fraud, violence, and injustice, till our consciences be defiled by the trial. Rather than we should bear poverty, we venture on base actions. The possession of wealth, in whatever way acquired, takes from us the  
 desire

desire of being admitted to a better country. SERM.  
The love of the world entangles the slothful XIX.  
in the cares and enticements of this life.   
Though he be diligent in making preparation  
for the body, he may be indifferent about  
the concerns of his soul.

We give way to covetousness, rather than  
strive against it; we give way to impiety, ra-  
ther than encounter with the impious. We  
will not lift up our hand, or engage with  
fatigue, to save us from all the consequences of  
vice. We sail with every stream, we bend be-  
fore every wind, rather than part with indo-  
lence: indolence, the advocate of sin, and in-  
fidelity; the minister of death, and of ever-  
lasting destruction.

Indolence is dexterous in finding out excu-  
ses; it is never at a loss for a reason to put  
off the performance of any duty. If we be  
exhorted to repent, sloth raises her voice in  
the cause, and speaks with warmth and elo-  
quence; the only cause in which she can be  
at the trouble of being eloquent. If she can-  
not openly take a side against religion, she uses  
stratagem; and throws down in secret what  
she affects to build up in public. She per-  
suades us that another time will do as well;  
that

SERM. that any time will answer better than the pre-  
 XIX. sent. Her first rule is, that any thing ought  
 to get the better of religion. If there be amuse-  
 ment, religion gives way to it; if pleasure, she will not strive against it; if profit, every man hath his price, and holiness is parted with to secure the bargain. The necessity and hurry of business form an apology at one time; the listless spirit of idleness forms one at another. In this place, sloth deafens the calls of devotion, by the disorderly mirth of unruly company; in that, by the clamour and wants of importunate friends and of needy children.

What circumstance can we imagine that does not give indolence an excuse for neglecting the affairs of another life. If you put the question to him who passes his days without praying; Are you ever to be devout, and when is the habit to begin? The openly profane answer in a moment: Why should I pray, it is a weak, enthusiastic custom; and I will not act so unlike a man as to comply with it. If it be put to the heedless finner, who is not openly abandoned, he forms a softer excuse. I must pray, I am resolved that I shall pray; as this duty is required that I may  
 have

have peace when I die, and have mercy at the seat of judgement; but, at this time, I have neither the faith, nor seriousness, that is necessary for him that bows himself before the Almighty. How can I be serious amidst the projects of ambition, the bustle of interested engagements, or the contentions of party disputes? I cannot habitually pray, till I have retired from the world. This apology will be as fresh, twenty or thirty years after this, as it is at this hour. In the spirit of delay, the sinner goes on in the same way; and he will die without making confession, offering praise, or making his requests to his Creator.

If we put the question, How soon art thou to repent? If the slothful answer ingenuously, he will say, I cannot repent at this time. How can I do it, with this fiery conflict of passions, and with these perplexing projects of interest? How can I, amidst the rashness of youth, and the enticements of pleasure? At another time, I shall have more leisure, and greater success, than I can have in the heedless days of youth; or than I have in manhood, when I have a family to support, children to dispose of, or other troublesome engagements. At any rate, I cannot think of repenting amidst the many

SERM.

XIX.

avocations of this day. If you only excuse yourself for this day, Will you set about it in earnest to-morrow? Indolence answers without delay: This is too short warning, I cannot be better prepared to-morrow than I am this day. Are you then to repent the next day? No. The third day? No. In a week? No. Will a month answer? No. A year? Not a year. Will you repent in ten years? Perhaps I may; perhaps I may not. Circumstances, conveniency, or the humour I may be in, or the health and spirits I enjoy, must fix the particular time. We have an answer which fits every age, circumstance, or station of life. Go away this time: Come on another occasion, on any other occasion. At this time I am engaged in particular business, or with particular company. How could I be so indiscreet as neglect my affairs, or so rude as to forget my friends.

These excuses are made by the old, as well as by the young. The young contend, that they have a good title to make them, though they observe how foolish they are in the mouth of an old man. The old man has his own reasons, in which he trusts, as much as the young man does in his. There is no pe-  
riod

riod so early, or so late, that indolence does not take advantage of. As soon as a child can distinguish the right hand from the left, he has a dexterity in shifting every duty from himself, and in finding an apology for his misconduct. His first ingenuity, the very opening of his reason is employed in finding evasions for falsehoods, in concealing his own faults, and in removing upon others the blame he deserves. This is the seed-bed of vice. Sloth sows it in tender ground: It buds early, is nourished with care, and it will come to maturity in due time. The child has a cunning beyond his years, a readiness of contrivance, and a slyness, that shews, that though he be young in years, he is old in design; and that he is not easily disconcerted. The child delays till he be a boy; the boy, till he be a young man; the young man, to manhood: the next stage is old age, dotage, and a death-bed repentance. Even on a death-bed sloth does not leave us. We flatter ourselves, that we may recover this time, as we have done on former occasions: We put off from day to day, and we die in a dream, as we had lived in a dream.

