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# SERMONS

BY THE

*REV. THOMAS GISBORNE, M. A.*

VOL. I.

1805. —

S E R M O N S

*Saml. Miller.*

BY THE

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REV. THOMAS GISBORNE, M. A.

VOL. I.

THIRD EDITION.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

*LEWIS BAGOT, D.D.*

LORD BISHOP OF SAINT ASAPH.

MY LORD,

**T**HE honor which you have been pleased to confer on a former publication of mine (*a*), by causing a very large portion of it to be edited in the Welch language; and the manner in which you were so good as to apply to me, at that time personally a stranger to your Lordship, for my assent to the plan, and to speak of those parts of the book, the translation of which was not required by your immediate purpose; have rendered it my duty to embrace any opportunity which might occur of publicly testifying my gratitude.

(*a*) A Familiar Survey of the Christian Religion, &c.

I avail myself of the present occasion with cordial pleasure. Allow me to say that, independently of all private considerations, the proof which your Lordship's conduct afforded of vigilant sollicitude to adopt any measure which, in your opinion, should seem likely to be subservient to the eternal interests of the inhabitants of the diocese consigned to your superintendance, excited in my mind very lively emotions of satisfaction. May the grace of God attend and prosper your pious exertions !

It may be right to add some few words respecting the Volume now inscribed to your Lordship. Different writers of Sermons, all aiming at the same ultimate object, pursue it, according to their respective views, judgements, habits of study, and other circumstances, in different ways. The vineyard of God will employ and remunerate labourers of various descriptions. My present efforts, as an humble workman in that vineyard, have been principally directed to two

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points :

points: the elucidation of some fundamental doctrines of our faith; and the inculcation of a practical truth of the highest moment, yet a truth which too often, if we may judge by the language in common use among men when speaking either concerning themselves or others, is fatally undiscerned or disregarded, that nothing short of an avowed and unreserved surrender of the *whole* heart to God through Christ, evinced, under the blessing of divine grace, by a zealous and habitual pursuit of universal holiness, is Religion.

Many persons appear to imagine that, when once the researches of an individual into the Christian Revelation have satisfied him as to its sacred authority, the remainder of his religious course lies plain and easy before him. They perceive not that he has ascended but the first and the least laborious acclivity of the mountain. Surely it requires but a small degree of insight into human nature and the Scriptures to discover with how much greater

A 4

facility

facility the understanding is convinced of speculative truth, than the heart is subdued to a productive faith and a practical love of holiness. I shall rejoice if any part of the following pages should be rendered instrumental in dissipating the pernicious delusion which I have mentioned.

I am, with sincere respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's obliged

and affectionate Servant,

THOMAS GISBORNE.

Yoxall Lodge,  
April 20, 1862.



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tinue there a Year, and buy and sell, and  
get Gain." Whereas ye know not what shall  
be on the Morrow. For what is your Life?*

It

*It is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say; "If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that." But now ye rejoice in your Boastings: all such Rejoicing is Evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to him it is Sin.* - - - Page 318

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## SERMON I.

JESUS CHRIST the Corner-Stone.

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I PETER, ii. 6.

*Behold! I lay in Sion a chief Corner-Stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.*

**T**O the attentive reader the holy Scriptures continually offer new subjects of admiration and gratitude. Among other circumstances which will excite his wonder and thankfulness, he will notice the accommodating condescension of God to the dulness of human understanding, in setting before men under so copious a variety of appropriate and familiar figures the nature and plan of Redemption through Christ. The sower sowing his seed; the good shepherd giving his life for the sheep; the vine nourishing its branches; the king making a marriage for his son; the householder superintending his vineyard; the fa-

ther receiving the repentant prodigal; the master settling accounts with his servants; the wheat-field overspread with tares; the net cast into the sea, and gathering fishes of every kind: these are among the images, by which the office of the Son of God, and his dealings with man, are represented and rendered clear to our apprehensions. In the passage now before us the apostle alludes to our Saviour under the description of a massy corner-stone placed in the foundation of a building, that it may unite and bind together the principal walls, and may thus ensure the firmness and the durability of the structure. Christ is displayed to us as the chief corner-stone, of chosen strength, of inestimable value, fixed by the hand of God himself, and capable of sustaining for ever and ever the fabric of the universal church. Under this image Christ was originally portrayed by David and Isaiah. *The Stone which the builders refused, the same is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes (a). Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth on him shall not make haste (b); shall not be hurried into dismay, shall not be confounded.* To these words of Isaiah

(a) Psalm cxviii. 22, 23.

(b) Isaiah, xxviii. 16.

St. Peter refers. To them St. Paul also refers in his epistles to the Romans, and to the Ephesians (*c*). In several passages in the New Testament the expressions of David are likewise recited and applied to Christ (*d*). I propose, therefore, in the first place, to point out some of the particulars with respect to which we are to regard Jesus Christ as the great corner-stone. And I shall endeavour afterwards to illustrate the animating declaration of St. Peter; that he who believeth on Christ shall not be confounded: and the tremendous warning which it involves, that they who refuse to believe on Christ shall be confounded for ever.

I. 1. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone of religious doctrine. He is the sole foundation, the author and finisher (*e*) of our faith. He came from the Father: he is one with the Father: and he knoweth the will of the Father. He was in the beginning with God, and was God: and he knew the incomprehensible nature and the unchangeable attributes of the Godhead. He knew the perfect holiness necessary to obtain acceptance from a God of holiness. He knew the inherent heinousness

(*c*) Romans, ix. 33. x. 11. Ephesians, ii. 20. (*d*) Matt. xxi. 42. Acts, iv. 11. (*e*) 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. Heb. xii. 2.

of sin; the extreme guilt of every deviation from the divine law, of every instance of rebellion against God. He knew how great must be the sacrifice, for he offered himself to be made that sacrifice, by which the pardon of sin, and the restoration of the divine favour, should be procured. He knew by what price, for that price he undertook to pay, the continual grace of the Holy Spirit, by which alone the sinner could be enabled to repent, to believe, to become holy, and to persevere in holiness, must be purchased. He was the Son of the God of truth: he was Truth himself: and he came into the world to bear witness to the truth. By his personal ministry, and by the ministry of his apostles, he revealed to the fallen children of men the things which belonged to their peace. By his Spirit he instructed and empowered the sacred writers of the New Testament to spread to the most distant regions, to deliver down to the latest generations, the words of eternal life. Well therefore may St. Paul affirm that *all Scripture is profitable for doctrine* (f). Well may St. John pronounce; *Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine; receive*

(f) : Tim. iii. 16.

*him not into your house, neither bid him God speed : for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds (g).* Learn then your faith from the mouth of your Saviour, and of his inspired apostles and evangelists. Look to your Bible. Fix your foot on that rock. Apply to yourself the admonitions of St. Paul : *Be stedfast in the unity of the faith. Be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine : but speaking the truth in love, grow up unto Him in all things who is the head, even Christ. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines : for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. Remember them which have spoken unto you the word of God : whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever (h).* Recollect the prophetic warning of the same apostle. *The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (i).* That time has long since arrived. The prophecy has already been fulfilled, and is at this day fulfilling, with respect to multitudes. Numbers at this day, while they profess themselves Christians, erect themselves in opposition to the essential doctrines of the Gospel. Sometimes they ex-

(g) 2 John, 9—11. (h) Ephes. iv. 13—15. Heb. xiii. 7—9. (i) 2 Tim. iv. 3.

claim against its mysteries : and presuming to measure by their unassisted reason subjects utterly beyond the grasp of human understanding, plunge into the most extravagant wildnesses of interpretation, rather than bend to the plain and repeated declarations of God concerning the nature of his own Godhead. More frequently they take offence at the humiliating facts which lie at the root of the doctrine of redemption : that man is radically corrupt ; that the law of God is a law of perfect holiness, and requires perfect obedience ; that any breach of that law in any one point, subjects the offender to the penalty of eternal death ; that holiness is in no respect the product of the human heart, but altogether the fruit of the Spirit of God ; and consequently that whoever shall receive remission of punishment, sanctification, and the gift of life eternal, will receive all these blessings solely through the free grace and mercy of God in Christ, and will owe no one of them in the smallest portion or degree to any right or merit of his own. Numbers, instead of humbly acknowledging these truths, which are as consistent with reason as they are decidedly inculcated in the Scriptures, proudly rely on their supposed personal righteousness ; dare to claim forgiveness and salvation as in part at least due to their own excellence and good works ;

works ; and are so far from looking to Christ as the sole ground of hope of deliverance from the wrath to come, and of admission into the kingdom of glory, that they regard his atoning sacrifice merely, if I may venture to apply the term to so awful a subject, as a sort of make-weight, which may compensate for such of their transgressions as their own imaginary righteousness may not have been altogether sufficient to countervail. So blind to their own state, so ignorant of the fundamental principles of Christianity, are many who frequent Christian worship ! May God grant that few or none of you, when you examine your own faith, may find yourselves of this description ! *Meditate then, as the apostle exhorts, upon these things. Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine : continue in them. Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine ; that men be found in faith. If any man consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness ; he is proud, knowing nothing (k).*

2. Christ, in the second place, is the corner-stone of morality. He conferred, in various ways, most eminent glory on the moral law of God. He came to give himself as a sacrifice

(k) 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. Tit. ii. 1, 2. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

for offences committed against that law : and thus established in the face of men and of the universe, the excellence of that law ; and evinced the heinousness of sin, for which no inferior atonement could suffice. In explaining that law, he shewed by his sermon on the mount, as well as by many occasional expositions, its holy and spiritual nature. Far from perverting its operations, like the Pharisees and Scribes ; far from restraining its influence, according to their absurd and pernicious system, to outward and notorious sins, or exhausting its efficacy on the punctilious observance of trifling duties and unauthorised injunctions ; he sanctioned and magnified the whole law : he assigned to its several precepts and commandments the place and preponderance to which they were respectively entitled : and he extended the empire of every one of them to the heart. *Think not, said he, that I am come to destroy the law : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees ! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin ; and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith. These ought ye to have done ; and not to leave the other undone. Who-*  
*soever*



*Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgement. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. Out of the heart proceed the things which defile a man. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (l).* During the whole period of his ministry he afforded a constant example of perfect obedience to the moral law. Every duty which it became him as man to fulfil towards men, he discharged no less punctually than those obligations of which the immediate object was God. He was *holy, undefiled, separate from sinners (m)*. Made like unto his brethren (n) in every point except one; in one point he differed totally and immeasurably from them all: for he was *without sin (o)*. By his example, and for the express purpose of glorifying his name, every moral duty is inculcated and enforced by the apostles: and thus also the moral law is continually receiving additional glory through him. If humility is to be impressed, *Let this mind, saith St. Paul, be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself*

(l) Matt. v. 17, 18. xxiii. 23. v. 22, 28. xv. 18. v. 8.  
1 John, iii. 15. (m) Heb. vii. 26. (n) Heb. ii. 17.  
(o) Heb. iv. 15.

*of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (p). When the same apostle recommends meekness and gentleness; what is his argument? I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (q). When he exhorts to unity and concord, and mutually edifying assistance? Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself: sought not his own ease and satisfaction, but the benefit of others. The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God (r). When he admonishes Christians to brotherly love; to what pattern does he refer us? Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God (s). By what example does he enforce the duty of forgiveness? Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (t). How does he encourage charity to the poor? So labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to*

(p) Philipp. ii. 5-8. (q) 2 Cor. x. 1. (r) Rom. xv. 1-6.

(s) Eph. v. 2.

(t) Col. iii. 13.

*give than to receive (u).* When St. Peter teaches men to be patient under injuries; what model does he propose to them? *If, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not (v).* When the same apostle inculcates universal holiness; to what standard does he direct the thoughts of his followers? *As he, Jesus Christ, which hath called you is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (x).* Is not the same motive urged by St. John? *He that saith, he abideth in Him, namely, in Christ, ought himself also to walk even as He walked (y).* And do not the sacred writers hold up the name of Christ as the great and constant incitement to all holiness? *Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Let God in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity (z).*

If Christ has thus glorified, if he has thus established, in its widest extent, the

(u) Acts, xx. 35. (v) 1 Pet. ii. 20—23. (x) 1 Pet. i. 15.  
(y) 1 John, ii. 6. (z) Col. iii. 17. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

moral law of God, by his life, by his death, by his personal instructions, and by the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of his apostles: how fatally do those unhappy men deceive themselves who discourse of a mitigated law; who imagine that they are in any degree set at liberty through Christ from any one obligation to universal holiness, from any one branch or particle of moral duty. *Show me thy faith by thy works (a)*, if thou hopest to enter into heaven. If the fruits of faith do not habitually appear in thy life; thine is not a faith which will justify thee through Christ. If thy deeds are the deeds of darkness; thou belongest to the kingdom of darkness. If thou indulgest thyself in any known sin; thou art in bondage to the author of sin. Unless with a broken and contrite heart thou fleest unto Jesus, and hast thy fruits through his Spirit unto holiness; thy end shall not be everlasting life.

3. Jesus Christ, in the third place, is the corner-stone of salvation. *Other foundation can no man lay (b)*. *There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved (c)*. Through him we are justified; through him we are sanctified; through him we receive the inheritance of eternal life. In consequence of the sinfulness and disobe-

(a) James, ii. 18. (b) 1 Cor. iii. 11. (c) Acts, iv. 12.

dience of men a covenant of works necessarily terminates in death. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: and by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight (d). The wages of sin, of every sin, is death (e).* Every man reads his own ruin in that tremendous denunciation; *Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (f):* and looks forward with gloomy forebodings to the final sentence on record against all who shall remain under the curse of the law: *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire (g).*

Christ is the mediator of a new and a better covenant established in his own blood. *He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that he might reconcile us to God by the cross (h).* He laid down his life of himself: no man took it from him: but he laid down his life of himself (i); that all that believe in him, and prove their faith by holy obedience, should be clothed with his righteousness, and receive, through the merits of his atonement, pardon and eternal happiness. He rose from the dead, and shewed himself again upon earth, *for our justification (k);* as a

(d) Rom. iii. 20—23. (e) Rom. vi. 23. James, ii. 10, 11.  
(f) Gal. iii. 10. (g) Matt. xxv. 41. (h) Gal. iii. 13.  
(i) John, xv. 18. (k) Rom. iv. 25.

decisive proof that the price which he had paid for human redemption was accepted; that the divine justice was appeased by the sufferings which, as the surety of man, he had sustained; that mercy and reconciliation through him were freely offered to all mankind; that he ever liveth to make intercession for us; that he has the keys of death and the grave, that to him all judgement is committed; that he has all power in earth and heaven. Through him we have access to the Father. He is the way, and the truth, and the life: and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (*l*). Through Him alone we obtain the regenerating sanctification of the Holy Ghost. If we are *born again of water and of the Spirit*; emblematically of water, substantially of the Spirit; and are thus rendered capable of *entering into the kingdom of God* (*m*); that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and is sent forth by Christ from the Father (*n*). *If we are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; that influence of the Holy Ghost *is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour* (*o*). *If we come forth from our graves to the resurrection of life*; it is because Christ

(*l*) Ephes. ii. 18. John, xiv. 6.      (*m*) John, iii. 5.  
 (*n*) Rom. viii. 9. John, xv. 26.      (*o*) Tit. iii. 5, 6.

liveth that we shall live also (*p*). If we are admitted into the mansions of his Father; it is because He is gone before to prepare a place for us (*q*). Well therefore spake the voice of prophecy, when God announced beforehand the future coming of his Son in the flesh; *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation. I will place salvation in Zion for Israel. I will also give thee for a light unto the Gentiles; that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth* (*r*). Well do the sacred writers of the New Testament celebrate the Lord Jesus under the name of a *Horn of salvation, the Captain of our salvation* (*s*). Well might that glorious and countless multitude seen by St. John before the throne of God and of Christ; *a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands*; well might they cry with a loud voice, while the surrounding hosts of angels fell down on their faces and worshipped, *Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb* (*t*). My brethren, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation* (*u*)?

(*p*) John, v. 29. xiv. 19. (*q*) John, xiv. 2. (*r*) Zech. ix. 9. Isaiah, xlvi. 13. xlix. 6. (*s*) Luke, i. 69. Heb. ii. 10. (*t*) Rev. vii. 9—12. (*u*) Heb. ii. 3.

II. 1. Thus then we are to look to Jesus Christ as the corner-stone of our faith, of our practice, of our justification, of our sanctification, of our hopes of pardon and eternal life. He who builds on that corner-stone, builds on a sure rock : he who believes on Christ shall not be confounded.

*Christ, saith the apostle; is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him (w). He is head over all things to his church, which he purchased with his own blood. He has declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Fear not, little flock, said he to his disciples: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (x). Into that universal church he invites all mankind. Go into all the world; and preach the gospel to every creature. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest to your souls. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out (y). For the Scripture saith, as St. Paul subjoins, whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

(w) Heb. vii. 25. (x) Luke, xii. 32. (y) Mark, xvi. 15. Matt. xi. 28, 29. John, vi. 37.



*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (z). Believe then in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (a). Hast thou a true and lively faith in Christ: not a barren and dead faith, influencing only thy understanding; but a genuine and living faith, governing thy heart, and proving its own reality by stedfast holiness of life? Thy faith has already brought thee into the way of salvation. Persevere in the same faith unto death, and thou shalt obtain salvation. For he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved (b). My sheep, saith the Lord Jesus, hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand (c). If, as Noah fled to the ark, thou hast fled for refuge from destruction to thy Saviour; and if thou provest, by hearing his voice and following him, that thou continuest in his sheep-fold: these promises are made unto thee. Christ, the good shepherd, will not permit the powers of darkness to pluck thee from thence by violence: and he will afford thee grace sufficient, if thou wilt seek and employ it aright, to preserve thee from abandoning his fold of thyself. He*

(z) Rom. x. 11—13.

(a) Acts, xvi. 31.

(b) Matt. x. 22.

(c) John, x. 27, 28.

will not suffer thee to be tempted above that which thou art able to sustain ; but with the temptation will also make a way to escape, that thou mayest be able to bear it. He will so overrule the events of thy life, that all things shall work together to thee for good in the end, because thou lovest God and thy Redeemer. When he chastens thee, he will think upon mercy. When distress and anguish are ready to overpower thee ; he will fill thy heart with the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. He will strengthen thee upon the bed of languishing ; he will make all thy bed in thy sickness. When thou walkest through the valley of the shadow of death, thou shalt fear no evil ; for he shall be with thee, his rod and his staff shall comfort thee. When thou standest before his throne of judgement, he will acknowledge thee for his servant. He will interpose his atonement between thee and condemnation. He will cover thy unworthiness with his merits ; he will array thee in his righteousness. He will change thy vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. He will say unto thee, *(Come, thou blessed of my Father ; inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the*  
*the*

*the world (d).* He will cause thee to reign with him for ever and ever.