In travelling through life, we forget that

we

SERM. we must soon die; and that, as we die, our  
 XIX. condition is to be fixed for ever. The slug-  
 gard never turns his eyes this way, unless he  
 be forced by sickness, pain, or misfortunes.  
 When he is in health, he has no more concern  
 about death, than if he believed the soul to be  
 annihilated the moment the breath shall leave  
 the body. We have warning every day, yet  
 we do not act more wisely. We hear of men  
 falling in battle, or sinking in a storm. Great  
 cities are destroyed by fire, laid waste by fa-  
 mine and pestilence, or swallowed by an earth-  
 quake. Men fall by accident, by intempe-  
 rance, by disease, by heart-break, and by  
 the shedder of blood, by their own folly, by  
 the neglect, or too great care of their friends:  
 A hundred paths lead to the habitation of  
 death. We see these paths always crowded,  
 but we never apply these reflections to our  
 own cases. We see the king of terrors sharp-  
 ening his scythe, and mowing down thou-  
 sands, yet we sleep as soundly as if the danger  
 did not concern us. Though the distress of  
 our own house, or of our neighbours, may  
 convince us, that we have no continued abode  
 in the land of our pilgrimage, and that we  
 soon are to go to our fathers, yet indolence  
 prevents

prevents us from thinking of this change. SERM.  
Our foot has no sooner left the house of mourn- XIX.  
ing than our old thoughtlessness returns. We   
even look as carelessly at dead bodies, as if  
they were lumps of common earth, and as if  
our bodies were never to be in the same situa-  
tion. When, with so little feeling, we tread  
upon the graves of our deceased friends, it  
does not enter our minds, that perhaps, the  
next year, we shall be laid by their side, and  
be as little minded as they are this year. “O  
“ that they were wise, that they understood  
“ this, that they would consider their latter  
“ end!”

We see many mournful sighs; we see them  
to little purpose; or, if we receive a temporary  
impression, it only continues while grief is  
fresh, perhaps it does not continue for half  
an hour: Sloth erases from our hearts the cha-  
racters that are written on them by the death  
of a friend. Grief half opens our eyes, we  
look up for a little, close our eyes a second  
time, and our sleep is heavier than the first.  
We take no warning from a hundred exam-  
ples, and when our carelessness is at the height,  
death comes, and we either die in our sins, or  
want to repent when it is too late, and when  
sloth has bound us with triple chains.

This

SERM.

XIX.



This is the indolence which closes the gates of heaven, and opens the door of the bottomless pit. This slackness in religion attends men to the last; and is not to be remedied. The disease has continued so long, and has taken so deep root, that it cannot be cured. Therefore, the medicines they use are not such as remove the disease, but such as stupify the senses. The heart is faint, there is rottenness in the bones, their plot is to become insensible. Sloth mixes the poison, she makes us swallow the potion, our breast heaves, our eye stares, darkness covers our face; sighs, and groans, and convulsions, seize us.

The negligent have contracted great debts, without being able to pay them. Difficulties press on every side, angry creditors disturb their rest; they come from the north, and from the south; every noise frightens them, every voice alarms them; they have recourse to drunkenness, in order to banish care. If the negligent sinner has a sober hour, he has the melancholy of low spirits, and must return to sottishness again. He procures a temporary relief, but it is at the expence of parting with his reason. But, instead of this, he ought to have banished sleep, and bestowed

more

more pains than others do. This leads me to  
give, SERM.  
XIX.  
~~~~~

II. SOME ADDITIONAL REASONS for avoiding SLOTH.

Allow me to observe, that a life of action is agreeable to our nature; and that every thing, from the cradle to the grave, encourages us to it. These hands were designed for labour, these feet for motion; we see distant things with these eyes, that we may change our place. Creeping things seem to be the only living creatures designed, by providence, for a life of sloth. One creature is endued with speed; as he is weak, he uses the gift of nature in order to make his escape from danger: Another is strong; with great activity he scours the forest for his prey: "He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture."

Man has greater reason for activity, as he has powers which are peculiar to himself. He perceives the beauty of holiness, and the deformity of sin; that he may labour to acquire the one, and to avoid the other. Having memory and judgement, a sense of right and wrong,

SERM. wrong, with expectations beyond the grave,  
 XIX. and a natural impresson of providence; it  
 ~~~~~ becomes us to be busy in promoting the end  
 of our creation. To maintain the harmony  
 of God's works, we ought to be vigorous,  
 foreseeing, and diligent. Why should man  
 loll at his ease, while other creatures traverse  
 the mountains, or plunge into the flood? The  
 wild beasts form dens for themselves, the tame  
 cattle enter the folds. "The ox knoweth his  
 " owner, and the ass his master's crib." "Go  
 " to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways,  
 " and be wise: which having no guide, over-  
 " seer or ruler, provideth her meat in the sum-  
 " mer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

Is man to be the only inactive creature? Is  
 he to sleep for ever? or to mispend those hours  
 which ought to have been employed in doing  
 good? What is the use of reason, if we do not  
 cultivate it? What of conscience, if we do not  
 attend to its checks, and admonitions? Are  
 all our powers to be idle, to contract rust?  
 Or are they to be employed in gratifying the  
 appetites of the body? We are not to be indo-  
 lent, but busy in working the work of God,  
 " while the evil days come not, nor the years  
 " draw nigh, when they shall say, I have no  
 " pleasure in them."

Industry

Industry was necessary for man, even, when he was in the state of innocence. “The Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.” After the fall, it was necessary for the support of his mortal body; agreeably to the injunction given to Adam and his posterity: “In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” From that day nothing desirable is given us without labour, and, by avoiding labour, we ensure distress.

If we are not obliged to earn our own subsistence, we are under a necessity of using bodily exercise; for many deadly diseases spring from sloth. Of the rich and luxurious, ten suffer by indolence, for one that is cut off by the sword of the enemy. Their bodies breed gross humours, they swell without increase of strength, they are puffed up without additional vigour, they are a burden to themselves, and the ease they enjoy is the executioner by whom death strikes the fatal blow. The ox is put into the stall, that he might be fattened for slaughter. And, if we ruin our health, we ruin our circumstances, for poverty is the follower of sloth: “He also that is slothful in

SERM. "his work, is brother to him that is a great  
 XIX. "waster."

~~~~~  
 We have much more reason for industry in the affairs of another life, than in those of this, as a greater prize is proposed. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." Industry in our worldly calling makes the fields fertile, adorns the city, covers the sea with ships, connects the man in the east with the man in the west: "She bringeth her load from afar; she seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." Industry in spiritual things makes the church of God rejoice, and lays up a treasure in heaven; and we are made to abound in every thing that adorns a Christian. But what virtue can a sluggard acquire? what vice can he avoid? The road is too rugged, the mountain too steep for one who is out of breath with fatigue for a few minutes. His resolutions are entered into without thought, and broken without uneasiness. He engages suddenly, and forgets his engagements as suddenly. His virtue only stands, when nobody has been at the pains to corrupt it. But, if we want to  
 avoid

avoid misery, we must guard against sloth, SERM.  
for the following reasons. XIX.

I. We must avoid it, if we wish not to fall a prey to temptations.

Temptations are not wanting to men of every disposition. The very best meet so many and so strong ones, that it is a painful thing to withstand them. The most industrious of the servants of God often must encounter them, and their temptations are of peculiar malignancy; they croud, in bands, about a slack and careless sinner. The inconsiderate walk blind-folded among burning ploughshares. Who can escape safe from this severe ordeal?

Even the want of worldly employment opens a passage for legions of temptations. The great field of wickedness lies where there are crowds of lazy creatures, whose only employment is to eat and drink, and to pass away their time in mirth. Where there is industry, they have no leisure for being great proficients in vice, at least not for refining upon it. Business employs all the ingenuity of the labourer, and of the artist: He has not an opportunity of painting, in high taste, the face of wickedness; of giving her ensnaring looks,  
alluring

SERM. alluring words, and an engaging address. By  
 XIX. being active, though it be only in worldly  
 things, temptations come and go with less hazard; or, if they approach, it is mostly in the intervals of labour.

The perfection of vice is acquired, where they have leisure for dressing her in a stile of elegance, and magnificence; where they can instruct her in all the motions of refined luxury. She appears to such advantage, that it is the pride of the soul of man to boast of her acquaintance. She is decked in purple from Tyre, in fine linen from Egypt, in gold from Ophir, and she breathes perfumes from Arabia. Her form is delightful to the eye, her voice charms the ear. These refined sinners leave the great road of worthlessness to artists and clowns, in order to find something which shews taste, elegance, genius, and contrivance. They vary temptations, and are at as great pains to be corrupted, as might have served them to have been men of exemplary goodness. Instead of flying from temptations, they run to meet them; instead of combating them, they open their arms to receive them; and are much disappointed, if the first solicitation to wickedness is not made to them;

and

and think it a reproach, if any person be thought to exceed them in vice. Modesty is banished, and a hardened manner of doing the worst things is reckoned a sign of superior education. Indolence makes them the prey of every temptation, they give way to every bad example.

SERM.  
XIX.

The mind of man is active in itself; and if we do not find employment for it in doing good, it finds it for itself in doing evil. When our hearts are open to every temptation; when we lie at the mercy of every deceiver; when wickedness has beauty and engaging manners, can we wonder at the fall of a thoughtless, slack, yielding, irresolute sinner? It would be a wonder if he did not yield to the charms of such ensnaring companions.

The whole world is full of temptations. We meet them in the smile of a friend, or in the frown of an enemy. We meet them when we are poor, and when we are rich. If we never knew want, we become proud and overbearing; if we have felt many straits, we may strive to mend our fortune by fraud. Temptations are in the crowd, and in solitude: they visit us when we are well, and when we are sick. There is a snare in our house, there is

SERM. one round our table. Warm passions rule  
 XIX. the young, cold selfishness rules the old. The  
 former is tempted by the heat of a keen temper, the latter by the sly designs of interest. What man, what company, what place, is without temptations? Temptations reach from the one end of the earth to the other; they cover the land, cover the sea, cover the city, and the wilderness. They are in our own country; and if we cross the globe, we shall have as many, and as powerful ones, as we had at home.

They take different shapes, and a different manner of enticement, according to the particular bias of our tempers, and the circumstances of things. They allure us with pleasure, they bribe us with profit; they amuse our fancy, or deceive our heart; they multiply difficulties to frighten us, they lessen them to make us secure. Loose companions corrupt our morals, ungodly ones turn us from God. We learn fraud from the deceiver, and infidelity from the freethinker. How many arts, how many allurements have temptations? how many faces? How many ways of seduction do they point out to the indolent? In these circumstances a man must fall who does  
 nothing

nothing for himself. Where are we to be out of this hazard? The traps are placed thick, the careless man cannot move a foot without treading on some of them. They are so many, so powerful, that the danger is great even to faithful servants of the Lord. They come out of great tribulation; they work out their salvation with fear and trembling; they are saved as by fire. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" How is the drowsy creature to obtain the victory, which costs the most resolute soldier watching, toil, and loss of blood? Less difficulties than these, take courage from his heart, and strength from his hand. His colour changes at the sight of danger, his joints tremble, and a shadow of a temptation makes him turn his back: "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." How ill fitted is he for encountering so many difficulties? How shall he master the allurements of evil communication? There is no strength or resolution in him for such a trial. It is to the devout worshipper that the advice is given to guard against every solicitation of every sort of temptation. The devout worshipper can

SERM.  
XIX.

subscribe

SERM. subscribe to the counsel of the wise man;  
 XIX. “ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou  
 “ not.” “ My son, walk not thou in the way  
 “ with them: Refrain thy foot from their  