My brethren, if these are blessings worthy of your pursuit; remember through whom alone they are to be obtained. Remember Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith; Jesus Christ your Legislator and your King; Jesus Christ your propitiatory sacrifice; Jesus Christ the Lord of life, the Giver of salvation. Take your part with him. Consecrate yourselves to his service. Stand forth as his soldiers in the face of an unrighteous world. If you are not with Christ, you are against him. There is no middle path. If you are not his friends; you are the friends of the world, the flesh and the devil. If religion is any thing, it is every thing. If you make religion a secondary concern; you are not religious. If it be not your prevailing desire and study day by day to walk in the faith of Christ, and to manifest your love and fear of God through his Son by humble, watchful, resolute and persevering holiness; you are not religious. Look well then to yourselves; for eternity is at stake.

2. *If the righteous scarcely be saved; if even those persons, whose hearts the Spirit of sanctification has turned unto holiness, mourn unto*

(d) Matt. xxv. 34.

the close of life under the burden of corruptions still unsubdued; and experience, until the moment when they grasp in death their unfading crown of victory, the difficulties and the dangers of their Christian warfare: *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear (e)*! What shall be the doom of the enemies of Christ; of those who refuse to build on that corner-stone which the hand of God has planted for salvation! They shall be confounded for ever. The stone which the builders rejected is become the head-stone of the corner. *Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder (f)*.

Consider, whoever thou art, who art *ungodly and a sinner*! Consider whether this prophetic warning of the destruction which hangs over thine head, and over the heads of all who resemble thee, has not already received in many memorable instances completion so decisive in the present world, as to give thee full assurance that the judgements beyond the tomb, which are revealed as awaiting the impenitent, shall be accomplished to the uttermost. Suppose, in the latter days of the Evangelist St. John, one of his youthful disciples at Ephesus, after hearing a recital of

(e) 1 Pet. iv. 18. (f) Ps. cxviii 22, Matt. xxi 42. 44.

the life and sufferings of Christ, to have enquired of the aged apostle concerning the events which had befallen the most distinguished adversaries of his Lord. "Did Herod, who sought to murder the new-born Saviour at Bethlehem, descend to the grave in peace?" "He died, smitten by the hand of God, in agony and desperation; baffled in his attempt to cut short his miserable existence; worn away by the lingering horrors of a disease unexampled in loathsomeness and anguish (g)." "What vengeance overtook the traitor Judas!" "He perished by his own hand!" "What was the end of that other wretch of the name of Herod, by whom Christ, a short time before his crucifixion, was derided?" "He was stripped by the Roman emperor of his property and of his kingdom, and was driven into perpetual exile (h)." "What befel the iniquitous judge, Pontius Pilate?" "Recalled in disgrace from his government, and condemned to banishment, he took away his own life." "The city of Jerusalem, which nailed its King to the cross; does it survive?" "Not one stone of it is left upon another!" "Where is now the Jewish nation?" "Cut off by unequalled calamities;

(g) Josephi Opera, edit. Hudf. vol. ii. p. 768. 770, &c.

(h) *Ibid.* p. 820. 1067.

or scattered in bondage and infamy over the face of the earth!" Within the span of St. John's life all these examples of divine justice and truth were displayed. What if we continue the enquiry lower? What befel the Roman empire; which first shed the blood of the Master, and then persecuted his followers? It bowed to the standard of the cross; it dishonoured by sin the Christian profession; and was swept away by the deluge of barbarians which the Dragon, "the Old Serpent," is represented in the book of Revelations as having poured forth for the destruction of the Christian church. But were those pagan invaders permitted a long triumph over Christianity? *The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood (i).* Their names are nearly vanished from remembrance; nation after nation speedily worshipped within the pale of the church which it came to destroy; and among their descendents, deeply as the majority of them has been sunk for many ages in the bitter dregs of a corrupted religion, are to be found *peoples and languages* eminent for evangelical purity of faith. What is the present state of those pre-eminent antagonists of Jesus, the votaries of the Papacy and of Mahomet? To the servants of Jesus they are still

(i) Rev. xii. 15, 16.

formidable foes. They have not yet fulfilled the appointed period, to the conclusion of which, conformably to the dictates of Prophecy, they shall have power to afflict the saints of the Most High. But *the stone, which, in the visions of Daniel, was cut out of the mountain without hands, shall assuredly become a great mountain, and shall fill the whole earth (j)*. However tremendous may be the temporary triumphs in reserve for papal Rome; even now we behold her, after the lapse of centuries, staggering under that concussion which was a prelude to her irrecoverable fall. Even already we behold in the waning crescent of Mahomet the tokens of its perpetual extinction. Even already we begin to exclaim, in the rapturous anticipations of assured and exulting hope; “Great and marvellous are thy  
“ works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true  
“ are thy ways, thou King of saints. We  
“ praise thee, we bless thee, we glorify thee;  
“ we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.  
“ Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts!  
“ The whole earth is filled with thy glory!  
“ King of kings, and Lord of lords!  
“ Thou hast taken unto thee thy great  
“ power, and hast reigned. The kingdoms  
“ of this world are become the kingdoms of

(j) Daniel, ii. 34, 35, 45.

“ our Lord and of his Christ ; and He shall  
“ reign for ever and ever (k).”

In the face of these admonitory demonstrations of the truth of the divine threatenings against transgressors, presumest thou to think, O ungodly sinner ! that thou shalt escape the judgement of God ? Knowest thou not that after thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou art treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath ? Flames and vengeance, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil. The stone, at which thou stumblest, shall fall on thee, and grind thee to powder. Mercy has been pressed upon thee, blessings have been heaped upon thee, in vain. The counsels of God for thy salvation thou hast rejected. The blood of thy Redeemer thou hast despised. The Spirit of grace thou hast grieved. The chains of sin are multiplying around thee. The shades of death eternal are closing over thy head. Yet now, even now, it is not too late. Thy Saviour still waiteth to be gracious. He still invites, still encourages, thee to fly to him for pardon and deliverance and peace. To-day, if ever thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart. The present call may be thy last. Arise, and flee for thy life.

(k) Rev. xi. 17. xv. 3. xvi. 7. xix. 16. Isaiah, vi. 3.



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## S E R M O N    I I .

The Christian Method of Justification explained and vindicated.

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ROMANS, iii. 20—22.

*By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight : for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.*

**T**O understand the value of a benefit, we must estimate not only its intrinsic amount, but the amount also of evil which it mitigates or removes. If a distressed man would appreciate the real worth of a donation bestowed upon him ; let him consider the misery from which it rescues his family and himself no less carefully than the positive comforts which it enables him to procure. If

a criminal, restored by the clemency of his sovereign to freedom, would become sensible of the extent of the gift; in computing the enjoyments of liberty, let him not forget the superseded horrors of a dungeon. On the same principle ought every man to form his judgement, who is desirous to contemplate in their full importance the mercies of God in the plan of redemption. Together with the state into which he is raised, let him labour to comprehend that from which he is delivered. With the glories of life everlasting, let him contrast the blackness of eternal death.

It was by this principle that the conduct of the apostle Paul was actuated, when he addressed his epistle to the Romans. His primary object was to convince them that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, were alike guilty before God; and could look for pardon and for eternal happiness only through Jesus Christ. St. Paul well knew with what unwillingness men acknowledge a doctrine, which stands in direct opposition to the pride of heart so deeply rooted in our fallen nature. He knew the eagerness, the obstinacy, which we are all disposed to manifest, in confiding more or less upon our own righteousness; the earnestness with which we strain to shut our eyes against unwelcome conviction; the pains which we

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employ

employ to twist and explain away the meaning of the Scriptures, in order to escape the humiliating necessity of confessing our own utter unworthiness and depravity in the sight of our Lord and Judge. In several of the early chapters therefore of this epistle, and afterwards in the seventh and the eighth, he dwells with marked anxiety on this most important truth;—that any man who should be tried by his own works, by his own deservings, must inevitably perish. Until an humble recognition of this truth be extorted from us by a consciousness of our guilt; we never shall be persuaded to fly with godly fear and truly penitent hearts to the cross of Christ for salvation. *They that are whole*, said our Lord to the self-righteous Pharisees, *need not a physician; but they that are sick* (a). They who are not aware of their spiritual maladies, despise and reject the Saviour who offers, and who alone is able to heal them. But they whose eyes are opened; they who are penetrated with a true sense of their deplorable condition by nature and by transgression, and feel that they are completely unable to deliver themselves from the just anger of God; will throw themselves with joy at the feet of their Redeemer, and, with humble and grateful

(a) Luke, v. 31.

hearts, will accept the blessings which he offers to bestow. They will receive him as their Lord; they will adore him as their Saviour; they, under the guidance of the Spirit of grace, will believe in Him, will love Him, and will keep his commandments. They will *walk in Christ Jesus, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit: and to them there will be no condemnation* (b).

It shall be my endeavour, in the present discourse, to explain to you, from several distinct considerations, the nature, and the transcendent mercy, of justification through Christ.

I. Consider, in the first place, the inherent and perfect and necessary holiness of the divine law.

What is the view which the Scriptures display of the perfections of Him who gave the law? God is eternal: He is all-powerful: He knoweth all things: He is every where present: He is the Author and Giver of all good. But is there not yet another attribute of the Godhead; an attribute of primary concern to man? Of the perfections which the Scriptures ascribe to God, the most glorious is perfect holiness. Hear on this subject the dictates of

(b) Rom. viii. 1.

Inspiration. *The Lord our God is holy. Holy and reverend is his Name. There is none holy as the Lord. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness! Thou only, O Lord, art holy. God is pure, and every word of God is pure. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. God cannot be tempted with evil (c).* When Christ, on the evening which preceded his crucifixion, opened the fulness of his heart before God; he addressed Him by the name of *Righteous Father, Holy Father (d)*. When Isaiah in his vision saw the Seraphim standing before the throne of Jehovah, and covering their faces with their wings from the glory of his presence; he heard them crying one to another, with voices which shook the pillars of the temple, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts (e)*. When St. John beheld the four living creatures, the representatives of an innumerable company of Saints, surrounding the throne of the Omnipotent; he heard them pour forth in the same language their never-ceasing praises. *They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty (f)*.

Since God then is a God of perfect holiness; the laws which he gives to his creatures must

(c) Lev. xix. 2. Pf. cxi. 9. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Exod. xv. 11. Rev. xv. 4. Prov. xxx. 5. 1 John, iii. 3. Pf. cxlv. 17. James, i. 13. (d) John, xvii. 11. 25. (e) Isaiah, vi. 3. (f) Rev. iv. 8.

necessarily be holy. From a holy God, nothing except that which is holy can proceed. Well do the Scriptures proclaim; *The statutes of the Lord are right. Thy law, O Lord, is the truth; and thy judgements are righteous. The law of God is holy: and his commandments are holy and just and good* (g). You cannot examine with attention the law of God, without perceiving its holiness. The worship which he requires of you, is holy worship. It is the worship of an humble, devout, and pious heart. God is a Spirit: and you are to worship him in spirit and in truth. The conduct which he requires you to observe one towards another is, in every respect, according to holiness. You are to be in all your dealings true, and faithful, and just. You are to be filled with good-will towards all men; to be kind, liberal, tender-hearted, forgiving, long-suffering, peaceable, meek, gentle. In the government of yourselves, you are to be temperate, contented, chaste, and pure. Not only your actions, but your words also, and your most secret thoughts, are to be holy. In all things, you are to abstain even from the appearance of evil. Hence in the New Testament Christians are said to be

(g) Psalm xix. 8. cxix. 142. 160. Rom. vii. 12.

*called with an holy calling : and are exhorted to be holy and unblamable : to have their fruit unto holiness ; to perfect holiness in the fear of God (b). Hence too it is solemnly declared, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (i).*

II. The next point for your consideration is this: Whether you have faithfully kept in every particular this holy law of God? Without hesitation, you confess that you have not. You confess that you have broken it times without number. You confess that in thought, or in word, or in deed, you are breaking it every day. You confess that you have experienced the acquisition of that perfect holiness, which it requires, to be by your own strength unattainable; that although you see and know the path of duty, you are continually deviating into a contrary course; that the good which you perceive that you ought to do, the good which you wish to do, you do not; that the evil which you disapprove, the evil which you are desirous of avoiding, you commit. You confess that sin besets you at all times, on every side in a thousand shapes, and is perpetually gaining some advantage over you. You confess that under the influence of a corrupt nature, and the force of temptation,

(b) 2 Tim. i. 9. Col. i. 22. Rom. vi. 22. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

(i) Heb. xii. 14.

you cannot hope to obey the law of God in any tolerable degree for the future, if you are left to yourself. Are you unwilling to advance to the full length of this avowal? An avowal far less ample would suffice to establish the conclusion to which we are approaching. But every one of us, my brethren, who has attained any substantial knowledge of himself, and has learned to profit by the lessons of his own experience, will join in the preceding confession with deep humility and self-abasement. It is a confession which the scriptures declare to belong to every individual of the human race. They describe the nature which we have all inherited from our forefather Adam as so thoroughly corrupted by his rebellion against God, and his submission to the enticements and the dominion of the devil; that of ourselves we not only are unable to fulfil the law of God, but are alienated from him, at enmity with him, averse to holiness, prone to sin. Most truly therefore do they pronounce, that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: that every mouth is stopped, and all the world is become guilty before God: and that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight* (k).

(k) Rom. iii. 19, 20. 23.



Consider now the general nature of a law. A law points out certain duties to be performed ; promises protection, perhaps reward, to those who fulfil its demands ; and denounces wrath and punishment against all who shall in any point be guilty of disobedience. It is thus that the law of God deals with mankind. It enjoins on men the performance of all those duties, which are necessary to constitute perfect holiness ; duties, many of which are disclosed to every man by the light of conscience, and all of them are clearly stated in the law itself. It promises life to every person, who shall fully perform the whole of that holiness towards God, and towards man, which it exacts from all mankind. *The man, it saith, that doeth them, shall live by them (l).* But what if a man falls short in some particular ? He loses the benefit of the promise ; and must submit to the consequences of his transgression. *Cursed, saith the scripture, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (m).* The law of God requires perfect obedience. To perfect obedience it promises the reward of life. Against those who transgress in any point it denounces the punishment of eternal death. *Sin is the trans-*

(l) Gal. iii. 12.

(m) Gal. iii, 10.

*gression of the law: and the wages of sin is death(n).*

Observe then the situation in which you, and I, and all men stand by nature with respect to the law of God. He has placed before us a law of perfect holiness; and has commanded us to obey it. We have not only fallen short of perfect obedience; but have become in numberless respects miserable sinners, laden with iniquity, transgressing daily in thought, in word, and in deed. We have become thus sinful, not necessarily, but wilfully: not necessarily; for St. Paul declares that even the Gentiles, who had not the written word of God in their hands, were altogether inexcusable for their transgressions, because they listened not to the law of God written in their consciences (o). We have become thus sinful wilfully: having possessed not only the light of conscience, but the book of God; having knowingly disobeyed his law; having yielded with open eyes to the instigation of our depraved nature, and the artifices of our spiritual foe. We have failed, lamentably failed, as to that perfect obedience, to which *alone* the law promised the reward of life. We have continually committed, and are continually repeating, offences against the law; for

(n). 1 John, iii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. (o) Rom. i. 19—21. 32.  
every

every one of which the law denounces the penalty of eternal death.

The law promised reward to perfect obedience: but it promised not pardon to transgression. Man, ever inclined to presumptuous murmuring against God, is ready to exclaim that the law was rigorous and cruel. Rigorous and cruel, because it did not hold forth pardon to those who should wilfully break it! Do human laws hold forth pardon to those who wilfully break them? Is it consistent with the nature of a law to hold forth pardon to transgressors? Would a law which promised pardon to those who should break it be likely to procure obedience? Would a wise legislator among men enact such a law? Could you expect a wise and holy God to promulgate such a law? The law of God denounces vengeance against *all* who break it: and you and I and all men have broken it. If we entertain any hopes of pardon, we must look for it from some other quarter. We must look for it, if we look for it at all, from the undeserved mercy of the Legislator: but in the law itself, it is unreasonable and impossible to expect to find forgiveness.

But you complain that a single transgression should entail the forfeiture of all the blessings which might otherwise have been derived

under the law ! The fact with which you are dissatisfied is unquestionable : a single transgression entails a complete forfeiture. And how stands the fact in the case of human laws ? He who transgresses against a single clause of a single act of parliament ; is he not punished, and justly punished, for disobeying that clause, even though he may have punctually regarded every other clause of that particular statute, and every clause of every other statute ? If death itself be the penalty denounced against all, who should violate that statute ; is he not justly punished with death ? Do you complain then, because God, in delivering for your observance his holy law, has adopted a principle, the equity of which, when adopted by the law of your country, you recognise every day ? Do you complain, because God has established the divine law on that foundation, which the universal consent of mankind acknowledges as the only basis, on which any human law can efficaciously be rested ? *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all (p).* Whosoever offends against any one precept of the divine law, offends against the whole law, of which that precept is a constituent part ; and against the sovereignty of the Legis-

(p) James, ii. 10, 11.

lator, who has enjoined the uniform observance of every part of his law: and deservedly forfeits all the blessings which were annexed only to the faithful observance of the whole. He who sins against any one branch of any one statute, sins against the whole legislative authority of his country, from which every statute derives its obligatory power. By despising that authority in any one of its injunctions, he proves himself devoid of the dispositions of a good subject: he loses all title to the protection of his country, and falls under the severity of her justice. And he who wilfully violates in any one instance the law of that Legislator, who, when he said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill;" who, when he commanded the observance of his law in one point, equally commanded the observance of it in all: sins against the supreme Majesty of Heaven; shews himself destitute of the temper of a true Christian; justly forfeits the favour, and incurs the vengeance of his God.

But you reply that, in some cases, if the unhappy man who, by offending against one human law, has rendered himself obnoxious to punishment, shall have been assiduous in his observance of the rest of the laws of the land, he is discharged from punishment.

Discharged from punishment! How is he discharged from it? He receives pardon by an act of grace. Does he presume to claim pardon as a debt? Does he demand it as his right, because, though he has broken one statute, he has obeyed many? He sues for it as an emanation of free mercy: and as an emanation of free mercy his sovereign bestows it. Now contemplate the divine administration; and behold the resistless force with which your argument turns against yourself. God is willing to pardon not in few and extraordinary instances, but in every instance. He does not wait to be entreated; but spontaneously offers to every offender forgiveness and life eternal. When he offers unmerited blessings; shall he not offer them in his own method, on his own terms? If you seek for pardon; seek it not in the law, from which it is impossible that you should obtain it. Seek it from the free mercy of God: and seek it in that channel, through which alone he has decreed that his mercy shall be dispensed.