 “ path.” Vice may be countenanced by men  
 of great name, whose example we are proud  
 to follow: Christianity may be the subject of  
 their sneers, and the slothful cannot put him-  
 self to the trouble of withstanding their at-  
 tacks.

The wavering lazy creature is carried away  
 by these temptations which assault him when  
 he is least able to resist them. Any original  
 principles he had, are undermined, or drawn  
 from their post by force. This happens to  
 young men in particular. If they slacken their  
 natural activity, they must fall before so many  
 and so strong temptations. They have more  
 fancy than judgement; they have little pru-  
 dence, experience, or suspicion, and, on that  
 account, are easily beguiled. If others fly  
 from sloth, the young man must fly with  
 greater speed. He must not look behind him,  
 or wait to take his “stuff out of the fire;” by  
 throwing back a wistful look, he shews that  
 he wishes to reside in the midst of corruption,  
 and, rather than part with his old companions,  
 he

he turns back, and throws himself into the fire. The coldness of an old man may preserve him for some time, though he make no great exertion: but, if a young man hesitates, there is no saving him from ruin. A young man must be alert in avoiding temptations, for the trial is too great when he shall come to be actually engaged. A man cannot safely play with an asp, or with a lioness bereaved of her young: He avoids to encounter the rage of a madman. A young man must, with equal care, shun temptations, which are poisonous as a serpent, raging as a wild beast, and unmanageable as a madman.

And, though temptations are the most dangerous in youth, yet, in every age, we experience their power. Neither young nor old should be unprepared, lest they should come to be entangled in the snare of wickedness. We have to exert our own strength, and we must do what we can to prevent other men from going astray. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The Lord saw, so clearly, the hazard to which men are exposed from the prevalency of temptations, that, upon every occasion,

SERM. caſion, he, with earneſtneſs, warns us againſt  
XIX. them. This advice was ſo near his heart, that  
he repeats it often, and puts it in many different views. At one time, he enjoins his diſciples: “ Watch, and pray, leſt ye enter into  
“ temptation.” At another: “ What I ſay  
“ unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch.” Exer-  
ciſe the vigour of your mind, and the power  
of your conſcience, to beat back the enemy ;  
otherwiſe, you muſt be totally routed ; and,  
it is with the greateſt difficulty, that ever  
you can make a ſtand, after your defeat.  
On this account, we ought to be diligent in  
every part of duty, and not be ſlothful at  
any time, leaſt temptations ſhould come at an  
hour they are not looked for, and we ſhould  
fall a ſacrifice to our own raſhneſs, and ill-  
adviſed deſigns.

# S E R M O N XX.

## The FOLLY of SPIRITUAL SLOTH.

---

1 THESS. v. 6.

*Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but, let us watch and be sober.*

**H**AVING represented the danger of spi-  
ritual sloth, from its nature: Having  
also shewn that we ought to avoid it, on ac-  
count of the frequency, and strength of temp-  
tations; we proceed to consider,

2. That the strength of our passions makes these temptations more troublesome, and sloth more to be avoided.

We, before, slightly mentioned the influence passions have on indolent finners. The importance of this part of the subject demands that we should now spend some more time upon it.

SERM.

XX.

In the darknefs of sloth, the paffions act without controul. Wo be to the man who ferves fuch task-mafters; and who is at the mercy of raging beafts of prey! Does any man ferioufly believe, that the curbing them is an employment for the lover of eafe. He knows very little of his own hiftory, and has very little knowledge of the weaknefs of human nature, who thinks that all our paffions may be brought into order, without any manner of trouble.

The fame fort of difcipline does not always anfwer with them; for they wheedle us, at one time, they ufe the word of command, at another. The soothing blandifhments of fluttering paffions cannot eafily be refifted; the fweet voice of the charmer cannot be filenced, without watching, and great refolution. When paffion is only oppofed by sloth, heat by coldnefs, zeal by indifference, vigour by weaknefs, we become as feeble as infants at the breaft. The hands of the ftrong man are bound with a fingle thread, and though the cry fhould be, "The Philiftines are upon thee, Samfon," he cannot move hand or foot; "Though they took him, and put out  
" his

“ his eyes,—and bound him with fetters of  
“ brass, and he did grind in the prison house.”

SERM.

XX.

We must not give sleep to our eyes, or lie down to rest, when such powerful enemies are about us. We must beat them back, or, we may depend upon it, we shall be slaves. We must exercise a severe discipline; for, if we allow our appetites to rebel, or to dispute our orders, downright confusion, and wild uproar must be the consequence, and the mutiny is not to be quelled without loss of blood. If the tumult continue, the master becomes the servant, the servant becomes the master. He is the most tyrannical of masters, the most slavish of servants.

In these circumstances, where shall we find room for sloth. We walk blind-folded on rugged mountains; one rash step may make us fall from a height of many hundred fathoms. Have we not reason for uncovering our eyes, for examining every step, and for our acquitting ourselves like men? The champion does not sleep, while the enemy is awake; he sits on the watch-tower, gives warning when the foe is approaching; puts on his armour, girds on his sword; opens the sally port, charges with vigour, and does not go  
to

SERM. to rest, till he has driven the enemy from the  
 XX. walls. Does sloth willingly bear the fatigue  
 and danger of this war? What will she do  
 when we have appetites to mortify? What,  
 when we have to renounce covetousness, de-  
 ceit, or cunning; resentment, envy, or pride?  
 Will sloth either fight this battle, or be the  
 mediator of peace? "There is no peace, saith  
 the Lord, unto the wicked." The passions  
 rule the sluggard with a rod of iron, the yoke  
 about his neck is not to be broken by his  
 feeble attempts. The apostle was sensible of  
 the power of our appetites, when he gave this  
 very warm advice: "Dearly beloved, I be-  
 seech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain  
 from fleshly lusts which war against the  
 soul." This is a dangerous warfare, it is  
 exposed to many hardships, to which the in-  
 dolent sinner is not equal.

The slothful lays himself out for ease, but  
 his appetites allow him no ease or satisfaction.  
 He has dispeace in every place; he has it day  
 and night. He eats the bread of sorrow, and  
 drinks the water of affliction. If industry be  
 asleep, the worst passions are awake. In gra-  
 tifying them we look for happiness, but, alas!  
 she never comes into our view. Hunger and  
 disease

disease are the attendants upon indolence. SERM.  
The sons and daughters of that man are in a XX.  
state of wretchedness. The man of evil de-  
sign, preys upon the heedless, as long as he  
can make any advantage of him; but, upon  
the appearance of poverty, he departs without  
taking leave.

Spiritual sloth also promises her servants ease, peace, and pleasure; but peace, and ease, never enter her gates. She is tossed back and forward at the will of impetuous passions. If they bid her move, she is in motion; if they bid her stop, she stops; if they bid her put her finger in the fire, she bears burning; if the lash be put to her back, she bears scourging. She deserts her post, that she may not labour in the field, and, for this, she is obliged to drudge in the mines, and to breathe a tainted air under ground. Strong passions on the one hand, and an offended conscience on the other, make a slothful man to be miserable above others. To prevent this dreadful calamity, we must banish all inattention, and exert ourselves at all times, against all passions and temptations, otherwise, we neither shall have happiness in this life, nor in the next.

SERM. 3. We have to consider, that bad habits are  
 XX. formed on sloth; and, if we cannot withstand  
 the first attack of sin; how shall we do it,  
 when, by long indulgence, it has become a  
 second nature?

We are not formed in a day, for virtue, or vice. It requires time to be a proficient in either. Neither good nor evil is uniformly practised upon a slight acquaintance: A thyness continues for a time: Vice intrudes upon virtue; virtue intrudes upon vice. For years, the young practitioner breaks off to this side, or to that. In time, however, the character is determined; vice becomes familiar to the habitual sinner; virtue to the habitually holy man. The fearful youth, who is disturbed at small transgressions, at length commits crimes, without blushing, or hesitation.

Nothing tends so much to the establishing these bad habits as a lazy humour, which makes a man yield to evil, rather than be at the pains of doing good. The seeds of wickedness are sown in an uncultivated soil, they do not require sunshine, but they grow fastest when all men are asleep. By neglect, a small sin becomes a great one, a great sin becomes very great. If a man do a bad thing once,  
 he

he will try it a second, a third, a hundred, a thousand times. The history of mankind does not furnish us with many instances of a man being guilty of one solitary vice, which never has been repeated. Certainly, such instances must be very rare, among listless, languishing, feeble-minded men. The temptations which led to the first transgression, lead easily to the second, and to every following one. In a short time, we yield to the sin that besets us, if we do not, in the first place, banish sloth, and, in the second, if, for the sake of the whole body, we do not cut off a diseased member. A man may live without bread, quench his thirst without water, breathe without air, as easily as an indolent man can guard against habitual wickedness. Carelessness makes the sin that was, at first weak, to be strong, and twisted into his nature. It hath fixed its roots in the heart; the soil is well watered, and the kindly heat of the sun, in a few years, makes a twig to be as the spreading oak, or the cedar of Lebanon. Sloth prepares the soil, sets the weak plant, fences it from injury: Years give it strength: The root of it is in the earth, the top of it towers into the clouds. Who knows to what

SERM. height a bad habit may grow, or imagines the  
 XX. depravity of which the mind of man is capable?  
 A gangrene destroys the body, when nothing has been done to stop its course. The disease spreads from joint to joint, till there is but one mass of putrefaction. It might have been prevented in the beginning, but laziness made food, exercise, and medicines, to be neglected. O wretched man, who hast had a concern in thy own destruction! Thy own hand has sharpened the poinard, which has cut the thread of thy life.

Please, also, to observe that bad habits are never single. One bad habit brings on another, two bring on three; three four; and so without end. Avoid sloth; as, by encouraging one bad habit, it encourages a hundred.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an example or two. An indolent man seldom avoids a habit of impurity. But, do not imagine that you can be impure, without having other vices along with this one. A sensual man freely violates every principle, when it stands in the way of gratifying his passion. He betrays his friend, tells many falsehoods, and breaks many promises. Innocence claims the protection of men; the ruining innocence is  
 the

the happiness of the licentious. The lamb falls before the wolf, the dove before the vulture. A licentious man eyes goodness, in order to destroy it. For this end, he speaks deceitfully, he acts dishonestly, he swears disgracefully. A father becomes a wicked father, a brother, a wicked brother: A judge determines unjustly: A ruler governs tyrannically. Integrity, generosity, honour, are sacrificed to passion: A man becomes profligate without a mixture of goodness.

Give me leave to mention another instance; I might apply the observation to the whole catalogue of sins. Suppose again that covetousness is the darling habit. The love of money will habituate you to violate integrity, friendship, and natural affection: It is connected with lying, false swearing, over-reaching, hard-heartedness, and oppression. The love of money leads to make plunder of every body. Connected with indolence and dissipation, it makes one man to steal, another to commit robbery or forgery. Bad habits are connected together, they all run from one center. A hundred lines are directed to this point: The darling sin is that center. If indolence, then, give rise to a favourite sin, it gives

SERM.

XX.

gives rise to many that are favourites in a second degree. We must resist the beginnings of vice, if we do not wish to be totally and finally abandoned.

We ought to take care in time, before we have acquired a bad habit, many bad habits. If we cannot look sin in the face, when it is young, how can we grapple with it, when it is grown to all its height? If, this day, sloth does not allow us to move a hand, or shed a tear, how can it bear the vexation and labour of subduing so many bad habits, which have been gaining strength from youth to old age?

Among others, sloth itself is a very bad habit, which, by indulgence, becomes inveterate. He who is indolent at present, may be twice as indolent, twenty years after this. What wretchedness is this! our burden becomes every day, heavier, and we are becoming weaker.

When the consequences of sloth are so fatal, when the disease is, every day, more virulent, we have to strive against it, as against the enemy of the hopes of a Christian. If we wish to live and to die happily, let us not be slothful, but diligent, from the beginning to the end of our time.

4. If these things appear upon the principles of reason, they appear also in the word of God. SERM.  
XX.

The whole scriptures are favourable to diligence; and condemn negligence of every kind. In particular, we meet many directions on this subject in the Proverbs of Solomon. That wise king did not think he was allowed to shut himself up in his palace, and to take his information from men who might have been interested to deceive him, but, being persuaded that the chief ruler ought to see with his own eyes, he mixed with his subjects, studied their tempers, and thence formed the most accurate notions of mankind. We can, in no other way, account for the striking representations of human nature, which his writings contain. His piercing eye observed all the wanderings of the heart of man; and we see, that, to nothing he ascribes a greater share of our misfortunes than to indolence. In how many attitudes does the sluggard come before us? Thousands and ten thousands were ruined by sloth; the leader of the people put many a beacon upon this rock. It is true that he has temporal indolence in  
his

SERM. his eye, for the most part, but his observa-  
 XX. tions apply, with greater force, to spiritual,  
 ~~~~~ than to temporal things, as the latter soon  
 must have an end, the effect of the former is  
 to reach beyond the grave.