III. But previously consider farther, what strong reasons there might naturally have been for apprehension, that the punishment which our sins deserved would be inflicted in its largest extent. Recollect the holiness of God.  
 Recollect

Recollect that a holy God must abhor sin and sinners. *Evil, saith the scripture, shall not dwell with God. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He hateth all the workers of iniquity. The way of the wicked, the thoughts of the wicked, the sacrifice and prayer of the wicked, are an abomination unto the Lord* (q). What then could the wicked have naturally expected but death and misery? Remember too the justice of God. *To me, saith the Lord, belongeth vengeance and recompence. I will render vengeance to mine enemies* (r). By sin all mankind were become the enemies of God; and had no claim to escape the extremity of his justice. Remember likewise the sovereignty of God over all his creatures. Was it to be expected that the Sovereign of the Universe would permit sin, which is rebellion against himself, to pass unpunished? Would he permit his righteous laws to be broken, without pouring forth his indignation on the transgressors? Would he pass over the crimes of the guilty race of man, and thus hold forth an encouragement to presumptuous guilt in all the other worlds which he has made? Might it not rather have been apprehended, that both for the purpose of punishing human sin

(q) Ps. v. 4, 5. Hab. i. 13. Prov. xv. 8, 9. 26. xxviii. 9.

(r) Deut. xxxii. 35. 41. Heb. xi. 30.

in proportion to its demerits, and of exhibiting an awful warning to the whole creation, He would have exacted the full penalty which we had incurred? These are the dreadful forebodings with which our breasts might naturally have been filled. And if we had endeavoured to console ourselves with the reflection that God delighteth in mercy, and had ventured on that ground to hope for forgiveness; how reasonably might we have feared, that no method was to be devised, in which the Judge of the Universe could exercise mercy towards man consistently with his holiness and his justice! After all our inquiries, our pleadings, and our hopes, there still lay open before us the gulf of eternal death.

IV. Such was by nature the miserable state of man. So truly *did the law work wrath*. So truly was *the commandment, which was ordained to be unto life, found to be unto death*. So plainly *by the law was the knowledge of sin imparted and diffused*; the knowledge of its heinous guilt, of its universal and deadly influence. So effectually *did sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceive us, and slay us*. So fatally was *the law which is holy, and the commandment which is holy and just and good, made by our corruption and*  
 transf-



transgressions *death* unto every man (s). Thus condemned, thus helpless, thus destitute of all claim to mercy, thus ignorant whether to human guilt mercy could be extended consistently with the other attributes of God, was the whole race of Adam. But God is infinite in mercy, goodness, and wisdom. He saw what man could not discern. He perceived the means of reconciling the offer of forgiveness to fallen man, with the demands of his own righteous and violated law. *O wretched man that I am!* cried St. Paul; *who shall deliver me from the body of this death* (t)? A favour was at hand. There was *One* in heaven able to make an atonement: able to make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and such a satisfaction as it would be consistent with the righteousness and the justice of God to accept. But was this favour willing as well as able to make the atonement? He was willing. He was aware what must be the price of man's salvation; and that price he freely offered, and took upon himself to pay. And who was this favour? What being was it that undertook this most astonishing office of mercy? It was the eternal Son of the eter-

(s) Rom. iii. 20. iv. 15. vii. 10—13. (t) Rom. vii. 24.

nal God. It was one of the persons of the incomprehensible godhead. It was Jesus Christ, who was one with the father. It was Jesus Christ, who in the beginning had made the world, and now engaged to redeem it. He became surety for man. The humiliation, the sufferings, which he saw that as man's surety he must undergo, dismayed him not. He knew that the iniquity of the human race was to be laid upon him ; that with his stripes mankind were to be healed. He knew that he must himself become the sacrifice in the place of man. He knew that he must leave the glory, in which he had reigned with the Father from eternity ; that he must come down to dwell on earth ; that he must himself become man, and sustain all the infirmities and evils of human nature, sin only excepted, which could not approach to him. He knew that he must be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; that he should be despised and rejected by the world which he came to save ; that of the followers whom he should particularly select to be his companions and friends, he should be betrayed by one, denied by another, forsaken by all. He knew that he should be delivered up to his bitterest enemies ; that he should be exposed as a mark to the shafts of scorn, insult, and cruelty ;

and that he must make atonement by his blood ; that he must suffer a painful and ignominious death, crucified between two malefactors ; himself condemned as a malefactor, though he was the Lord of Glory. All this abasement, all this anguish he foresaw to be necessary, if he would purchase redemption for mankind. All this abasement and anguish he foresaw ; but it shook not the purpose of his love. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (u). By this his obedience unto death the great atonement was made. The gate of heaven was thrown open to man. Pardon through the blood of Christ, sanctification through the Holy Ghost, and everlasting happiness in the world to come were offered, as purchased by the sacrifice of Christ, to all who should fly for salvation to him.

How then may we acquire an interest in these blessings ? By faith : by faith only.

(u) Philipp. ii. 6—8.

#### 44 *The Christian Method of Justification*

Faith is ordained of God to be the instrument, the only instrument, by which we may receive and apply to ourselves the mercy of God, the atonement of our Redeemer. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. A man is justified by faith. The law worketh wrath : therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. The righteousness of God (the method of justification which God hath ordained) without the works of the law (without our works being required to do that which they never could do, to pay an atom of the price of salvation) is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe : for there is no difference ; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood (w). Justification by faith alone, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the grand doctrine of both testaments. Under*

(w) Acts, xvi. 31. Rom. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. Rom. iv. 15, 16. v. 1, 2. iii. 21--25.

their

their authority, it was the grand doctrine of the reformation; It is the grand doctrine of the church of England. It was *witnessed by the law*. It is the justification to which the intimations of mercy that gleamed amidst the awful curses of the law alluded; the justification which the law with all its shadowy rites and emblematical sacrifices unremittingly prefigured. It is the justification *witnessed by the prophets*. To that Redeemer by whose blood it was to be accomplished, *give all the prophets witness; that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins (x)*. It is the justification to which, from the gospel of St. Matthew to the book of Revelations, all the penmen of the new covenant bear witness. It is the justification by which God is glorified; the justification by which man is to be saved.

The most salutary instruction may be perverted; the most holy doctrine may be vilified. *What shall we say, therefore, if Ignorance should accost us in the language which she once addressed to St. Paul: Do you then make void the law through faith? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? In what words shall we reply but in those of the apostle? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law. God*

(x) Acts, x. 43.

*forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? They which do the works of the flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Continue in faith and holiness. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly; that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works (y). Is additional refutation necessary? Let it be given in the words of St. James. Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. By works faith is made perfect. By works a man is justified, and not by faith only (z). But here new difficulties seem to arise. "If St. Paul acknowledges that holiness must be constantly added to faith; if St. James affirms that a man is justified, not by faith only, but by works; where is the unity of Christian doctrine? Is the apostle of the Gentiles inconsistent with himself? Do the two apostles contradict each other? Will you plead that they speak of a first and of a subsequent justification? Or do you contend that they refer, the one to justification in the sight of God, the other only to justification in the sight of men?" St. Paul is in no degree inconsistent with himself. The two*

(y) Rom. iii. 31. vi. 1, 2. Gal. v. 19—21. 1 Tim. ii. 15. Tit. iii. 8. Heb. xii. 14. (z) James, ii. 20. 22. 24.

apostles accord in perfect harmony of sentiment : they speak of one and the same justification ; and of justification in the sight of God. The justifying faith of St. Paul is *faith that worketh by love* (a). The justifying, or *perfect*, faith of St. James, is faith which bringeth forth *good works*. The same faith is described by the two apostles, and in terms of the same import. A dead, barren, and speculative faith is equally condemned by both. According to the doctrine, the uniform doctrine, of both, a living faith is a faith that justifies ; and no faith is a living faith, which does not evince itself to be such by the fruits which a living faith cannot but produce, *holiness and good works*. “ Yet when St. James pronounces that a man is justified not by faith only, but by works ; is not this,” it will finally be objected, “ to pronounce that good works pay a part of the price of our justification ?” Impossible ! “ How is the impossibility manifested ?” By the two following considerations. First : Because such an interpretation of the words of the apostle, an interpretation in no degree required by the ordinary use of language, is utterly inconsistent with that righteousness of God, that method

(a) Gal. v. 6.

of justification by faith alone, which is witnessed by the law and by the prophets; and is completely unfolded in the New Testament. And, secondly; because it is equally inconsistent with the nature of good works. The best of human works are imperfect in the sight of God. They cannot stand the inquisition of his justice. They are rendered complete and acceptable before him, only through the atonement of his Son. Admit any human work to have been perfect. It might have stood by its perfection. Perfect however it ought to be; and more than perfect it could not be. It could boast no superfluous merit. It could advance no overplus of worth which might be applied to make atonement for evil deeds. He who had wrought that work would still have been, as to that very work, *an unprofitable servant; he would have done no more than it was his duty to do.* Good works, persevering good works, steadfast and habitual holiness of heart and of conduct, are indispensable to salvation. By requiring them as indispensable, faith *establishes the law*, grace proscribes and anathematizes continuance in sin. But they cannot buy salvation: they can pay no part of its price: *they must let that alone for ever.* Indispensable as they are, they



they are valuable, but as evidences, the sole evidences, of that faith, which justifies through the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

My Christian brethren, I have now endeavoured to set before you, conformably to the simplicity and the genuine doctrine of the Scriptures, this most important, this frequently misunderstood and misrepresented subject, the method of justification through the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me conclude, with briefly recapitulating the substance of this divine plan, in the way of general application.

If you are seeking pardon and eternal life, seek them not by standing on the deeds of the law: seek them not by claiming them as in the slightest degree or portion due to any works of your own. *The law worketh wrath. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* The law of a God of perfect holiness is itself a law of perfect holiness, and requires perfect obedience. If you fail in any one point, it denounces the penalty of eternal death. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* You are conscious that, in common with the rest of mankind, you have failed,

you have transgressed, in numberless instances. What day has passed without your having done, either in thought, or in word, or in action, that which you ought not to have done; and without your having left undone that which you ought to have done? Were the very best of you to examine fairly the very best of your works, you would find them to have been so imperfect; to have fallen so far below the standard towards which a higher measure of antecedent holiness would have advanced them; to have been so far from proceeding from truly Christian motives, and from those only; to have been so stained in part, either in the intention, or in the execution, or in both, with various degrees of guilt; that you would tremble at the thought of producing them as pure, as examples of perfect obedience before God. Before him we all stand condemned sinners. From the law it is impossible to derive forgiveness. If we are saved, we must be saved by one able to make an atonement. We must be saved by unmerited grace through a Redeemer. We must receive salvation as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ the Son of the Most High. Renounce then, unreservedly renounce, all presumptuous ideas of merit in yourselves. Look to the cross on which the  
promised

promised Redeemer died, and to that only. Present yourselves as suppliants for mercy through faith in his atoning blood. It is only by his atoning blood that your sins can be washed away. It is only by faith that the fruits and merits of the death of Christ can be received and applied to the benefit of your soul. But remember that, if you wish Christ to be your Saviour, you must receive him as your Master. If you desire a justifying faith, it must be a living faith. It must be a faith wrought by the Holy Ghost. It must be a faith which governs the heart. It must be a faith which worketh by love. It must be a faith which labours after universal holiness. You must give up yourselves wholly to Christ. You must make it your constant object, and your supreme delight, to obey all the commandments of your Lord; to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; to have your heart filled with Christian tempers, and impelled and controlled by Christian motives. These blessings are in no degree to be attained by your own strength. They are entirely the gifts of the Spirit of God. But Christ, by his death, has purchased them for all who seek them through him. If you seek them by daily and fervent prayer, offered in his name and grounded on his merits; if, in pro-

portion to the grace which he has vouchsafed, you constantly strive to act as his faithful servants; he will bestow them in larger and larger abundance upon you. Then will he acknowledge you for his own at the last day: and while he commands the wicked, who remain under the curse of the law, to depart into everlasting fire; will address to you the unchangeable benediction, "Come, ye blessed of my Father: inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

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## S E R M O N    I I I .

On the Nature and Efficacy of Divine Grace.

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2 COR. xii. 9.

*And He said unto me, " My Grace is sufficient  
" for thee : for my Strength is made perfect  
" in Weakness."*

**F**OR the accomplishment of any useful design, it appears necessary that all inferior instruments should be subjected to one superintending power. In the structures of human mechanism, however numerous, however complicated may be the contrivances by which the ultimate object is pursued ; some main-spring, some master-wheel, some ruling force, some preponderating weight, actuates and controls all the subordinate parts, and gives motion and efficacy to the whole. It

is thus, if we may presume to connect together by any semblance of comparison the labours of terrestrial feebleness and ignorance with the operations of infinite perfection; that the divine wisdom conducts its plans to their appointed success. Earth and air, cold and heat, clouds and sunshine, the interchange of day and night, the gradual vicissitudes of seasons, and all the principles of vegetation by which food is produced and ripened for mankind: these are all but means governed and directed by the providence of God. Youth and age, health and sickness, affluence and poverty, prosperity and distress: these and all other secondary causes through which salvation is vouchsafed to man, are all but instruments in the hands of the First Cause: these are all but ministering agents subservient to the sway of the grace of Christ.

Never perhaps was the power of divine grace more gloriously displayed than in its effects wrought through the instrumentality of St Paul! Never perhaps among all the children of Adam did it form to itself a more able, or a more willing minister! This great instructor of the Gentiles, in vindicating his character and his apostolical authority against the insinuations of false teachers among the Corinthians, was led to specify, among other evidences

evidences of his divine commission, the visions and revelations with which he had been favoured in a very uncommon measure by his Lord. He describes himself as having been caught up into Paradise; into the third Heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not; and as having heard unspeakable words; words not to be uttered by human lips. The Saviour of the world, however, shewed himself not unmindful that his holy apostle was but man. According to the wisdom displayed in all the dispensations of his providence, he tempered his extraordinary mercies with such a portion of humiliation and fatherly chastisement, as might guard his beloved servant against spiritual pride, and extravagant ideas of his superiority over his fellow Christians. *There was given to St. Paul, to use his own words, a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations.* This thorn in the flesh, the precise nature of which, as being well known to the Corinthians, among whom he had resided eighteen months, it was not necessary to particularise; evidently appears to have been some personal infirmity, which St. Paul regarded as likely to impair his ability and lessen his usefulness

as a preacher of religion. In the verse from which the text is taken, he stiles it an *infirmity*. In his epistle to the Galatians, he alludes to it in similar expressions. *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not nor rejected.* From the tenth and eleventh chapters of his second epistle to the church at Corinth, we learn that the enemies of the apostle represented him as *rude in speech, contemptible in speech, and weak in bodily presence.* Here perhaps we obtain some insight into the nature of the infirmity with which he was visited. But whatever the thorn in the flesh might be, the apostle, grieved at the prospect of its interference with the efficaciousness of his ministry, with earnest and repeated supplication, besought the Lord Jesus that it might depart from him. The prayer Christ did not see fit to grant. The motive which prompted it he beheld with complacence. He beheld the heart of his apostle glowing with zeal for his glory. But he knew, what the apostle could not know, the methods by which his glory might best be promoted. He knew that the feebleness of the servant would conduce to the glory of his Lord; that the imperfection of the instrument would magnify the strength of

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of him by whom it was wielded ; that the successful labours of the apostle, in the face of circumstances which might in some degree have a tendency to excite scorn or disgust, would prove that the *faith* of his converts *stood not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* He replied unto the petitions of St. Paul ; *My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* “Be not afraid ; be not dispirited. I the Lord am able to complete my own work. My grace, without which thou canst do nothing, shall be with thee ; and that grace can accomplish every thing.”

In this reply of our Saviour to the request of his apostle, we read a distinct intimation of the nature and the importance of divine grace. The instruction thus conveyed to St. Paul is applicable to every man. In the farther consideration therefore of the subject, I propose, in the present and in two subsequent discourses, to explain the necessity of the grace of Christ to salvation ; to prove that every man is enabled to obtain this grace ; to indicate the means by which it is to be acquired ; to point out the tests and proofs by which the possession of it is to be ascertained ; and to evince its complete and unalterable sufficiency. Some observations will afterwards be

be severally addressed, to those who disregard or despise the grace of God, and to those who labour to obtain and to improve it.

I. The grace of Christ is indispensably necessary to salvation.

Is a long train of argument requisite to establish this proposition? Contemplate the picture which the Scriptures present of the corruption of human nature; and of the consequences, in which that corruption by its own inherent tendencies would terminate. *If the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; if the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; if in us, by nature, dwelleth no good thing; if we are altogether gone out of the way, altogether become abominable, so that by nature there is no one that seeketh after God, no one that is righteous, no not one*: how is sanctification to be attained; how is destruction to be escaped? How is the Ethiopian to change his skin, and the leopard his spots? How is the servant of sin, to become the servant of holiness? How is the soul, groaning under the chains of the prince of darkness, to be restored to the glorious liberty of the children of God? How is the bosom which is the habitation of every impure thought, every unhallowed desire,

fire, to become the temple of the Holy Ghost? Will you answer, "By repentance; by faith in Christ; by perseverance in every good work?" Be it so. Is repentance then, is faith, is perseverance in good works in your own power? Consult the Scriptures on each of these points. The Scriptures call upon every man every where to repent. But do they affirm, do they imply, that man can repent by his own strength? Do they admit the possibility of such a supposition? What then is the import of the expressions of the prophet Jeremiah, expressions not less wisely than piously interwoven into the liturgy of our church; *Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord; and we shall be turned: turn thou me, O Lord; and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God* (a)? What is the import of the following passages in the writings of St. Luke and St. Paul? *God hath exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel. Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. In meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (b). Is it not clear that repentance is to be sought as a gift from God; as a gift through the grace of Jesus Christ? Enquire farther how the case

(a) Jerem. xxxi. 18. Lam. v. 21. (b) Acts, v. 31. xi. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 25.

stands with respect to faith. *Without faith it is impossible to please God. By faith a man is to be justified. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (c).* But do the Scriptures describe faith as an attainment within the grasp of human ability? What is the language of the Son of God? *No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him (d).* What faith St. Luke? *Apollos helped them much, which had believed through grace. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, and was baptized (e).* How speaks St. Paul? *Faith is the fruit of the Spirit. No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. To you, O Philippians, it is given to believe on Christ (f).* Then with respect to practical holiness. Are Christian tempers and good works the produce of your own exertions? Do you learn such imaginations from the Scriptures? *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do. It is God who maketh you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably. Righteousness, truth, love, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, tempe-*

(c) Heb. xi. 6. Rom. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. Acts, xvi. 31.

(d) John, vi. 44. (e) Acts, xviii. 27. xvi. 14. (f) Gal. v. 22. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Philipp. i. 29.

*rance, are the fruits of the Spirit (g).* It is thus that an examination into the natural state of the human heart, and an enquiry into the method by which the different graces of the Christian character are wrought in man, constrain us to ascribe every thing in us which is good, to God, the Author of every good and perfect gift. They constrain us to acknowledge, that as St. Paul, depressed and impeded by his thorn in the flesh, could be enabled to preach the gospel with success only by the grace of Christ: so by that grace only can man, labouring under his natural corruption, be enabled to attain eternal life. They constrain us to acknowledge as indispensably necessary to salvation that total change, which the Scriptures delineate under a variety of figurative expressions, essentially of the same meaning, and calculated, partly to exemplify its magnitude and effect, partly to denote its supreme importance: a change which the word of God attributes exclusively to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost purchased for us by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They constrain us to confess, that *except a man be born of water and of the Spirit; emblematically of water by baptism, and substantially of the Spirit by the renovation of his corrupt nature unto holiness; he cannot enter into the kingdom*

(g) Philipp. ii. 13 Heb. xiii. 21. xii. 28. Gal. v. 22, 23. Eph. v. 9.

of God (b). They constrain us to confess, that we must become *new creatures* (i); that we must *be transformed by the renewing of our minds*; that we must *put off the old man, which is corrupt, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds*; that we must *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (k). They constrain us to confess, that if we are to be saved, *we are to be saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost* (l). We are to be saved by receiving from the Spirit of God, not those extraordinary and now no longer needed powers, which were requisite to enable the first preachers of Christianity to confirm the truth of the new religion by the evidence of miraculous attestations: but that influence which in every age is no less necessary to the salvation of every Christian, than it was in primitive times to the salvation of the apostles; that influence which alone can enlighten the understanding, rectify the will, dispose us to repentance, establish us in faith, renew the heart unto godliness, supply strength to withstand temptation, inspire holy resolutions and ability to fulfil them, and finally seal the steadfast servants of Christ through continuance in faith, and in good works the fruits of faith, to eternal life.

(b) John, iii. 3. 5. (i) 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15.

(k) Rom. xii. 2. Eph. iv. 23, 24. (l) Tit. iii. 5.

II. The grace of Christ, as necessary to salvation, is placed within the reach of every man.

Does this assertion, so full of consolation and encouragement to the terrified sinner, stand firm on Scriptural authority? On that authority it stands immovable. *God hath no pleasure that the wicked should die; but that he should return from his ways and live. God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things: all things needful to salvation, and as of all things the most needful, his grace? If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him (m)!*

But of what avail is the rope, which you hold forth to the shipwrecked mariner; if his eye is too dim to discern it, his hand too feeble to grasp it? Although it is apparent that God freely offers his grace to every man; is it also clear that every man has the power of accepting it? May there not be a natural or a moral impossibility, which may disable the perishing

(m) Ezek. xviii. 23. 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. Mark, xvi. 15. Rom. viii. 32. Luke, xi. 13.

sinner from deriving benefit from the means of deliverance when placed before him? Among the numerous doubts and suspicions which have disquieted the breasts of Christians, that which is here presented, if one of the most distressing, is also one of the most extraordinary. Do you ascribe to the Most High delusive offers? To the God of truth, do you ascribe shifts, and pretences, and evasions, which in the common transactions of life you would disclaim yourself, which you would condemn in any one of your fellow-creatures? Is it thus that you dishonour the Father of mercies, and render nugatory his gracious proposal of universal salvation? *God is no respecter of persons.* If he has demolished the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile; has he reared an insuperable barrier between members of the same covenant, between Christian and Christian? The offer which he makes to every man, he enables every man, by a measure of preventing grace bestowed upon him for the sake of Christ, to accept. No man ever committed any sin, but the grace of God was ready to have qualified him to withstand it. No man ever committed any sin, but he might have obtained the grace of God necessary for effectual resistance, had he antecedently chosen to apply for it in propor-



tion to his knowledge, and to the preventing grace inciting him to the choice. Such has been the fact with respect to every sin which ever was committed. Such will be the fact with respect to every sin which ever shall be committed. God is not the author of evil. He tempts no man to sin. He places no man under the necessity of transgressing His universal law. He leaves no man, in any instance, destitute of the power of obtaining that grace which would have preserved him from transgression, or destitute of the preventing influence of grace on his will in a measure sufficient to incite him to exert the power. He mocks no man; however; some, who have singularly misinterpreted his word, have virtually represented him as mocking the great mass of the human race; he mocks no man by groundless hopes, by calls which cannot be heard, by commands which cannot be obeyed, by offers which cannot be accepted. He subjects no man, he permits no man to be subject, to a natural or to a moral impossibility; distinctions, if tried by fair reasoning, in this case completely without a difference, of accepting the mercy which he proposes to all. God, the God of mercy, is faithful and just and true in all his dealings. Could he be faithful and just and true in all his dealings, if, while describing himself in terms the most comprehensive

as holding forth a blessing to all, he held it forth only to some: if, while in language the most impressive he urged every man to accept his mercy, he knew that numbers were by his predetermined purpose ordained to remain for ever destitute of the moral power of accepting it? *God is love*: love to every being which he has made. Could he be *love* to a being, who might have grounds for replying to him at the day of judgement; "Thou sentest me  
 "into the world incapable of serving thee.  
 "Thou calledst me; but thou continuedst me  
 "under an impossibility of turning unto thee  
 "when thou calledst. And now thou con-  
 "signest me to everlasting perdition, for not  
 "doing that which by nature I could not  
 "do; that which by grace thou wouldest not  
 "enable me to perform." God will be clear when he is judged. The judge of the whole earth shall do right. He is *love*, universal love. On St. Paul he freely bestowed the grace, which under the apostle's infirmity was requisite. To every man the grace necessary to counteract and purify human corruption is freely offered. To every man is the power given through Christ, of accepting it, of improving under it, of profiting by it unto salvation. *The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching*

us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (n): enabling every man to discern and to will that which is right, to live acceptably to his Maker in godliness and true holiness; and thus stopping every mouth before God, thus cutting off all excuses from those who complain of strictness and difficulties in religion, and allege their natural weakness and depravity as a plea for disobeying the commandments of their Lord.

III. The means, by which the grace of God is to be obtained, are distinctly revealed to us.

What are those means? The first is prayer. *Ask, and it shall be given unto you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (o). But do these promises relate to the gift of the Holy Spirit? Our Saviour proceeds to shew by a familiar and most encouraging illustration, that the Holy Ghost is their immediate object. *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father; will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish; will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he shall ask an egg; will he offer him a scorpion?*

(n) Tit. ii, 11, 12.

(o) Luke, xi, 9, &amp;c.

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!* But is it not possible that we may pray for the Holy Spirit; and yet fail of receiving the full blessing which we desire? Undoubtedly it is possible. *You may ask and receive not, because you ask amiss* (p). Can prayer then fail to obtain that blessing, which God has promised to bestow on those who seek it by prayer? Genuine prayer will never be disappointed. Let your prayers be real prayers, and they shall succeed. But if your prayers for sanctification through the Spirit of God are destitute of the qualifications, which are necessary to render any prayer acceptable; if while you draw nigh unto your Lord with your mouth, and honour him with your lips, your heart is far from him; assuredly you will worship him in vain. What then are the qualifications essential to the success of our prayers for the Holy Spirit? In the first place, faith; a steadfast conviction that God will perform his promise of bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost on every man who seeks it aright. *If any of you lack wisdom, saith St. James; let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and*

(p) James, iv. 3.

*upbraid-*

upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering : for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed : for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord (q). Wisdom is to be derived only through the Holy Ghost, who is denominated the *Spirit of wisdom* (r). The faith, which is indispensable to the success of petitions for this gift of the Holy Ghost, is equally necessary when you pray for any other of the Christian graces. In the next place, your supplications must be accompanied with an humble consciousness of your helpless state by nature, and of the value of the blessings which you request. For otherwise, they will be devoid of that earnestness and fervency which St. Paul connects with genuine service of the Lord ; which another apostle describes as characteristic of *the prayer that availeth much* (s). And farther, your petitions for the aid of the Holy Spirit must be persevering. Your heavenly Father may wisely determine to prove you by delaying to comply with them. Will you lose that renewal of heart without which you cannot enter into the kingdom of God, by discontinuing

(q) James, i. 5—7.

(r) Isaiah, xi. 2. Eph. i. 17.

(s) Rom. xii. 2. James, v. 16.

your supplications? Be not discouraged: your supplications, though not yet granted, are heard. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise. God only waiteth to be gracious. *Be not weary in well-doing*, in urging your request before the throne of grace; *for in due time you will reap, if you faint not*: in due time, and that too a time sufficiently speedy to meet the exigencies of your situation, you shall obtain the guidance, the support, the consolation of the Spirit of God: guidance, support, or consolation, not perhaps exactly according in kind or degree with the special object of your prayer, but better adapted to promote your true interest and the glory of the all-knowing giver. St. Paul thrice besought the Lord in vain, that his infirmity might depart from him. Was his persevering supplication unrewarded? He received in return an assurance, that the grace of Christ should be with him; and in a measure abundantly sufficient to secure those objects, for the attainment of which the apostle had been solicitous that his thorn in the flesh should be removed.

In addition to habitual prayer, you have yet another duty to fulfil, if you are sincerely desirous of the continual assistance of divine grace. You must diligently labour to profit  
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in piety and holiness by the grace which has already been bestowed. *To him, saith our Lord, that hath, shall be given*: to him who has studied to improve, as instruments of godliness, the means and supplies of divine grace which have been placed within his power, additional grace shall be afforded. *From him that hath not*; from that slothful and wicked servant who has neglected the talent which his rightful master had entrusted to his care, under an injunction that, it should be employed to advantage; *even that which he hath shall be taken away*; the grace which he had received and despised shall be proportionally withdrawn.

Finally, if you would obtain the assistance of divine grace, you must apply for it through the mediation of your Redeemer. Through whose merits have we access to God? Through the merits of him who died for us. In whose name are all our prayers to be presented to the Father? In the name of his beloved Son. Whose is the grace which we solicit? The grace of the Lord Jesus. "*My grace,*" said Christ to his apostle, "*is sufficient for thee.*" Through him, and unto him, let us apply for the sanctifying influence of his Spirit.

The consideration, however brief, of the subjects which have already been noticed, has

unavoidably occupied so much time, that the remaining heads must be deferred unto a future discourse. Let me conclude, therefore, with addressing to you some few words of general application, drawn from the remarks which have been laid before you.

.. Endeavour throughout life to bear in mind that of yourselves you can do nothing : that you inherit a nature radically corrupted, prone to sin, averse to piety and holiness. Unless you build your religion upon this foundation, you build it upon sand : for you do not build it upon the only solid foundation, that foundation, that corner-stone, which is laid in the word of God. But beware of deceiving yourselves by imagining, that this original corruption of your nature affords you any plea for continuing in sin. The grace of God, by which you may be preserved from falling into sin, by which you may be redeemed from the strongest bonds of depravity, is freely offered to you through Christ at all times ; and power in every respect adequate is at all times given unto you from God to accept it. Consider St. Paul's account of himself. *In my flesh, saith he, dwelleth no good thing. I cannot do that which I would. The good which I approve, I do not. The evil which I disapprove I do.* This is the description



scription of his state by nature. But how speaks he in another passage? *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.* Here he speaks of himself as under the influence of divine grace : and as thus enabled to perform the whole of his duty. Christ is at all times ready to strengthen every one of you to perform your whole duty ; and whenever you fail, you fail by your own fault. Turn your eyes then upon the Bible to learn the full extent of your duty. Beware of being satisfied with that half-religion, that shadow of Christianity, which in the eyes of the world is regarded as the complete substance ; that counterfeit coin which passes current with multitudes, but bears not the stamp of the King of kings. Take your standard of duty from the word of God ; for by that standard you will be tried at the last day. See what devotedness to God, what holiness of temper and of conduct, what living not unto yourself but to Christ who died for you, the Scriptures require. Say not within your heart “ These things cannot be required of me ; for “ I cannot attain unto them.” They are required of you ; for so God hath announced to you beforehand. You can attain unto them ; for God offers to enable you by his grace. Seek then his grace that you may attain

tain to that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. So shall your sins be blotted out, and mercy and salvation extended to you through the atonement of the Lord Jesus. But if you vainly persuade yourself that you may make religion a secondary concern: if you fall short of scriptural holiness, because you would not strive for the grace through which you might have performed it: you will stand self-condemned at the judgement-seat of Christ, and will confess that God was solicitous that you should be saved, but that you have yourself pulled down destruction with your own hands upon your own head.

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## S E R M O N    I V .

On the Nature and Efficacy of Divine Grace.

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2 COR. xii. 9.

*And he said unto me : " My Grace is sufficient  
" for thee : for my strength is made perfect in  
" weakness."*

**I**N a former discourse on this passage, when I had explained to you the occasion on which the words of Christ, as quoted in the text, were spoken; and the particular sense in which they referred to the existing situation of St. Paul: I endeavoured to shew that the instruction which they conveyed was applicable to all men. I laid open to you, first, the evidence which the scriptures furnish of the indispensable necessity of divine grace to salvation: secondly, the unbounded mercy with which God offers his grace to every man, and bestows on every man the moral power of accepting

accepting it : and thirdly, the means by the proper use of which this sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit may assuredly be obtained. Regarding therefore the observations which were stated under those three branches of the general subject, as in an adequate measure present to your recollection ; I now proceed, in humble dependence on the blessing of God, to unfold to you the marks by which you may judge, every man for himself, whether your hearts are under the government of the Holy Spirit. I trust to be enabled, on a future occasion, to execute the remainder of my plan as originally stated, by manifesting the complete and certain sufficiency of divine grace for every purpose for which it can be desired or bestowed ; and by a general application of the whole subject to persons of different descriptions.

IV. I propose to set before you the tests and proofs by which the effectual acquisition of divine grace is ascertained.

A tree is known by its fruits. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit : neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. If your dispositions and your conduct are characterised by the fruits of the Holy Spirit ; you may humbly confide that you are under

his effectual guidance. If your hearts, and lives do not habitually display those demonstrations of his prevailing influence; you are not authorised to draw that conclusion.

What then are *the fruits of the Spirit*? All *good and perfect gifts*; for *every good and perfect gift is from above*: all the graces of the Christian character; for every one of those graces is a plant foreign to the corrupt soil of the human heart, and can flourish there only in consequence of being sown and nurtured by the fostering care of the Spirit of God. In the sacred writings, these fruits or gifts of the Holy Ghost are sometimes mentioned singly; accordingly as the inspired penman was led by his immediate subject to delineate some particular feature of true religion: sometimes, when the train of his argument carried him into a wider range of description, several of them are noticed at once, and exhibited in one view. To collect from the word of God the various fruits of the Holy Spirit into one glorious assemblage; to illustrate the nature of each; and to trace the precise course of enquiry necessary to qualify you to estimate the degree, in which they are severally produced in yourself; this would be a task which would demand, in addition

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to other requisites, the compass of many discourses. On the present occasion, therefore, I must content myself with calling your attention to some few of those fruits, and with selecting such as are of prime importance.

*To this man will I look, saith the Lord; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit (a).* Have these fruits of the Holy Ghost, humility, and repentance, been wrought in you? Are you thoroughly penetrated with the conviction of the inherent heinousness of sin? Do you acknowledge that every transgression of the divine law is treason against the sovereign of the universe: ingratitude to your most bounteous benefactor: abomination in the sight of a God of holiness: a forfeiture of the whole of that future reward, which was promised only to perfect obedience: and a just ground for the punishment denounced against all, who after receiving, as all men have received, ability

(a) *Isaiah, lxvi. 2. Matt. v. 3. Isaiah, lvii. 15.*

to perform their duty, shall be found guilty of any act of rebellion? Are you convinced, that by wilful transgression you have proved yourself rebellious? Are you convinced, by contemplating the depravity of the nature common to all men, and by the result of your personal experience, that you must despair, if abandoned to yourself, of resisting the future allurements of sin? Do you feel an abhorrence of sin because of its sinfulness? Are you earnestly solicitous to be delivered from sin, not merely on account of the penalty which it entails, but on account of its native deformity, its offensiveness in the sight of God? Do you begin to see the beauty and excellence of holiness? Are you submissively willing to be rescued from guilt and its consequences, and to be reconciled to God, by such methods, whatever they may be, as he in his wisdom shall ordain? Then *hath God granted* unto you the grace of *repentance*! Then hath he wrought in you by his Spirit that self-abasement, which is the foundation of justifying faith in the Lord Jesus!

*The just shall live by faith: and faith is the fruit of the spirit (b).* Is that fruit manifested in you? Do you receive with reverent ac-

(b) Habb. ii. 4. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. v. 22.

quiescence the scriptural revelation of the nature and the office of the Messiah? With respect to mysteries, concerning which the limited understanding of man is of itself utterly incompetent to pronounce any decision; do you bring every thought into captivity before the declarations of God? Do you behold your Redeemer as the teacher of the will of God to man? Do you behold his blood as the fountain opened for the washing away of sin? Do you look to him as the Lamb of God; the only, the all-sufficient sacrifice, by which atonement is made for transgressors? Do you cordially believe that there is salvation in no other: that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby you may be saved? Do you look up to him as your advocate, your continual intercessor with the Father? Do you elevate your thoughts to him as the King of kings; seated on the throne of glory at the right hand of God, Lord of angels and arch-angels, of principalities and powers throughout the whole extent of creation: as head over all things to his church, dispenser of light and strength and life, the raiser of the dead, the appointed judge of the world? Do you renounce as altogether indefensible, as irreconcilably repugnant to the divine plan  
of



of redemption, every pretension to the pardon of sin, every claim to the inheritance of the saints, grounded on any supposed merit of your own? Do you desire to be found at the last day justified exclusively through the righteousness of Christ; acceptable solely through the merits of his atonement? Then has *the grace of our Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, been exceeding abundant to you with faith which is in Christ, even the faith which is the operation of God (c).*

All Christians however are not as yet perfect Christians. All who are genuine members of the true church, the mystical body of our Lord, are not yet *come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (d).* There may be some in this congregation, who, at the same time that they humbly trust that they have laboured to obtain grace unto repentance and faith, perceive such ample grounds for deploring their deficiencies in both, that they tremble lest they should be regarded in the sight of God as effectually possessed of neither. Christ will not break the bruised reed. His lambs he will carry

(c) 1 Tim. i. 14. Heb. xii. 2. Col. ii. 12. (d) Eph. iv. 13.

in his bosom. He beholds with compassion and forbearance, he cheers with consolation and encouragement, the mourner who feareth for his soul. He strengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees. Examine then thine own breast, whosoever thou mayest be who art tempted to despond; examine whether it be thy earnest and habitual desire to be enabled to repent and to believe. Examine whether this be the spirit of thy supplications before the throne of grace: "Make me a contrite heart, O God! Lord!" "I believe: help thou mine unbelief." Examine whether thy sorrow for sin, thy exertions in pursuit of holiness, correspond with thy prayers. If to these enquiries thou receivest the answer of a good conscience, be comforted. Thou art already under the teaching of divine grace. Persevere in thy course; and the Lord Jesus will cause thy *godly sorrow to work repentance to salvation not to be repented of; and will perfect that which is lacking in thy faith. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (e).*

I proceed to the consideration of other fruits of the Holy Spirit.

(e) 2 Cor. vii. 10. 1 Thes. iii. 10. Matt. v. 6.