The other parts of scripture are often in the same style. The prophets, and the apostles, recommend diligence, with peculiar earnestness. In this they are supported, by the example of Christ, who often warned his hearers of the evil of inattention, and insisted upon the duty of watchfulness.

There is a beautiful parable, in which this is represented, with that lovely simplicity which characterises all his compositions of that kind. I mean the parable of the virgins. The foolish virgins made no preparation for receiving the bridegroom, though he was at hand, and was expected every moment. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all "slumbered and slept:" We see the universal power of sloth, the wise slumbered, as well as the unwise. When they heard the cry, that the bridegroom was near, the foolish virgins were disconcerted. Being amazed at their own folly, and having then no power of putting things to rights, they apply to their companions

panions for help. The wise virgins were not able to assist them, neither had they the inclination of countenancing their indolence. The foolish virgins found their oil spent, the others refused to lend them. Being unfettled in their own minds, they run hastily to those who sold oil, in hopes that they should return in time, or that, from favour, they should be admitted after the due time. Meanwhile, the bridegroom had made his entrance; on their return, they found the door shut, and, when they knocked, a mortifying answer was given them: "He answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." And the application of the parable is in these words: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, when the Son of man cometh." How powerful is this reason! To whom is it not applicable? How short is our appointed time? Are we sure of living another hour? How many, how important duties have we to perform! Short as our life is, we have to prepare ourselves for eternity. Therefore, we ought always to have the day of account before our eyes.

In this spirit, the Psalmist pours out his soul: "Lord make me to know mine end,  
and

SERM. “ and the measure of my days, what it is ;  
 XX. “ that I may know how frail I am. Behold,  
 “ thou hast made my days an handbreath,  
 “ and mine age is nothing before thee: Ve-  
 “ rily, every man, at his best, is altogether  
 “ vanity.” If, indeed, we had to live the  
 term of the patriarchs who inhabited the earth  
 before the flood, and, who were in their vi-  
 gour at the age of five or six hundred years,  
 we might have some excuse for trifling away  
 fifty or sixty years. But, how can we answer  
 for our sloth, when, “ we dwell in houses of  
 “ clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which  
 “ are crushed before the moth.” Indolence  
 does not answer this frail body, nor this fleet-  
 ing state. Indolence turns to folly the clear-  
 est understanding, to wickedness the purest  
 heart. A child will break a bar of rusted  
 steel, which becomes rotten, when it lies ne-  
 glected in a damp place. “ Watch therefore,  
 “ for ye know neither the day, nor the hour,  
 “ when the Son of man cometh.”

We have the same lesson in the parable of  
 the talents. No man is so poor, mean, or un-  
 learned, that he has not to account for some-  
 thing. We have to answer for reason, for a  
 sound imagination, for health, riches, or  
 power.

power. And whether our proportion of these SERM.  
advantages be great or small, we must be XX.  
judged by it. When an account was taken  
of these servants, he was rewarded, who, with  
five talents had gained other five: “The Lord  
“ said unto him, Well done, thou good and  
“ faithful servant; thou hast been faithful  
“ over a few things, I will make thee ruler o-  
“ ver many things: Enter thou into the joy  
“ of thy Lord.” How happy was this found  
to that servant? But a heavy charge is brought  
against that servant who had hid his talent in  
the earth. “His Lord answered and said unto  
“ him, Thou knewest that I reap where I  
“ sowed not, and gather where I had not  
“ strawed; thou oughtest, therefore, to have  
“ put my money to the exchangers, and then,  
“ at my coming I should have received mine  
“ own with usury.—Cast ye the unprofitable  
“ servant into utter darkness; there shall be  
“ weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

All the scriptures represent the danger of  
sloth. The diligence of the patriarchs is re-  
commended to the imitation of the Hebrews,  
in these words: “And we desire that every  
“ one of you do shew the same diligence to  
“ the full assurance of hope, unto the end:

SERM. " That ye be not slothful, but followers of  
 XX. " them, who, through faith and patience, in-  
 " inherit the promises." This was a noble  
 motive to the Hebrews, as they respected their  
 forefathers, with a peculiar earnestness and  
 veneration. They are encouraged to atten-  
 tion, from the behaviour of these celebrated  
 men, who had been the pillars upon which  
 the temple of the Lord had been built.