*The Lord direct your hearts, saith St. Paul, into the love of God. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (f).* Has the Holy Ghost shed abroad the love of God in your heart? Have you evidences to prove that you possess this fruit of the Spirit? Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength; and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent? Do you serve your Creator and Redeemer in simplicity and godly sincerity? Are you anxious to further, according to the talents and opportunities which you enjoy, the glory of God, and the kingdom of his Son? Among the fruits of the Spirit particularly mentioned by St. Paul, righteousness stands conspicuous: and righteousness, as exemplified in the exercise of holy dispositions towards the Deity, for of that branch alone of righteousness I at present speak, is a convincing proof of love to God. Have you this proof to bring forward? By piety, by devotion, by every act of religion which has God for its immediate object; by the cultivation of faith, and fear, and love, and gratitude, and resignation; do you witness before the world a good confession, that his favour is your aim, his salvation the prize which you

(f) 2 Thef. iii. 5. Rom. v. 5.

purſue? If it be your fervent deſire and your habitual prayer to be enabled to love the Lord your God; then are you already under the teaching of his Spirit. If you are thus enabled to ſet your heart upon him; then *hath God given unto you the Spirit of love: then the love of the Father is in you* (g).

*Ye yourſelves are taught of God to love one another. The Lord make you to increaſe and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men* (b). This alſo is the language of St. Paul to the Theſſalonians. Has God wrought in you the grace of love towards your fellow creatures? Do you love your neighbour as yourſelf, with a pure heart, and with charity unfeigned, fervently? Do you love him thus becauſe God commands you to love him thus; becauſe an apoſtle hath ſaid, that if God ſo loved us that he ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins, we ought alſo to love one another; becauſe your Saviour has declared, that love to others is the diſtinguiſhing mark, by which all men ſhall know that you are his diſciples (i)? Do you love your enemies? And do you love them becauſe, while ye were yet enemies, God

(g) 2 Tim. i. 7. 1 John, ii. 15. (b) 1 Theſ. iii. 12. iv. 9.

(i) 1 John, iv. 10, 11. John, xiii. 35.

loved us? *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Love, or as it is elsewhere expressed, Charity, suffereth long and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things* (k). Do you fulfil the law of justice to your neighbour by working no ill to him; by carefully abstaining from offering injury to his person, to his property, or to his good-name? Have you that love for him which suffereth long; which is slow to take offence, unwearied in forgiveness? Have you that love which is kind: which not only abounds in acts of good will to those who have manifested friendship towards you, or gratitude for benefits received from your hand; but, like the love of your heavenly Father, who maketh his sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good, and sendeth rain both on the just and on the unjust, overflows in bounteousness to the unthankful and the froward? Have you that love which envieth not: which coveteth not the advantages enjoyed by any other, grudgeth not his comforts, repineth not at his welfare? Have you that love which

(k) Rom. xiii. 10. 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7.

vaunteth not itself: that love which prompts you in honour to prefer one another; nourishes that distinguished fruit of the Spirit, *meekeuess*; remembers the words of the Lord Jesus, *Blessed are the meek*; restrains you from an ostentatious display of the pre-eminence in rank, in wealth, in authority, in abilities in knowledge, with which the common Master of all may have entrusted you? Have you that love which is not puffed up: which is clothed with humility; inspires a conviction of our own unworthiness; admonishes us to regard every additional degree of influence, every additional instrument of doing good, as a talent for the use of which we are to render an account before the judgment-seat of Christ; and thus, by reminding us of an awful responsibility, tempers the joy excited by the acquisition with awakened circumspection and holy fear? Have you that love which doth not behave itself unseemly: which assumes not a demeanour unsuitable to its station; but conducts itself with respectfulness to superiors, with courteousness to inferiors, with modesty and gentleness to all? Have you that love which seeketh not its own: that love which extinguisheth selfishness; which persuades you rather to submit to injustice than either  
to

to displease God; or needlessly to give offence to man; inclines you when despoiled of your cloak, rather to surrender your coat also than to maintain your rights with passion, or by unwarrantable methods; that love which proclaims, *look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others* (1); disposes you to consult in all your undertakings the benefit of others no less than of yourself; and determines you cheerfully to make large sacrifices of your own ease and advantage for the sake of promoting even the earthly comforts, and more especially the spiritual interests, of your neighbour? Have you that love which is not easily provoked: that love which governs the temper no less than the conduct; is not only long-suffering, unalienated by repeated injuries, but proves itself to be genuine by curbing every tendency to irritation, sharpness of humour, hastiness of language, harshness of deportment? Have you that love which thinketh no evil: that love which meditates no evil; permits not any unjust or ungenerous purpose against another to find shelter in your bosom, and starts back with pain from every suggestion which tempts

(1) Philipp. ii. 4.

you to thwart his welfare: that love which imputeth no evil; entertains not hard thoughts of your neighbour, charges him not with unsubstantiated guilt, nor treasures up unauthorised suspicions against him? Have you that love which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; that love, which beholds with grief not merely the success, but the very existence, of rapacity, of fraud, of malice, of slander, of every scheme and device of sin, the enemy of human happiness present and future; that love, which exults in the triumph of righteousness, in the manifestation of innocence, in the establishment of truth; in every event which evinces or confirms the power of the gospel over the hearts of men, and thus, while it redounds to the glory of God, ministers consolation and strength to his servants? Have you that love, which beareth all things; that love, which bears with the infirmities, whether bodily or mental, of others; dwells not upon errors, looks not upon defects; covers, draws a veil over, a multitude of failings; and, when they are forced upon thy notice, leads thee to behold them with tenderness and pity, and without any diminution of that affection, to which, on other grounds, thy relation, thy friend, or thy companion, is entitled



entitled from thee: and when it perceives a man overtaken with a fault, whispers to thee, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (m)? Have you that love, which believeth all things; not that credulous facility, which turns away its ear from the lessons of reason and experience; not that blind candour which calls evil good, and confounds the distinction established from everlasting to everlasting between him who serveth God and him who serveth him not: but that love, which presupposes uprightnes where it discerns not evidence of iniquity; listens with delight to any favourable interpretation of the conduct of another; puts the kindest construction on such of his words or actions as appear ambiguous; and welcomes every circumstance which tends to prove that he has not committed the offence ascribed to him, or that, if he committed it, he has returned from the error of his ways? Have you that love which hopeth all things; that love which, where it cannot rationally believe that good exists, encourages itself to presume that it will exist; is almost prepared, like Abraham, against hope to believe in hope; despairs not of the conversion of the sinner,

(m) Gal. vi. 1.

nor slackens its labours to promote it? Have you that love, which endureth all things; that love, which is ready to sustain hardships, to encounter dangers, to stand the brunt of ridicule and scorn; if thus it may be enabled to forward its first and dearest purpose, the advancement of the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind? If the attainment of this scriptural love of your neighbour be the object of your fervent wishes, of your continual supplications; then are you already under the teaching of the Spirit of God. If your dispositions and your conduct towards your neighbour correspond with these characteristics of Christian charity; then hath God empowered you by the Holy Ghost reverently to obey the command, *Let him who loveth God, love his brother also*: then have you purified your soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren (n).

There yet remains one class of gifts of the Holy Spirit, which requires, even in this very imperfect enumeration, briefly to be noticed: that class, namely, which respects the government of the sensual appetites. Among the fruits of the Spirit expressly mentioned by St.

(n) 1 John, iv. 21. 1 Pet. i. 22.

Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, we find *temperance* (*o*). Among the *works of the flesh*, which in the same chapter he describes as opposed to *the fruits of the spirit*; for *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other*; sins of impurity stand foremost. This observation may be extended to those portions of the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, in which he treats of the same subject (*o*). Purity, therefore, in its largest import and in its minutest subdivisions; purity of thought, of word, and of deed, is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Are you able to prove that these fruits of the Spirit are habitually brought forth and ripened in you? Are temperance and purity distinguishing virtues in your character? In proportion as your mind abhors the opposite crimes, you are under the teaching of the Spirit of God. If you are actually preserved *from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh*; then have you decisive evidence that you *walk in the spirit*.

Having placed before you these select examples of the proofs by which cordial acceptance and improvement of divine grace are to be ascertained; let me remark, in quitting

(*o*) Gal. v. 23; and see the whole passage, 16—25.

(*o*) Ephes. v. 3—9. Col. iii 5—10.

this branch of the subject, the unequivocal demonstrations by which St. Paul evinced that his heart was under the effectual influence of the Holy Spirit. What repentance and humility, what faith, what gratitude, what love towards God and our Saviour, breathe in the following expressions! *I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle; because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering; for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* (9). When he learns that the continuance of his thorn in the flesh will redound to the honour of his Lord; the infirmity which had so deeply grieved him instantly becomes a theme of rejoicing. *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmi-*

(9) 1 Cor. i. xv. 9, 10. 1 Tim. i. 12, 13. 15—17.

ties, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions; in distresses for Christ's sake (r). Hear his ardent declarations of affection for mankind, whether of the Jewish, or of the Gentile race. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that my self were accursed from Christ; that I were subjected to the temporal vengeance about to overtake the Jewish nation; or, as some learned expositors understand the original phrase, that I were made, after the example of Christ, a sacrifice unto death; for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith; I joy and rejoice (s).* Observe his earnest solicitude to subdue the corrupt appetites of human nature. *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a*

(r) 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. (s) Rom. ix. 1—4 x. 1. Eph. iii. 1—3. Philipp. ii. 17. See on Rom. ix. 3. Doddridge in loc. and Dr. Waterhouse's Sermons, vol. 1, p. 77.

*cast-away (t).* The testimony which in these passages of his writings the apostle incidentally bears concerning himself, is true. It was confirmed by his life and by his death. The indefatigable zeal which he exerted for the advancement of the gospel; the long course of sufferings which he cheerfully endured until they were closed by martyrdom; bore witness upon earth and will bear witness at the day of retribution, that his heart was governed by the Spirit of God.

In concluding this discourse, for the length to which the foregoing observations have extended themselves, compels me to defer to another occasion the consideration of the remainder of the subject; let me recommend to the attention of every person present, the character of that eminent apostle. Was he bound by the sovereignty of God, by the mercies of creation, of preservation, and of redemption, to be a faithful servant and soldier of the Lord Jesus? So likewise are you. Did he confess the obligation? You have confessed the same obligation times without number. Was the hand of Omnipotence stretched forth to help him? It is at all times stretched forth to help you. Were life and death eternal

(:) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

set before him? They are set before you likewise. Compare then his frame of mind with your own. Compare the proofs, which he gave, of acting stedfastly under the influence of divine grace, with the proofs which your conscience may be able to produce, that you are acting in your station of life in obedience to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Examine whether, like St. Paul, with an humble and penitent heart, you have discovered and acknowledged, that by the deeds of the law, by human works, by personal righteousness no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God. Examine whether, like him, you have sought for salvation solely through the blood of the Cross. Examine whether, like him, you have looked for sanctification solely by the grace of Christ: whether, like him, you attribute to that grace alone whatever measure of holiness you enjoy. Examine whether, like him, you love God and your Redeemer with all your soul. Examine whether, like him, you love your neighbour as yourself without dissimulation, with charity unfeigned, with a pure heart, fervently. Examine whether, like him, you keep under your body, and bring it into subjection. Thus may you be powerfully assisted in forming your

judgement, whether as yet, like St. Paul, you are under the effectual guidance of the Spirit of grace; whether you are at present authorized to hope, that you are one of those, to whom, as unto St. Paul, the Lord Jesus will give a crown of glory at the last day.



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## SERMON V.

On the Nature and Efficacy of Divine  
Grace.

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2 COR. xii. 9.

*And he said unto me, " My grace is sufficient  
" for thee : for my strength is made perfect  
" in weakness."*

**T**HE necessity, and the universality, of divine grace, the means by which it is to be obtained, and the fruits by which its influence is characterised, have already been laid before you. In pursuance, therefore, of my original design, I proceed to demonstrate on scriptural grounds the truth of the concluding lesson, which I stated as deducible from the text.

V. The grace of Christ is all-sufficient.

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For the elucidation of this general proposition, let the leading particulars which it comprehends be distinctly examined.

1. Divine grace is sufficient to supply strength to withstand temptation.

He who is Head over all things to his church, he who hath all power in earth and heaven, is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He who has instructed, who has commanded, his disciples to make deliverance from temptation one of the objects of their daily prayer, will not disregard the petition. He will not suffer them to be tempted above that which they are able to endure; but with the temptation will also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. However attractive may be the allurements, however profound the deceit, however rugged the obstacle, however alarming the danger, by which sin may strive to seduce or to deter you from the way that leadeth unto life; He who knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust, will open a path by which you may turn aside from the extremity of the trial: and that path he will give you wisdom to discern, and strength to pursue.

Are we then required, are we authorised, that we may put to the proof the grace bestowed upon

upon us, needlessly to expose ourselves to the assaults of sin? God forbid! *It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (a).* If thou prayest not to be led into temptation, plunge not thyself into temptation. Are we to despise temptations which we cannot avoid? God forbid! *Happy is the man who feareth always. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall (b).* Are we to repose, when tempted, with indolent security on the scriptural covenant of support? God forbid! He who has promised to bestow food on man, requires that man should till the field and reap the harvest. Wouldst thou obtain, wouldst thou preserve, the assistance of the Spirit of God? Employ the appointed means: To humility, to prayer, to dependence on God through Christ, add watchfulness, diligence, and exertion. Then will he, who sendeth the former, and the latter rain upon the earth, shower down his all-sufficient grace upon thy heart.

But you are depressed by sad experience of your inherent infirmity and corruption! Past failures and transgressions crowd upon your remembrance; and appal you with gloomy

(a) Matt. iv. 7.

(b) Prov. xxviii. 14. 1 Cor. x. 12.

forebodings as to the event of future temptations. You are half prepared to conclude in the moment of despondence, that you are by nature weaker than the weakest; that the promises of the gospel will always be preached to you in vain. If, in manifest contradiction to the unequivocal declarations of the gospel, you will not believe that its promises extend to you and to all men; if in direct opposition to its plainest commandments, you are become weary of well-doing, and determined against exertion; if you will neither hold fast faith, nor labour after holiness: most truly do you affirm that the word of life will in vain have been preached unto you. If you refuse to follow the standard of the Lord Jesus; you will not be found among those to whom he is the captain of salvation. But if you rest with undoubting confidence on the scriptural covenant of grace; if in sincerity of heart you are truly desirous of being rescued from the bondage of sin, and of living henceforth as the servant of righteousness; if you are ready to take up your cross, to submit to discipline, and to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ: turn to the scriptures, and behold them recording for your sake the fulfilment of their own promises. Turn to the scriptures, and behold them recording for your encouragement,

couragement, for your consolation, various examples of the power of the grace of Christ made perfect in weakness: examples, wherein the grace of Christ displayed its sufficiency by transforming timidity into fortitude, and rendering those who had sunk under former and feebler temptations, finally and stedfastly triumphant. In an early period of our Saviour's ministry, Nicodemus was convinced that he was an instructor commissioned from above. *We know, said he, that thou art a teacher sent from God. For no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.* He was anxious to receive instructions from this heavenly guide; and came to request them. But how did he come? Did he come openly, in the face of day; like one whose heart, occupied with the concerns of salvation, was superior to worldly consequences; like one who, supremely bent on pleasing God, was indifferent to the opinions of men? He came like a man ashamed of his purpose; secretly, by stealth, in the darkness of night. He dreaded to be discovered. He recoiled at the idea of being derided by his unbelieving countrymen. He loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Some time afterwards, in the course of our Redeemer's history, we

meet Nicodemus again. The Pharisees, resolved on the destruction of Christ, had sent officers to seize him. These emissaries, returning without their prey, were sharply reprehended by their employers. On that occasion Nicodemus ventured to enquire; *Doth our Law judge any man before it bear him, and know what he doeth (c) ?* And in return he was scornfully asked whether he also was of Galilee, whether he was a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth; an avowal to which his courage and sincerity were not equal. He had apparently made some small advances in conscientious resolution; but was still in a great measure remaining under the habitual influence of worldly fear. When our Lord was at length apprehended and condemned to be crucified; Nicodemus seems to have been silent. We may be assured that he did not give his consent to the deed. We may be assured that he abhorred it. But the scriptures furnish no foundation for believing that he confessed his Saviour in the hour of his distress; or even that he stood forward to give his voice against the shedding of innocent blood. Soon however we shall contemplate him with emotions very different from those, which his past conduct has excited. But let

(c) John, vii. 51.

us in the mean time turn our attention to a person of a kindred character, Joseph of Arimathea. He also had been a disciple of Jesus; and, like Nicodemus, *secretly, for fear of the Jews*. He, like Nicodemus, was a man of eminence, *a rich man and a counsellor*; and, like Nicodemus, had not dared to encounter for conscience-sake the contempt and indignation of the people. But being *a just and good man*; holding flagrant crimes in detestation, and sincere in his desires not actively to violate his duty as a religious man, much as he had hitherto failed as to the courageous performance of it; he would have no share in the perpetration of a legal murder. He *had not consented to the counsel and deed* of the Jewish rulers; contenting himself, as appears probable, like Nicodemus, with testifying his disapprobation of their proceedings by absenting himself from their assembly. Now behold the sanctifying and strengthening power of divine grace! This man on the evening of the day on which our Saviour died, went unto Pilate; went *boldly*, saith one of the evangelists (*d*), to mark the difference between his former cowardice and the religious fortitude with which he was now inspired; this man went in boldly to Pilate, and requested the body of Jesus. He who had himself waited

\* (*d*) Mark, xv. 43.

for the kingdom of God ; in full expectation that it was about to be established, and in decided assurance that Jesus was the long-predicted King and Redeemer of Israel ; he who, with this expectation, with this assurance, had never dared, while that King and Redeemer was alive, to confess his authority and confide in his protection : Now, when all his apostles had forsaken him and fled ; when the multitudes who had so lately rent the air with hosannas to the son of David, had successfully clamoured for his crucifixion ; when to human eyes his claims were disproved, his promises falsified, and all the hopes of his kingdom extinguished by his death ; when he had died as a malefactor, as a criminal accused and convicted of treason against Cæsar ; when to shew reverence to his memory, or even to mention his name with respect, would be a circumstance sufficient to subject any man to the suspicion of being an accomplice in the guilt imputed to the King of the Jews : this man, in the face of Jerusalem, went in boldly unto the Roman governor, and requested the body of Jesus, that he might bury it in the most honourable manner, and in the sepulchre which he had prepared for himself. In the discharge of these last offices, on his part perhaps the first offices, of pious and undis-

guised



guised veneration to his Lord; he had a companion. And whom? Nicodemus! Nicodemus had resembled Joseph in timidity; and now partook of his boldness. Disregarding all surmises, armed against all consequences; he came *and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linnen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury (e).* Whence was this fortitude? Did it belong to Joseph and Nicodemus by nature? Their antecedent conduct has answered the question. It was the work of the Spirit of God; the fruit of strengthening grace. The Spirit of grace, which strengthened Joseph and Nicodemus, is ready to strengthen you.

Do you desire another example? Look to the apostle Peter. You know his shameful fall. You know his denial of his Lord: a denial deliberate, thrice repeated, confirmed by oaths and execrations. When restored by his forgiving master to the rank of an apostle; he was forewarned of *the death by which he should glorify God (f).* Did he now display a dread of danger? Did he now shrink from suffering? Did the full prospect of death now move him? The prayer which his Lord had

(e) John, xix. 39, 40.

(f) John, xxi. 18, 19.

offered for him had prevailed. *His faith failed not. Converted himself, he strengthened his brethren (g).* He became the rock on which Christ laid the foundation of his church, both among the Jews and among the Gentiles. He was entrusted with the keys of the sheepfold of Christ; and opened the door of admission to both divisions of the flock (*b*). And though, on one subsequent occasion, he was ensnared by some slight remains of natural timidity into an undue compliance with the prejudices of the Jews; and received on that account the merited rebuke from St. Paul (*i*), whom he afterwards names with a warmth of affection probably increased by the recollection of this very event (*k*): he persevered with holy fortitude in his Christian course, until it conducted him to that cross, on which his master had foretold that he should seal his testimony with his blood. Thus effectual was the intercession of Christ. Thus all-sufficient was his grace. Christ now intercedes before the throne of God for you. To you he offers the all-sufficient influence of his Spirit. *Having therefore an high priest, which can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;*

(g) Luke, xxii. 32. (b) Compare Matt. xvi. 18, 19. with Acts, ii. 14—41. and x. 1—48. (i) Gal. ii. 11—14. (k) 2 Pet. iii. 15.

*an high Priest who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (1).*

But these, you remark, are primeval examples, exhibited in the days of the apostles. You would derive greater comfort from instances drawn from modern times and ordinary men. Take an instance then from the annals of your own country. Look to the character and conduct of Cranmer. In the general current of his proceedings, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, you behold a struggle between a mind intent on a conscientious adherence to duty, and a disposition naturally characterised by timidity. You behold him at one time strengthening himself with succour sought from above; and steadily pursuing his Christian purposes, regardless of the resentment of a furious, and ungovernable monarch: at another, the victim of inherent weakness, tamely subservient to his master's will, overawed into culpable compliances. When danger, after the accession of Mary, mustered its terrors; Cranmer sunk in the conflict. Less fervent in seeking succour from above, in the hour of tempta-

(1) Heb. iv. 15, 16.

tion he fell away. He renounced his faith! Again he looked to the grace of Christ, and he found it all-sufficient. Behold him chained to the stake, as the wind disperses at intervals the volumes of fire and smoke in which he is enveloped. Behold his undaunted demeanour: his face full of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, as it were the face of an angel. Behold him stretching forth into the flames the hand which had signed the recantation; and surveying with a stedfast eye the flesh wasting from the sinews, bone dropping away from bone. Hear him exclaiming with exulting fervor; "This hand offended; "this hand shall suffer, this unworthy hand." Contemplate this spectacle; this insensibility to pain, this sacred fortitude, this substantial repentance, this complete subjugation of nature and its besetting sin: and say whether this is not the triumph of grace, whether this is not the finger of God.

2. The grace of Christ is sufficient to enable his servants to perform efficaciously unto his glory the undertakings, with which he entrusts them.

*This is the word of the Lord: Not by might nor by power; but by My Spirit. saith the Lord of hosts. Without me, saith our Saviour. ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified,*  
*thus*

*that ye bear much fruit (m).* Look to the display which the Scriptures spread before you of the perfections of God; and you will immediately be convinced, that such a Being will in no instance require from his creatures any one act of obedience, which they are not thoroughly enabled to perform: and that no instance of service, however difficult, can be required from the weakest of his creatures, to which he cannot render that weakest of his creatures equal. Look to the examples which the sacred writings exhibit of the efficacy of divine grace, in strengthening holy men of old to execute every undertaking, to which God, for the manifestation of his glory, was pleased to call them: and your conscience will proclaim to you that if, at any hour, and under any circumstances, you fail to discharge the duties, trying as they may be, of the situation in which the Lord who appointeth your lot shall have placed you; it is not because the grace of Christ is not all-sufficient: it is because you ask it not, or ask it amiss, or refuse to employ it when bestowed. When Moses was commanded to return after an absence of forty years into Egypt, and to declare his commission to the king and to the Israelites; his feeble-

(m) Zech. iv. 6. John, xv. 5. 8.

ness and his infirmities overwhelmed him with despondence. *Who am I*, he replied, *that I should go unto Pharaoh; and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? O my Lord! I am not eloquent: I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. Behold! I am of uncircumcised lips; and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me? The children of Israel will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice.* What was the reply of the Almighty? *Certainly, I will be with thee. Who hath made man's mouth: or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. See, I have made thee a God unto Pharaoh. The children of Israel shall hearken unto thy voice* (n). Were not these promises fulfilled to the uttermost? Was not God with Moses? Did not Pharaoh tremble at his presence? Did not the Israelites believe him? Were they not delivered from Egyptian bondage by his hand? Additional testimonies crowd upon you. Look to the example of the apostle, whose words we are applying to our edification. Look to the support which he received from divine grace under that very thorn in the flesh, to which they allude. Hear his own expres-

(n) Exod. iii. 11, 12, 18. iv. 1. 10—12. vi. 30. vii. 1.

sions in the verses immediately subsequent to the text. *I take pleasure in infirmities for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds* (o). Hear his language on the same subject to the Galatians. *My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not nor rejected: but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them unto me* (p). Did not the grace of Christ here prove itself all-sufficient? Did it not prove itself all-sufficient, when it enabled the apostles, twelve obscure and helpless individuals, destitute of human attainments, of human strength, so successfully to preach Christianity, a religion equally odious to the Jews and to the Gentiles; that in the face of universal opposition, it speedily numbered thousands and tens of thousands under its banners in almost every region of the known world? Did it not prove it self all-sufficient, when it enabled the seed of the gospel, though planted in a barren and degenerated soil; though to

(o) 2 Cor. xii. 10—12.

(p) Gal. iv. 14, 15.

appearance inconsiderable as a grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all herbs; so speedily to bring forth to millions the peaceable fruits of righteousness: so speedily to assume the form of that mighty tree whose branches shall overspread the earth? Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you. All are come to pass unto you: and not one thing hath failed thereof (q). Judge from the past to the future. Know that He, who has hitherto proved himself true, will prove himself a God of truth for ever. He offers his grace for your acceptance. He pronounces his grace all-sufficient. Be assured that, *whatsoever ye do*, his grace is ready to enable you to do it to the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ (r).

3. The grace of Christ is sufficient to give comfort under afflictions, and to convert them into means of improvement in faith and holiness.

*Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I*

(q) Joshua, xxiii. 14.

(r) 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 Pet. iv. 11.



*kept thy word. Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope. Nevertheless, God comforteth those that are cast down (s). By whom? By the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Did not God abundantly comfort in ancient days that pattern of affliction, Job? Did not the Lord accept Job, and give unto Job twice as much as he had before? Did not he sanctify the afflictions of Job to the welfare of his soul; teaching him by salutary discipline to abhor himself, and to repent in dust and ashes? And does not the language of St. Paul, in the bitterest season of his sorrows, demonstrate that he welcomed affliction as a blessing sent from a wise and merciful Father; that he rejoiced in it as an instrument of growth in grace? Hear him addressing the elders of Ephesus: Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem; not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me: neither count I my life dear unto myself; so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. Nay, as he adds on other occasions, in all*

(s) Hebr. xii. 6. Psalm cxix. 67. 71. Rom. v. 3, 4. 2 Cor. vii. 6.

*these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. I am filled with comfort ; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation. For, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ (t).* Are not here the fruits of all-sufficient grace? Sanctify then, in all your sufferings, the Lord God in your hearts. By prayer, by patience, by self-examination, by unremitting endeavours to correct and amend in yourself whatever offendeth the eyes of your heavenly Father, strive to forward his gracious purpose. So shall the peace of God which passeth knowledge be poured by the Holy Ghost the Comforter into your heart. So shall your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory !

4. The grace of Christ is sufficient for salvation.

*It is the grace of God wherein ye stand. It is the grace of God which bringeth salvation. It is the Holy Spirit of God, sent forth by Christ Jesus, that he may abide with men for ever,*

(t) Acts, xx. 22—24. Rom. viii. 37. 2 Cor. i. 3—5. vii. 4.

whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (u). St. Paul felt the sufficiency of the grace of Christ unto salvation, when he exclaimed, on the prospect of approaching martyrdom: *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day (w).* He that endureth unto the end shall be saved: and the grace of Christ whereby you may be enabled to endure unto the end, is effectually placed within the reach of every man. Of the numbers of those who shall stretch forth their arms and embrace it, and hold it stedfastly unto salvation, we know little. That is a secret placed beyond the veil, which separates time from eternity. Yet have the skirts of that veil been so far lifted up by the hand of prophecy, as to cheer our present darkness with glimpses of the more than mortal light which glows behind. *The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our*

(u) 1 Pet. v. 12. Tit. ii. 11. Eph. iv. 30. (w) 2 Tim. i. 12. iv. 7, 8.

*Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. Many shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South; and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (x). That you may form some estimation of the countless myriads of the redeemed saints, the inheritors of everlasting life; contemplate the armies of heaven, represented as attendants on the triumphs of the Son of God in the emblematical visions of the Apocalypse: a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands; and crying with a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb! Allelujab! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth (y). Here behold the sufficiency of the grace of Christ unto salvation! How were all these countless myriads saved? Not an individual of the number was saved but by the grace of Christ. Do you rejoice in the contemplation of the innumerable hosts of the blessed? Rejoice with trembling. Innumerable as*

(x) Isaiah, xi. 9. Habak. ii. 14. Rev. xi. 15. Matth. viii. 11. Luke, xiii. 28. 29. (y) Rev. vii. 9. xix. 6. 14.

they are, the earth, from the generations which she has hitherto nourished in her bosom; from that which she now nourishes; from those which in due succession she shall nourish, before the dawning of the great day of the Lord; can supply these and yet larger multitudes to be inhabitants of heaven, without including you. She can supply these and yet larger multitudes to the regions of bliss eternal; and still may behold from among her children multitudes equally exceeding the power of computation consigned to misery everlasting. In which of these multitudes shall you be found? One fact is incontrovertible. *No unclean person, nor covetous man, nor any man who is a murderer, or a thief, or a liar, or a drunkard, or a reviler, or an extortioner, or a reveller, or seditious, or guilty of heresy, or of variance, or of hatred, or of strife, or of emulations, or of envyings, or of any such crimes, or any other habitual sin, shall inherit the kingdom of God* (z). If you live as one of the *unrighteous*; if you *fulfil the works of the flesh*; if you subject yourself to the dominion of any unchristian temper or practice; you will *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*. But the

(z) Eph. v. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19—21. Rev. xxi. 8. xxii. 15.

grace of Christ, which has already proved itself sufficient to the salvation of millions of your fellow-sinners, is sufficient, if you will seek for it and profit by it, for yours. Then will it qualify you to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit ; and to prove that you are Christ's, by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. Then shall it sanctify you unto the day of redemption ; unto that day when you shall join in the triumphant song of the *ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands* of the spirits of just men made perfect : *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever ! For thou wast slain ; and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood (a).*

Let me now endeavour to apply to two classes of persons of opposite descriptions, some portion of the instruction, which the general subject of the present and of the two preceding discourses may suggest.

I. I would in the first place address myself to those persons, who have hitherto neglected or despised the grace of God.

Are your eyes open to your situation ? What is the object which you neglect or

(a) Rev. v. 9. 11. 13.

despise ?

despise? Is it an object of no importance? Is it an object of little moment? Is it an object of temporary concern? It is the grace of God indispensably necessary, by your own confession indispensably necessary, to everlasting salvation. It is an object so pre-eminent in magnitude and in duration, that every other object which can interest the heart of man is in comparison but the weight of a grain of dust, the occupation of a moment. This grace of God you neglect or despise.

That you should disregard the acquisition of a blessing thus inconceivably great without reasons of the strongest nature, would be madness almost beyond credibility. Perhaps then you regard the attainment of it as hopeless. Perhaps you have discovered in the charter of grace some clause of exception, which singles you out from the rest of your species; severs and fixes you apart from the objects of mercy; and debars you from the possibility of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which you may be sanctified unto life eternal! You do not plead this apology. You confess that your heavenly Father has ever treated you, and still treats you, as one of his children: that the offer of divine grace is universal: that to you is the word of this salvation sent: that to you it has been given

to hear the invitation, and to understand the promise, of the Holy Spirit: that, whatever may have been the causes which have prevented you from obeying the call and accepting the boon, want of power has not been of the number.

But perhaps you imagine that efforts on your part are to have no share in the attainment of the grace of Christ: that your exertions would be either presumptuous, or useless, or needless: that it is your duty to wait in patient inactivity unto the time when it may please God, who worketh all in all, to vouchsafe to you the gift of his Holy Spirit. These are not your thoughts. You have not thus grossly misunderstood the scriptures. You confess that, although it be God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure; you feel yourselves no less efficaciously free, no less truly moral agents in the acquisition of divine grace than you are in the acquisition of any of the gifts of God which you are to collect from the bosom of the earth. You confess that Jesus Christ, who commands that his grace be sought by the use of means; has not left you either ignorant of the means, or incapable of employing them. You confess that prayer, animated by suitable dispositions and urged with due perseverance, is a necessary and certain instrument



ment by which the influence of the Holy Spirit in abundance proportioned to our need is to be drawn down from heaven : and that a reverent and edifying application of grace already received is an indispensable condition, not of its increase only, but of its continuance.

Perhaps then you may be doubtful, for there is scarcely any measure of self-deception too large to find admission into the human heart, whether you may not already be under the effectual guidance of the Spirit of God. You may be of opinion that there are not any unequivocal marks, by which his presence may be ascertained; nor any tokens, which are infallible indications of his absence. Yet assuredly I have again failed to specify the causes of your disregard. What is the language of your secret thoughts, but an acknowledgement that the splendor of noon and the blackness of midnight are not removed, each from the other, by a distance more wide, by characters more striking, than those which separate and discriminate the works of the flesh from the fruits of the Spirit? What is their language but an acknowledgement that you detect within your bosom proofs too plain to be contróverted that it is the habitation of worldly lusts, not the Temple

ple of the Holy Ghost; that you have not the Spirit of Christ, and are therefore none of his?

It is possible, however, that you may distrust the sufficiency of the grace of Christ. You may have become persuaded, that to a being by nature so unholy, by transgression so depraved, as yourself; to such a being encompassed by the snares, and assailed by the malignity, of the powers of darkness, the divine assistance is granted in vain. But your hearts recoil from this supposition. You "believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and "Giver of life." You believe in the omnipotence of God. You do not exalt Satan to the sovereignty of the universe. You are convinced that he whom God blesteth is blessed; that he whom God assisteth must be victorious: that he who taketh to himself the whole armour of God, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, will be able to withstand all the wiles of the devil, to quench all his fiery darts, and to lay hold in the strength of divine grace on the crown of everlasting salvation. What then am I to conclude? For what cause, unhappy victim of delusion, disregardest or despisest thou the riches of the grace of

6

Christ?

Christ? If thou art unable or unwilling to answer the question; I read the true reply in the word of God: *After thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath.* Thy neglect, thy contempt, of divine grace springs from hardness of heart, from stubborn reluctance to repent. Hence thou art insensible to danger, careless as to consequences. *The God of this world has blinded thy mind.* In the centre of the fulness of the light of the gospel, thou hast hitherto lived in wilful darkness. Surrounded with all the blessings of Christian instruction, all the benefits and encouragements of Christian communion; thou hast hitherto displayed the ignorance or the indifference of a heathen. Stationed on the verge of a boundless eternity, into which thou must shortly pass; elevated on an eminence, whence thou mayest behold the regions of everlasting bliss, and the abodes of never-ending woe; thou hast conducted thyself as though the prospect were an airy vision, as though death were a perpetual sleep. Year after year the Spirit of God has stretched forth his hand to pluck thee as a brand out of the burning; but thine hand thou hast obstinately withdrawn. His hand is stretched out still. Dost thou still withdraw thine? Repentance is not yet

yet too late even for thee. Dost thou still refuse the grace of repentance? From the throne of heaven God calls thee to himself. To-day, if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost invite thee to pardon, redemption, sanctification. They invite thee to salvation: they pledge the promise of the unchangeable Godhead to give thee strength, if even yet thou wilt accept strength, to attain salvation. To prefer perdition is within thy choice. Dost thou choose hell or heaven?

2. To those among you who have laboured to obtain the grace of Christ, and to apply to its proper object the strength which is granted from above, meditations on the nature and the efficacy of the promised gift of the Spirit of God are perhaps not less important than to the careless or the hardened sinner. You may not need, like the careless and the hardened, continually to be reminded that the guidance and support of the Holy Ghost, purchased by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, are essential to salvation, are freely offered to all men, are placed within the grasp of every man: for you have sought them, you still seek them, as necessary to you, as proposed to you, as attainable by you. You may not equally with the inconsiderate and the scorner require

require to be admonished that divine grace is to be drawn down by prayer; to be discerned by its fruits; to be cherished as all-sufficient: for to prayer you have trusted for the acquisition of it; its fruits are, in a measure more or less ample, visible in your lives; its sufficiency to present peace and final salvation is the sheet-anchor of your souls. But are not you the children of Adam? Are not you compassed with infirmity? Are not you assailed, day after day, by inherent corruption? Are not you perpetually under the eye of that adversary, who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour? Do not omissions of known duty, do not transgressions of acknowledged commandments, unceasingly arise before your consciences; covering you with shame, teaching you that of yourselves you are nothing, constraining you to admire the long suffering of God? Do not you read in the word of truth: *When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity; in his sin that he hath sinned he shall die (b)?* Do not you hear the voice of your Lord: *The branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If a man abide not in me; he is cast forth as a branch that is withered; as a*

(b) Ezek. xviii. 24. See also 26; and xxxiii. 12, 13, 18.

branch that is to be *cast into the fire* (c)? What is the conclusion to be deduced from these passages? A conclusion supported by many positive texts no less than by the decided tenor of holy writ; that grace received may be lost: that grace abused will be withdrawn: that a man may fall from grace: that the most righteous man may plunge himself into everlasting damnation. Is thy *name* written in the *book of life*? Be it so. Beware lest it be *blotted out* (d). *Be not high-minded therefore, but fear. Behold* with astonishment and gratitude *the goodness of God* in making thee a partaker of his grace: *towards thee, goodness.* Goodness that shall ensure to thee salvation? On one condition—*if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off* (e):

Grieve not then the Holy Spirit of God, ye who at present stand fast in grace: provoke not your Saviour to take his holy Spirit from you. Abide in your Lord; and he will abide in you. Continue branches of the true vine: and you shall receive abundant nurture. Persevere in prayer: flee from temptation: abstain from all appearance of evil. Examine your life and conversation by the stan-

(c) John, xv. 4. 6. (d) Rev. iii. 5. (e) Rom. xi. 20. 22.

dard of the gospel. Probe your heart to the bottom. Compare your present state with your state at antecedent periods. Learn whether you *grow in grace*; whether you make a visible advance, a regular progress, in the course of Christian attainments. If you find yourself now on the same spot, at which you had long since arrived: where in the mean time has been your exertion? Where has been your solicitude? Where your remembrance of God? Where your love for your Redeemer? Where your reverence for the Spirit of sanctification? However fair may be the blossom, however promising the early fruit: if that fruit, unresponsive to showers and dews and summer-suns, advance not towards maturity; it proves itself to be the production of a withering branch, a branch in danger of being cut off and cast into the fire. But if it be indeed undeniable that you have ceased to press forward towards the mark of your high calling in Christ Jesus: do you flatter yourself with the hope that you have remained stationary? On the abrupt and slippery ascent, which leads from earth to heaven, do you hope that, while you have remitted your exertions to climb the steep, you have preserved

served yourself from sliding backward? The loss of the fruits of many former, many laborious efforts, is, I fear, only one among the deprivations and disadvantages which you have to deplore. You have returned towards the world which you had forsaken. You have habituated yourself to sloth and unconcern. You have supplied encouragement to your spiritual enemies. You have manifested indifference towards the Spirit of grace. *Be watchful then, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. Remember how thou hast received, and heard: and hold fast, and repent. Remember from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do thy first works: and I will not blot out thy name, saith thy Lord, out of the book of life (f).*

(f) Rev. ii. 5. iii. 2, 3. 5.