How lively a description of himself does  
 the apostle Paul give, in the epistle to the Phi-  
 lippians? " Not as though I had already at-  
 " tained, either were already perfect, but I fol-  
 " low after, if that I may apprehend that,  
 " for which also I am apprehended: but this  
 " one thing I do, forgetting those things that  
 " are behind, and reaching forth to these things  
 " which are before, I press toward the mark,  
 " for the prize of the high calling of God in  
 " Christ Jesus." Though he was one of the  
 first of the apostles, he thought his former at-  
 tainments were as nothing, in comparison  
 with those which he was obliged to acquire.  
 The runner must not give way to sloth; he  
 must not give rest to the sole of his foot, till  
 he has gained the prize in the Christian race.

After the example of this faithful servant,

we are always to be advancing in faith, repentance, and charity. This day we must be better than we were yesterday; to-morrow, than we are this day; and we must be improving to the hour of our death. We have to confirm our old virtues, we have to acquire new ones. Prejudices must be removed; errors corrected; and bad dispositions must be amended. Neither our devotion, our integrity, nor our temperance is perfect. We make many false steps in a long journey. Why should we be slothful in any part of it. Let us follow the old worthies. Above all, "let this mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus." He went about doing good: The day he passed in working miracles, and converting sinners; and he spent the night in prayer. We see him in every corner of the land, and with men of every rank. With the example of Jesus Christ in our eye, can we allow ourselves to sleep as do others?

The mention of the Lord brings again before us the apostle Paul, that distinguished servant. How many difficulties did this man bear in execution of his Master's commission? What view of his activity do the Acts of the apostles present? In how many cities did he preach

SERM. preach the gospel? How much did he suffer?  
 XX. Among how many nations did he sojourn? In  
 how many hazards was he by sea and land;  
 among barbarous and bloody tribes of men?  
 His own account is in these words: "I am  
 debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Bar-  
 barians, both to the wife, and to the un-  
 wife. To as much as in me is, I am ready  
 to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome  
 also." In another place, he informs us of  
 his persevering care, his attention, and his  
 zeal for the interest of men of every nation:  
 "From Jerusalem, and round about unto  
 Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel  
 of Christ." How many cruel nations, how  
 many rugged mountains, and boisterous seas,  
 were in that tract?

From these precepts and examples we learn  
 to banish carelessness, and to have the con-  
 stancy that characterizes the faithful disciples  
 of Jesus Christ. Let your lives do credit to  
 these principles. "Be not slothful in business;  
 but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

5. The precious opportunities which the  
 gospel affords, make indolence inexcusable.

Let us take a view of these advantages.  
 "When we were yet without strength, in  
 due

“ due time, Christ died for the ungodly.” SERM.  
Our sins are pardoned, our nature is sancti- XX.  
fied, we are adopted into the family of God. 

“ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our  
“ spirit that we are the children of God.  
“ And, if children, then heirs, heirs of God,  
“ and joint heirs with Christ.” We have  
peace of conscience, peace in sickness, and at  
death; and happiness after death. Who can  
be idle, with such reasons for activity? “ De-  
“ spisest thou the riches of his goodness, and  
“ forbearance, and long suffering, not know-  
“ ing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to  
“ repentance?” “ In this the merciful day of  
“ our visitation, we should remember the  
“ things belonging to our peace, before they  
“ are hid from our eyes.” If we despise his  
mercy, we must feel the weight of his dis-  
pleasure. “ How shall we escape, if we ne-  
“ glect so great salvation.”

We live in a Christian country; we read  
the word of God, and hear it explained. Our  
care must be doubled, as we have to answer  
for the use we make of these advantages. In  
the land of our pilgrimage we have no halting  
places, no time for sleep. What profit can  
we reap from our carelessness. The waste  
field

SERM. field doth not produce corn, wine, nor oil?

XX.

It produces nettles that cumber the ground, and thorns that are fit for burning: "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy one for a flame; and it shall devour his thorns and briers in one day." What is profitable is to be preserved, what is unprofitable must be destroyed. "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Ought not these considerations to prevent us from falling asleep, when we see that it is to be the sleep of death?

God endures our sloth for a time, but we know not how long he may exercise patience. If we abuse his mercy, what can we plead for ourselves? There is a passage in Isaiah, where the danger of sloth is represented with that strength which distinguishes the eloquence of that prophet. There is a magnificence in this passage that obliges me to transcribe it, though it be long; a magnificence of thought conveyed in the most simple language. "Now will I sing to my well beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.

“ hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out  
“ the stones thereof, and planted it with the  
“ choicest vines, and built a tower in the  
“ midst of it, and also made a wine-press  
“ therein: And he looked that it should bring  
“ forth grapes, and it brought forth wild  
“ grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jeru-  
“ salem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray  
“ you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What  
“ could have been done more to my vineyard,  
“ that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when  
“ I looked that it should bring forth grapes,  
“ brought it forth wild grapes? And now,  
“ go to, I will tell you what I will do to my  
“ vineyard; I will take away the hedge there-  
“ of, and it shall be eaten up; and break  
“ down the wall thereof, and it shall be trod-  
“ den down. And I will lay it waste: It shall  
“ not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall  
“ come up briars and thorns: I will also com-  
“ mand the clouds that they rain no rain  
“ upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of  
“ hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of  
“ Judah his pleasant plant: And he looked for  
“ judgement, and, behold, oppression; for  
“ righteousness, but, behold, a cry.”

This noble description points at the destruc-  
tion

SERM.  
XX.  
~

SERM. tion of those who neglect the forbearance of  
 XX. God; and applies to us more properly, than it  
 did to the Jewish church. The city, or the  
 land, where the gospel has been preached and  
 refused, deserve wrath above every other place.  
 “ Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more to-  
 “ lerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of  
 “ judgment, than for that city.”

Having finished the first and second branches  
 of discourse, we proceed,

III. To give DIRECTIONS for avoiding  
 Sloth.

Sloth is so enticing that we all yield to her. It is pleasant to be in the shade, to stretch our bodies by the brooks of water, to hear the singing of birds, and to be lulled asleep by the murmuring of the stream. We must therefore use every precaution, lest we be entangled by indolence. For this end, allow me to give the following directions.

I. Let us observe a certain order, in regard to the duties of life.

The man of sloth keeps no account of his income, and expence, nor has he any desire of making the charges of the year answer its revenues.

revenues. Though he hath not a second shil-SERM.  
ling, he parts with the one he has for the first XX.  
trifle that pleases his fancy. He wades thro'   
his business; and throws himself, where he  
cannot find a bottom. He will not labour, as  
long as any of his patrimony remains, or as  
long as he can find credit. He will not la-  
bour nor hasten his steps, though poverty  
should overtake him. And, as it requires  
exertion to put his affairs in order, he never  
begins the disagreeable task.

Industry chooses to work in the light; in-  
dolence to be in the dark. Industry loves  
order; indolence courts confusion. By order,  
a man discovers whether he be richer or poor-  
er; and, if he has fallen behind, his first aim is  
to retrench his expences, the next is to reco-  
ver himself by method. Sloth increases confu-  
sion, and confusion sloth. The dreamer must be  
confused; the beginning of his project has no  
connection with the middle, nor the middle  
with the end. Vain images float in the brain,  
and incoherent circumstances crowd one a-  
bove another.

This rule also holds in matters of religion  
and morals. Regularity makes the duties  
pleasant, which indolence would have made

SERM. irksome. Though, at first, we have had little inclination for devotion, we shall acquire a taste for it, by our regularity in setting about it. Though we be cold when we begin, in the course of a few months, we shall become fervent. The method that answers in the affairs of time, will answer in those of eternity. If we assign to any thing a certain portion of our time, we soon may become great proficient. If we set apart a share of our substance for charity, we will soon be charitable, though we had not a great stock of it at first. A desire for righteousness is formed by custom; \*as an appetite for food returns at the regular time of eating. In this way, sloth is banished; faith, integrity, and sobriety will be formed into a habit. As far as it may be possible, let a time be fixed for bodily labour, a time for business, a time for prayer; and let not one thing break in upon another, otherwise confusion, embarrassment, and unfinished projects must be the consequence.

When I speak of regularity, I do not mean formality. I only mean, that we should, from day to day, set about our duty, and that we should do it from the heart: By formality, that

that we do every thing that is customary, without the heart having any concern in it. The Pharisees were the patterns of absolute formality, the apostles of decency and regularity. The former, by being busy about many small things, were slothful about the great things of the law; the latter, by not valuing themselves upon small things, were very diligent in regard to the one thing needfull.

SERM.  
XX.  
~

2. For this end, let us only do one thing at once, and have that finished before we proceed to another.

By running from one unfinished project to another, a man appears to be much employed, while he is only very idle. A poor wavering creature appears to be in a hurry all the year, without his being, in the least, advanced in his Christian course. When he prays, the world interferes; when he is thinking of charity, he is interrupted by a stranger; and he leaves the widow in her affliction, and the diseased in violent sickness, in order to laugh at a story of humour, or at an incident of surprize. The wearying of a thing before it has been brought to maturity; then leaving the new thing, and returning to the old; the  
being

SERM. being hot, and cold, and lukewarm, in one

XX. day's time, constitutes the dexterity of sloth.

To avoid this fault, this childish fault, let us hold fast by one thing, till we have become masters of it. In this way, we shall make a great progress in religion. We shall have less disturbance than the indolent, and all the success which arises from diligence.

3. Let us think often of the consequences of neglect. If we refuse to watch while the enemy is battering the walls, or breaking open the gates, our sleep will be succeeded by captivity or death. Though you should not do your duty for the sake of honour, and the love of your country, your own safety ought to keep you awake; to give firmness to your joints, and vigour to your stroke. An hour spent idly brings a day of sorrow; and, if we be negligent, what trouble shall we have, if ever we repent? An indolent sinner must be a heavy-hearted penitent. Consider that it is easier being careful when you are young, than it can be, when you shall have become old. Consider also the death of the negligent and inattentive. When he is about to leave the world, what would he give to have acted in another manner? What, to regain the oppor-

tunities

tunities he has slighted? His life has been thoughtless; his death must be miserable; as there is no redeeming a lost soul. When the slothful shall awaken in another world, he must raise his eyes in torment.

Let this danger recur often to our minds, and let us be made careful by attending to the future consequences of our conduct. “Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for, if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

F I N I S.

SERM.  
XX.  
~~~~~