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## S E R M O N . VI.

On the Marks which distinguish a real  
Christian.

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GAL. V. 24.

*They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh  
with the affections and lusts.*

**U**NCERTAINTY is the characteristic of earthly pursuits. All is vague, ambiguous, insecure, transitory, unsatisfactory. The sower knows not whether harvest will reward his labours. The merchant cannot pronounce whether his vessel will return with the expected cargo. The mariner, gazing on the blue vapours of the horizon, doubts whether the object to which he directs his course be a mountain or a cloud. *Man walketh in a vain shadow; and disquieteth himself in vain*

Not so with respect to the concerns of eternity. There every thing is determinate and immutable. Heaven and Hell stand revealed before man. The rewards provided for the servants of Christ, the punishments in store for those who disregard his offers of mercy, are established for everlasting in the word of truth; are so clearly displayed, that he who runneth may read and understand. Their voice is gone out into all lands; and their sound unto the ends of the world. Is additional illumination needed? The gospel supplies it. To enlighten the blind; to shame the self-deceiver; to cheer the righteous on his way; to awe the guilty into contrition; the faithful and the wicked are discriminated by marks, which ignorance cannot mistake nor craftiness elude.

In various passages of Scripture those persons in all countries to whom the Christian religion has been preached, for at present it is unnecessary to speak of heathen nations, are divided into two classes: into those that are Christ's, and those that are not Christ's. These two bodies of men are also delineated under other representations, which bear the same import with the preceding description. Thus those that are Christ's are

occa-

occasionally characterised as born of the Spirit; walking in the Spirit; the children of God; the elect of God; the doers of the law; the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Those that are not Christ's are described as walking in the flesh; fulfilling the lusts of the flesh; the children of this world; the unfruitful hearers of the law; the servants of Satan; the heirs of damnation. All of us who are here assembled, belong to the one or to the other, of these two divisions of the human race. We are Christ's; or we are not Christ's. If we are Christ's, and if through the blessed influence of the holy Spirit, which will assuredly attend earnest prayers and zealous exertions on our own part, we continue Christ's unto the end; we shall be received after death into the kingdom of heaven, through the atoning blood of our Redeemer. If we are not Christ's, and remain in that situation till we die; we have to look, as the Scriptures unequivocally declare, for that place only, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched.

If this statement be just; surely every person present, who has any serious concern for his soul, must feel how inexpressibly important it is to satisfy himself whether, in his

existing state of heart and life, he is Christ's, or not.

This is a question which God expects you to answer, every one for himself. There is only one method by which you can learn a true answer to it. Some persons enthusiastically conceive that they can discern by certain inward sensations and impulses, which they attribute to the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost upon their minds, that they are Christ's. Others are willing to conclude that they are Christ's, because they have been baptized into his church; attend public worship and the sacraments with tolerable regularity; and lead, according to their own estimation and the general opinion of the world, decently good lives. Others persuade themselves that Christ will acknowledge them at last for his, because he is very merciful; and because, unholy as they have been, they are satisfied that surrounding multitudes have been as unholy as themselves. All these modes of judging are fatal delusions. What is the true method? *To the law and to the testimony.* Search the Scriptures. They contain ample descriptions of the persons who are Christ's. If, on deeply examining your heart and conduct as in the presence of God, you discover adequate

quate grounds for belief that those descriptions may be applied to yourself; you have reason humbly to trust that you are Christ's. If you perceive that they cannot fairly be applied to yourself; conclude that at present you are not Christ's.

Search then the Scriptures for the answer to your question. Among the many passages relating to the subject, perhaps there is not one from which you may collect the true reply more easily than from the verse immediately under our consideration. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* And consequently, they who have not crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, are not Christ's. Brethren, every one of you may judge of his own state for himself.

*The love of Christ, saith the apostle on another occasion, constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: we judge that if Christ died for all men, it is a proof that but for his death all men would have fallen short of pardon and eternal life: and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again (a).* This living unto Christ he deno-

(a) 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

minates in the text crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts. *This I say, then, as he writes in an earlier part of the chapter ; Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other.* Having subjoined a copious catalogue of deeds of iniquity which he terms *the works of the flesh* ; the works to which our corrupt and fleshly nature of itself would draw us ; and concerning which he pronounces that they, who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God ; he enumerates sundry Christian virtues as among the fruits of the Spirit ; as contrary to our naturally sinful dispositions, and as created, nurtured and ripened in us only by the influence of the Spirit of God : for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do that which is right ; and he worketh by the agency of the Holy Ghost. And in order to qualify every person to examine and judge for himself whether he is living to the Spirit and to Christ, and is therefore authorised to hope for mercy and salvation ; or whether he is living to the flesh, and is therefore still lying in a state of condemnation ; St. Paul concludes with this short and explicit rule : *They that are Christ's have*  
*cruci-*

*crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

Let me now endeavour to assist you in judging whether you are living to Christ, or to the flesh, by setting before you some of the scriptural tests, which distinguish from a corrupt and unregenerate world those who belong to the Lord Jesus.

I. To crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, is, in the first place, to make it the business of life to overcome, through the ever present grace of God, the evil dispositions and desires of human nature ; and to abstain from the evil actions to which those dispositions and desires would lead. . And on what principle are you thus to crucify the flesh ? You are to crucify it for the sake of Jesus Christ. You are to abhor and renounce sin because it was the occasion of his sufferings. From love and gratitude to your Redeemer for the unspeakable kindness which he has shewn towards yourself, you are to forsake whatever is displeasing in his sight. He died for you : and you are to live unto him. If you will not live unto him in this world, you will not be received into his kingdom in the next. These are fundamental truths which

th eScriptures teach you plainly, and before hand. You are here placed, in this respect, upon your trial; with your understandings previously informed, with your eyes open to inevitable consequences. Consider; then well, each of you for yourself. Are you living to Christ? If you wilfully indulge yourself in any wicked principles, in any wicked habit; you certainly are not living unto him. If you are polluted with any impure practice; you are not living unto Christ, but unto the flesh and the devil. If your heart swells with hatred, or contracts with envy; you are not living unto Christ. If you are proud; or covetous; or a drunkard; or a reveller: you are not living unto Christ. Cast your eyes on some of the verses preceding the text: and you will read, if your character be found among those which I have specified, an express declaration concerning yourself, that you shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Deceive not yourself by irrelevant speculations. Say not within your bosom; "If this be the case, how few will be saved!" That is not your concern. The point which is important to you is this: that God has solemnly pronounced, that neither the unclean person, nor the envious, nor he who cherishes hatred  
or



or seeks for revenge, nor the drunkard, nor the slanderer, nor the proud, nor the contentious, nor the covetous, nor any man who will not labour stedfastly to live unto Christ, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Will not you credit the word of your Judge? Do you charge the God of truth with falsehood? Hath he spoken and shall he not do it? Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good? Beware lest you be convinced when it is too late. If you are living in any habitual sin; consider yourself as a person still lying under the curse of the law, under the sentence of condemnation. Attempt not to elude the denunciations of God by dangerous and groundless hopes that he will be merciful in cases, with respect to which he has forewarned you, and has forewarned you in terms as plain as language can furnish, that he will not shew mercy, but will allow his justice to pursue its course. Know that his threatenings will be fully executed against yourself; unless you submit to those means, through which alone mercy is held forth to you, and become invested with those qualifications, by which alone you can be rendered meet to receive it. O Lord our God! Thou art unspeakably merciful; otherwise no man would see salvation. From the cloud in which thou  
passedst

passedst before Moses, thou proclaimedst thy name to be *merciful*. Thou proclaimedst thyself, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*. But thou proclaimedst thyself also to be a God *that will by no means clear the guilty* (b). Thou wilt not shew mercy in a way which would contradict thy own word. Thou wilt not shew mercy in a way which would minister encouragement to sin. Thou wilt not shew mercy to those who remain obstinate in carelessness and transgression. Thou wilt shew abundant mercy to the repentant sinner; none to the persevering sinner. My brethren! Would you obtain mercy? Seek it in the way, the only way, in which it is to be obtained. Become conscious of your need of mercy; conscious of your guilt and of your helplessness. Fly to the atonement which Christ has made upon the cross. Pray constantly and fervently for his grace: and under the influence of his grace make it your first care and your warmest desire that your heart be purified, that it be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Renounce every sinful temper, every sinful practice, however dear it may

(b) Exod. xxxiv. 5-7.

be to you. If to renounce it be a trial as difficult and painful as to part with a right hand or a right eye; you must either relinquish it, or relinquish your hopes of heaven. You must make your choice. Do you hesitate to come to a decision? Transform mountains into valleys, the sea into dry land: remove the east to the west: reconcile darkness with light: and then dream of enjoying guilty pleasures in this life, and happiness in the life to come.

II. Have you therefore resolved, through the grace of God, to renounce the indulgence of sinful inclinations and practices? Have you thus taken the first step towards living unto Christ? What then is the second? *Cease to do evil*: saith the prophet. What is his next injunction? *Learn to do well*.

In addition to the crowds who abandon themselves to flagrant immorality, there are numbers who pass through life with so scanty a portion of active concern about religion; are so far from proving the care of their souls to be their main object; and fall so far short in temper and in practice of the scriptural rule of living unto Christ; that they must reasonably expect, if they continue in their present state, to fall short of salvation. In the world, which forms its judgement by  
its

its own standard; not by the true standard, the word of God; they support what is termed, a very respectable character. They are, on the whole, punctual and honest in their dealings; grave and decent in their manners; not apt, under ordinary circumstances, to use profane language, or to fly out into passions and quarrels; generally present, once at least on the Sabbath, in the public worship of God; and attendants perhaps, more or less frequently, on the sacramental table. Possibly you enquire, "Are not all these things right?" That is not exactly the question which you should propose. The true question is; Supposing this conduct, as far as it advances, to be right; is it sufficient? Is it living unto Christ in such a manner as the Scriptures declare to be necessary to salvation? Now, in suggesting this enquiry, far be it from me to encourage any of you censoriously to pry into the character of others. But most earnestly let me importune each of you thoroughly to examine his own; that he may discover whether it has been exhibited in the preceding picture. To the question, then, whether the conduct which has been described be not right as far as it advances; the Scriptures reply, that it is right, if it has originated from right principles; from Christian motives.

If you have been temperate only for the sake of preserving your health ; if you have been decent in your conversation, grave in your deportment, honest and quiet in your dealings, and regular in presenting yourselves in the house or at the table of the Lord ; only for the sake of your reputation, or for some other selfish and worldly reason : there has been nothing in all these things of living unto Christ. But let us make a more favourable supposition. Be it admitted that your conduct has flowed in some degree from the love of Christ. I cannot suppose, if you belong to the class of which I now speak, that it has flowed principally from the love of Christ. Had that been your principal motive ; it would have given birth to far other fruits. But your conduct flowed, in part, from love to Christ. Poor and deficient indeed, has been your love for the Lord Jesus ; if you have been satisfied with manifesting it by such feeble tokens. And poor and deficient is your knowledge of your Bible ; if you think that you shew that love of Christ, which the Bible requires of every true Christian ! What saith the old Testament ? *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might* (c).

(c) Deut. vi. 5.

What

What saith the New? *Ye are not to live unto yourselves ; but unto Christ who died for you. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God ; that God may in all things be glorified through Christ Jesus (d).* Interpret by these comprehensive yet most perspicuous explanations the import of the direction, *Learn to do well.* Behold what it is to keep the heart with all diligence ! Behold what it is to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness ! Behold what it is to love your neighbour as yourself ! Behold what it is to keep under your body, and bring it into subjection ! Behold a task which demands fervent zeal, affectionate gratitude, unabating vigilance, unwearied exertion. At home and abroad to be actively employed in doing good ; to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction ; to withstand corrupting example, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world ; to adorn day by day with encreasing holiness the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things ; to let our light shine before men for the very purpose of leading them to glorify our Father who is in heaven ; to labour to be holy because our Lord is holy, pure because he requireth purity, just and true and merciful be-

(d) 1 Cor. x. 31. 2 Cor. v. 15. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

cause he loveth justice and truth and mercy ; this it is to learn to do well, this it is to have the grace of God, this it is to live unto Christ, this it is to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

III. The characteristics which have hitherto been proposed as tests, by which you may be assisted in forming a judgement whether at present you belong to Christ, have principally been deduced from your proceedings as to the government of unhallowed inclinations and desires, and from your tempers and conduct as exercised towards man. Not that the frame of your heart towards God has been thrown into the back-ground. Love to God through Christ has been assumed as the basis of self-government, and of love to man. From that root must spring every ramification of duty. From that fountain of living waters every Christian grace must derive never-ceasing supplies. The disposition, however, of your soul as to subjects more immediately and closely spiritual than those which have been specified is the least dubitable of all the tokens, to which you can resort for insight into your actual state. Place then before your eyes the divine plan of Salvation. Con-  
template

template its nature. Behold it representing itself as in every point a system of free and unmerited mercy. Behold it casting down the pride of man : extinguishing his vaunted pretensions : exacting the unqualified renunciation of his imaginary righteousness : summoning him to fall prostrate as a condemned criminal at the foot of the cross : and constraining him to exclaim in the anguish of conscious guilt ; “ Lord ! I look for deliverance  
 “ from everlasting punishment, and for admission into thy eternal kingdom, solely  
 “ because thou wast slain that thou mightest  
 “ redeem me unto God by thy blood. Lord !  
 “ I look forward in hope of being enabled to  
 “ will and to do that which is well-pleasing in  
 “ thy sight, to conquer myself, to shun or to  
 “ repel the fiery darts of Satan, solely because  
 “ thy grace is made perfect in weakness.” Is this plan of salvation, thus humiliating to human arrogance, thus declaratory of man’s utter debility and corruption, acceptable to you ? Do you receive it not merely with acquiescence, but with complacency, with delight ? Is *Christ crucified*, to multitudes on the one hand a *stumbling-block*, to multitudes on the other, foolishness, to you *the Power of God, and the wisdom of God* (e) ? Are you cheer-

(e) 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

fully



fully willing to be abased ; in order that Christ, in his character as Saviour, may be exalted ? Are you cheerfully willing that your helplessness and your sin should stand fully revealed ; in order that the stupendous mercies of your redemption and your sanctification may wholly and completely redound to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ?

Consider likewise what is the frame of your soul with regard to communion with God, and meditation on things eternal. Does the current of your thoughts, when, unchecked by impediments, it selects a course for itself, flow towards God and your Redeemer ? Is the hour of prayer a burden to you, or a comfort ? In the hurry of business, in the intercourse of society, do you perceive your mind snatching opportunities of lifting itself up to heaven ? Do you delight to contemplate the works of God, because they are his works ; and through his works, whether of nature or of Providence, to admire, to venerate, and to adore their author ? Does the word of God, together with those human writings which are calculated to instruct and assist you in the performance of his will, constitute that branch of study, to which your inclinations princi-

pally tend? Does your soul expand itself in looking forward to the world unseen; in anticipating the presence of God and of Christ, the hymns of angelic hosts, the wonders and the glories of eternity? Do you exult in the prospect of those new heavens and that *new earth*, because it is a world *wherein dwelleth righteousness* (f): because sin shall not be there: because there shall no longer be temptation: because it is through the predominance of universal holiness that there shall be neither pain nor sorrow nor death; but peace and joy and bliss shall reign without measure, and without end? *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks; so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God* (g)? Such are the aspirations of the bosom, which is filled with [the love of Christ! Such are the prevailing affections, such is the frame of soul which, if the Christian has not decidedly attained, he earnestly desires and pursues!

IV. Direct your attention to the objects, which, when the affection of the apostle Paul for his converts expatiated in calling down

(f) 2 Pet. iii. 13.

(g) Psalm xlii. 1, 2.

bleffings upon them, uniformly prefented themfelves to his thoughts. *I ceafe not to make mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jefus Chrift, the Father of glory, may give unto you the fpirit of wifdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your underftanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the faints: that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be ftrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: that Chrift may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all faints what is the breadth and length and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chrift which paffeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulnefs of God. I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement: that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be fucere and without offence till the day of Chrift, being filled with the fruits of righteousnefs, which are by Jefus Chrift unto the glory and praife of God. I defire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wifdom and fpiritual underftanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all*

*pleasing, being faithful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (b).* Observe the completely spiritual nature of these supplications of the Apostle. *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit (i).* How truly conformable are the prayers to the description! Here is no minding of earthly things: no request making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; no solicitude even for the natural demands and legitimate comforts of the body. Every thing marks a man whose conversation is in heaven; a man anxious that there also should be the conversation of his disciples. Every thing is pure, holy, heavenly; directed to the glory of God, and the salvation of men; raised above the concerns of the present world except as far as they have reference to another. When you mould your thoughts into wishes, when you pour out your soul in petitions, for blessings upon yourself, upon your child, upon any one whom you hold dear: what are those

(b) Eph. i. 16—18. iii. 16—19. Philipp. i. 9.—11 Col. i. 9—11. (i) Rom. viii. 5.

blessings?

blessings? Are they the blessings which St. Paul supplicated for his beloved converts? Do wishes and prayers for such blessings crowd upon your mind; not like ceremonial attendants on a procession, coldly preceding or coldly following that part of the train in which the object really interesting is stationed; not ranging themselves as formal accompaniments on eager and animated desires for learning, for reputation, for power, for advancement, for wealth: but prominent and fervid, as intent on blessings so satisfying the understanding, so pervading and occupying the heart, that no other acquisition appears like unto them; no other acquisition seems entitled even to a second place; no other acquisition, stationed by their side, merits any degree or shadow of comparison? *To be spiritually minded, is life and peace.* To be spiritually-minded is to belong to the Lord Jesus.

Behold then in the tests which have been placed before you criterions amply sufficient to determine the question, whether you are Christ's or not. However that question be decided; *suffer, I beseech you, the word of exhortation (k).*

(k) Heb. xiii. 22.

1. If you are not Christ's, what are your hopes? Do you flatter yourself that the Scriptures may prove not to be the word of inspiration? Or do you assume the promises of God as true, and regard his threatenings as empty terrors? Or do you imagine that when Christ from his throne of judgement consigns to predicted punishment every other despiser of his gospel, he will select you as an exception; that he will distinguish you by unexampled mercy, because you have dared to make his known disposition to mercy a plea to your conscience for habitual rebellion against his laws? Behold the thin and hollow ice, on which you propose to cross the gulph of everlasting destruction! If you recoil from the prospect, what are your purposes? Are you desirous of salvation? Are you willing to be taught of God, to be delivered by him from the bondage of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of his Son? Are you willing to receive the gift of Salvation as light after darkness, as life from the dead? Approach then with confidence the fountain of living waters; and take and drink of them freely. Approach to your Saviour, through whom alone can man have access to the Father.

*Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;*

laden ; and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. To you is this invitation directed : to you is this promise addressed. But, if you would come unto Christ effectually ; come unto him faithfully. Come unto him with a surrender of your whole heart. Think not that it will be sufficient to abandon your grosser defilements. Think not that it is religion to pass a tolerably decent life, diversified with a regular sprinkling of religious observances. Will the grace of Christ share a divided empire ? Will the grace of Christ vouchsafe to occupy those out-skirts of the heart, which sin is content to relinquish, in order that it may enjoy in tranquillity the favourite spots which it has fenced off for itself ? Is this to become a new man ? Is this to be born again of the Spirit ? Is this to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts ? Is this to be Christ's ? Is this to offer your whole spirits, souls, and bodies, a living sacrifice unto the Lord ? *Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar. Ye have brought that which is torn, and the lame, and the sick : thus ye have brought an offering. Should I accept this of your hand ; saith the Lord ? Offer it now to thy governor. Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person ; saith the Lord of hosts ? Cursed be the deceiver, which sacrificeth*

*unto the Lord a corrupt thing. For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts: and my name is areadful. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts: neither will I accept an offering at your hand (l).*

2. If you are already a true Christian; foster the good seed sown in your heart, that the divine planter may preserve it from being overwhelmed by surrounding tares, and may nourish it unto timely and plentiful maturity. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you feel yourself disposed to be satisfied with your present attainments? And is not suspicion, is not alarm awakened in your bosom? With any person whom you cordially love, you are day by day desirous of cultivating a more and more endearing intercourse, a more and more intimate connection. When your heart is warmly engaged in any pursuit; you grudge the time which you are not able to devote to that object: you are zealous and anxious in pushing onward towards the attainment of it: you note with pleasure every degree of approach towards it: you are filled with regret if you discover that during a period of some length you have not made any perceptible advances.

(l) Malachi, i. 7, 8. 10. 13, 14.

Why



Why is it not thus with your love to Christ? Why is it not thus with your pursuit of faith and holiness? *Brethren*, said St. Paul, *I count not myself to have apprehended salvation. But this one thing I do: This is my great and unceasing object: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press to wards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (m). Are you farther advanced than the apostle? Though he did not deem himself to have apprehended salvation; do you presume that you are secure? If you disclaim the arrogant delusion; if, representing yourself for a moment as a fellow-traveller with the apostle on the way that leadeth to life eternal, you behold him already at an immeasurable distance before you: Why is it that you imitate not his humility, his ardour, his perseverance? Why is it that, like unto him, you count not all things but loss, that you may win Christ; if that by any means you may attain unto the resurrection of the righteous (n)? The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, from whom alone, through the merits of the Lord Jesus, every Christian grace is to be derived, withdraws not his countenance from you, limits not his bounty towards you.

(m) Philipp. iii. 13, 14. (n) Philipp. iii. 8. 11.

Has he enabled you to bring forth fruit thirty-fold? He offers to enable you to bring forth sixty and an hundred fold. *Ask; and you shall receive.* What shall you ask? Ask that you may be enabled to *give all diligence, to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.* Ask that you may *give diligence to make your calling and election sure.* For if you do these things you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (o).

(o) 2 Pet. i. 5—7. 10, 11.

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## SERMON VII.

On the Duty of openly ranging ourselves on  
the Side of the Lord.

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EXODUS, xxxii. 26.

*Then Moses stood in the Gate of the Camp, and  
said: "Who is on the Lord's Side?"*

**A**MONG the most evident tokens of the natural alienation of the human heart from righteousness is the indisposition of men to render unto God the same measure, which they render one to another. He, who in some few instances has found his friend deserving of confidence, is prone to confide in him afterwards, and perhaps even to credulity. He, who has witnessed examples of the power of a superior, usually ascribes to him still greater power. He, who has experi-  
enced

enced eminent and unmerited acts of kindness, and returns not to his benefactor the tribute of gratitude and love; is stigmatized with universal censure. How different is our conduct towards Him, to whom we owe every thing! *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a Father; where is my honour? And, if I be a master; where is my fear, saith the Lord of Hosts (a)?* They who have received unremitting testimonies of the providential wisdom of God, refuse to entrust themselves to his guidance. They who are surrounded by the wonders of his omnipotence, disregard his threatenings and his promises. They who are indebted to his spontaneous bounty for blessings incalculable in number and in amount, thank him not, nor obey him: and forfeit not the favourable estimation of the world.

In the unbelief, the contemptuous disregard, the base and rebellious ingratitude displayed by the children of Israel towards the Almighty Father of mercies who had rescued them from Egypt, we imagine that we behold this natural alienation of the heart from God exemplified to an extent never to be rivalled. Instance after instance we read with astonishment. We forget that, *what-*

(a) Malachi, i. 6.

soever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning (b). We forget that all men are children of Adam; that the Creator hath made all nations of one blood; that human nature is in all men the same; that in every man in every age *the heart* is in its original propensities *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked* (c). When we contemplate the enormities of the chosen people; we contemplate the course which we should ourselves have been no less disposed to pursue. The history of Israel is a mirror, which reflects our own likeness.

We learn, in the chapter from which the text is taken, that when Moses, who had been summoned to the top of Sinai that he might receive ordinances and directions from God, had now continued during many days upon the mountain; the people of Israel became extremely impatient at his absence. They assembled tumultuously around Aaron. They affirmed that, as for Moses, they knew not what event had befallen him. And although they had so lately covenanted in the most solemn manner stedfastly to keep the ten commandments; yet in defiance of the second commandment they insisted that Aaron should mould for them a graven

(b) Rom. xv. 4.

(c) Jerem. xvii. 9.

image, a visible emblem and representation of the unseen God, to be carried at the head of the host. Aaron, fearing man more than the Lord, most wickedly gave way to their clamour and violence. He formed a golden calf, the image of an animal which he had been accustomed to see the object of worship in Egypt; built an altar before it; and proclaimed a feast in honour of Jehovah. Before that image the people bowed down in adoration; to that image they offered sacrifices; to that image they ascribed the glory of their deliverance from the land of bondage. This blind and daring idolatry of the Israelites God revealed to his servant who stood before him. Moses, having prevailed with his heavenly master, by the kindest and most disinterested intercession, to forbear from destroying the rebellious nation instantly and utterly; hastened down from the mountain. Arriving at the gate of the camp, and beholding the people occupied in idolatrous songs and dances and worship before the golden calf; he cried aloud, *Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.* All the sons of Levi obeyed his voice. They gathered themselves together unto him: they declared themselves on the side of the Lord; and professed their  
readiness

readiness to execute the commands of his chosen minister. They were called to a painful trial of obedience. They were required to take their swords in their hands ; to pass through the camp of Israel from one side to the other ; and to slay every person, whether neighbour, companion, brother or son, whom they should find engaged in paying reverence to the idol. *The children of Levi did according to the word of Moses : and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.*

In applying to our edification the portion of scriptural history which you have heard ; I shall, in the first place, endeavour to convince you that, as Moses called upon the faithful among the Israelites, so the gospel calls upon us, to stand forth on the side of the Lord. And I shall afterwards lay before you some observations respecting the faithful discharge of this duty. Let us unite in earnestly beseeching the Giver of grace to open our minds, that they may understand and embrace the truth.

I. The people of Israel ; the peculiar people of God ; the people who had experienced such extraordinary mercies at his hand ; the  
people

people who within less than forty days had beheld the terrors of his presence on Mount Sinai, had heard the law from his mouth, and had pledged themselves to sincere and steadfast obedience; now disregarded their promise, despised the unchangeable commandment, and were rioting in idolatrous festivities consecrated to the honour of the golden calf. Professing to be the votaries of Jehovah; for even this impious feast was named by Aaron a feast to the Lord; they were become the vassals of an idol. Forsaking the ordinances of the true God, that they might pursue their own devices; and, under the pretence of worshipping him, polluting themselves with those very practices which he had recently pronounced to be abominations in his sight: they clearly proved that, although they called themselves his people, their hearts were alienated from him; that he was not the master whom they loved; that his will was not the law to which they were solicitous to conform. It was time then that a distinction should be made between the faithful servants of God, if such there were, and the unworthy multitudes who pretended to adore him. It was time for Moses, the ambassador of the Most High, to cry out in his name



to all the people ; *Who is on the Lord's side ?* It was time that the Levites, who alone had not partaken in the general idolatry, or now at length were struck with horror at their guilt, should fly with precipitation to their great leader, who summoned them to the standard of their God. Cast your eyes upon the Christian world : cast your eyes upon this your native country, in which Christianity is professed in its purest form : cast your eyes upon your own neighbourhood, upon the places where the prevalence or the deficiency of true religion is likely to be well known to you : and let your understandings and consciences pronounce, whether a scene too nearly resembling that which Moses beheld in the camp of Israel be not presented to your view. Through the enlightening grace of God, this Protestant land is no longer overspread with worshippers of graven or molten images. But are there not numbers among those, who profess the Christian faith ; are there not numbers among those, with whose conduct and principles the ordinary transactions of life render you acquainted ; whose hearts are set upon their idols ? The covetous man is declared in the Scriptures to be an idolater. Money is his god. How large a

portion of mankind is comprehended among the worshippers of money! The Scriptures aver the glutton also to be an idolater. He worships the brutish appetite, by which he is enslaved. On the same authority, the man whose chief object is any sensual pleasure deserves the same denomination. That pleasure is his idol. He likewise whose chief pursuit is reputation, or honour, or power, is an idolater. Reputation, or honour, or power, is the object of his worship. In short, he who sets his heart on any worldly **object**, instead of fixing it upon God, is considered in the Scriptures, as partaking in the guilt of idolatry, as a slave to that object which he makes his principal pursuit, and as not on the side of the Lord. *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness (a)?* When you survey multitudes among those who are denominated Christians, who were baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who profess to believe that the Son of God died on the cross to purchase for them the pardon of sin, the sanctifying influence of

(d) Rom. vi. 16.

the Holy Spirit, and the everlasting glories of the kingdom of heaven : when you survey multitudes of these nominal Christians, together with numbers who scarcely term themselves Christians, yielding themselves with eagerness as servants to sin ; when you see them giving up their whole hearts to things temporal instead of things eternal ; when you see them acting as the slaves of the world, the flesh, and the devil, instead of striving to become the children of the Most High : is it not time for every minister of the gospel to address his congregation in the words of Moses ; to cry out to them, “ who among “ you is on the Lord’s side ? ” Is it not time for every one of you to put the question to his own heart ; “ On whose side am I acting ? Am I on the side of the Lord ? ” Is it not time for every one of you, who is in sincerity and truth on the Lord’s side, to stand forth and prove himself to be so ? Can you remain for a single hour indifferent and with a quiet mind, without knowing whether you have stronger reasons to hope that God regards you as on his side, than to fear that he looks upon you as his enemy ? Are you ignorant that he who is not with God is against him : that he, who does not receive

God as his master and love God as his supreme delight, is the servant of the devil, and the enemy of God? Do you forget that salvation through Christ will be bestowed on those only, who prove themselves to be on the Lord's side: and that for those, who are not on the side of the Lord, nothing will remain but tribulation and anguish and everlasting destruction, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel?

To say that we are on the side of the Lord is easy. The sacrifice of the lips is an offering that costeth nothing: and is therefore an offering which nearly all men are ready to make. But God requires from those who profess to be on his side not empty words, but evidences and demonstrations of their sincerity. I fully trust that there are some, and I pray that there may be many, present in this assembly, who are thoroughly in earnest in religion: thoroughly and zealously desirous to give proof day by day that they are stedfastly on the side of the Lord; and prepared to receive with gladness any instructions or advice, which may contribute under the divine blessing to enable them faithfully  
to

to serve the heavenly Master whom they have chosen. Let me endeavour therefore to assist them in pursuing their holy purpose.

II. If you would prove yourself to be on the side of the Lord; consign yourself entirely to his governance, and receive with immediate and complete submission every one of his commandments. Consider the character and the duty of a soldier. A soldier who confides in his general, and desires to obtain his approbation, never in the smallest instance disputes his orders; and constantly holds himself prepared to carry them into effect. On the sagacity of his commander he relies for the establishment of plans, and the direction of measures, by which their common enemies are to be resisted and subdued: and is conscious that his own wisdom and safety consist in punctual, vigilant, and courageous obedience. Such must be your conduct as soldiers of Jesus Christ. Surrender yourselves without reserve to the guidance of the captain of your salvation. Fight the good fight of faith. Embrace with undoubting confidence every doctrine disclosed in his holy word. He is the Son of God: he knows what is the mind of his al-

mighty Father. He knows how great is the corruption of human nature ; how odious sin is in the sight of God ; and how dreadful are the consequences which naturally attend it. He knows that it is only through his atoning blood that sinners can be saved : that it is only through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost that his gospel can be accepted and obeyed. These momentous truths he has revealed to you in the Scriptures. Believe them, if you look for eternal life. Believe the Son of God, the Lord of glory, who came down from heaven, who died for you. Take him for your Master and your King. Range yourselves on his side. Let his will be your will, his ways your ways. Fly to him, as the Levites fled to Moses, with hearts prepared to listen with perfect submission to all his commands ; and resolve, through his blessed help, to serve him faithfully and zealously unto death.

If you are thus bent on devoting yourselves to the service of the Lord ; remember that there is only one method by which you can give proof that you are on his side. *He that doeth righteousness, is righteous. He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me. Ye are my friends, if ye do that which I*

*command you. If any man love me, he will keep my words. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments (e).* It is thus that you are to manifest yourself the faithful servant of God, the determined soldier of Christ Jesus. It is thus that you are to contend against his enemies ; it is thus that you are to promote his glory ; it is thus that you are to be instrumental in extending his kingdom. The first conquest which you will labour to present to your Lord, is the conquest of yourself. You will fervently seek his grace that you may be enabled to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. “ I am not my own ”—this will be the language of your heart—“ I am not my  
“ own : I am bought with a price. I am not  
“ my own : I belong to the Lord Jesus. I am  
“ not to live unto myself ; but unto him who  
“ died for me. I am a soldier stationed upon  
“ duty ; not to seek my own pleasure, but to  
“ perform the will of my heavenly King. I  
“ am now, if need be, to endure hardship. I  
“ am now to be watchful, patient, laborious,  
“ contented with my lot. I am to give full  
“ proof of my ministry. I am to deny my-  
“ self. I am to keep under my body and  
“ bring it into subjection. I am to resist the

(e) 1 John, iii. 7. — John, xiv. 21. 23. xv. 14. 1 John, v. 3.

“ temptations of the world, the flesh and the  
 “ devil, the adversaries of God and of my  
 “ soul. If sensual appetite, if the love of  
 “ ease, if a thirst for honour, or riches, or  
 “ power; if joy, or sorrow, or hope, or fear,  
 “ or any earthly allurement, prevail upon me  
 “ to abandon my post: I am no longer on  
 “ the side of the Lord; I am a traitor to him;  
 “ I take part with his enemies; I forfeit that  
 “ crown of glory, which my gracious God  
 “ has prepared for me if I faithfully serve  
 “ him unto the end; and I plunge myself  
 “ into the pit of everlasting destruction.”

If your heart be at length stedfast with the Lord, you will seize with delight every opportunity which he affords you of contributing to win others to his kingdom. The commission with which the Levites were charged by Moses against their sinful countrymen was a ministry of vengeance. *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Put every man his sword by his side; and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son and upon his brother (f).* Very different is the commission with which God charges you respecting those who are

(f) Exod. xxxii. 27—29.



not on his side. He charges you with a commission of love, with a ministry of reconciliation. To you he says; *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Follow after the things which make for peace; and things wherewith one may edify another* (g). Give to religion the full effect of your example, of your influence, of your recommendation. Shew that you assign to religion the first place in your heart from a decided conviction that the first place is its due; and that, where it does not hold that place, happiness will never take up her abode. Let others be won to the love of God by discerning the blessed effects of that love upon yourself. Let them perceive that in consequence of having set your heart upon God, you are become more humble, more gentle, more tender, more kind, more bountiful, more amiable, more happy. Let them perceive that your conversation is in heaven; that you feel yourself, and feel yourself without regret, a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; that you are not disquieted like the men of the present world, by distracting cares and conflicting passions; but that you are waiting in patient and cheerful serenity, under

(g) Matt. v. 16. Rom. xiv. 19.

every dispensation of providence, for the blessed hope which is set before you, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. If these fruits of holiness, if this peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, shine forth in your conduct; verily there will be those among the wicked, who will smite their breasts and will say; "Happy is the man that feareth the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. I have left the paths of righteousness, to walk in the ways of darkness. I have rejoiced to do evil; and have delighted in the forwardness of the wicked. I have forsaken the guide of my youth, and forgotten the covenant of my God. But I will fly to the Redeemer who is mighty to save. I will seek the Spirit of grace and of supplication. I will go and say unto my Father; Father! I have sinned against thee. I will turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon me; and to my God, for he will abundantly pardon. The ways of religion are the ways of pleasantness: and all her paths are peace!"

Stand forth then, ye who are on the side of the Lord: stand forth to save your own souls and the souls of others. Children of  
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the faith of Abraham; heirs of the promises of God! Be ye stedfast, be vigilant, and fear not. You serve a Master, who will never forsake his people. You serve an unchangeable Father, who will abundantly perform his covenant. You serve Him who liveth for ever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords; Him who has all power in earth and in heaven, in time and in eternity; Him in whose hand is mercy, and glory, and blessedness, and everlasting salvation. What shall prove capable of shaking your love to God and your Redeemer? Are you tempted by the riches of this world? Shall the poor and perishable and unsatisfactory treasures of the present life induce you to renounce an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven for the righteous? Are you solicited by sinful pleasures? Will you renounce, for the guilty indulgences of a moment, that fulness of joy which is at the right hand of the Omnipotent for evermore? Are you moved by corrupt customs, or by the scoffs and ridicule of the wicked? Will you seek honour from man rather than from God? Will you not confess Christ upon earth, that he may confess you before his Father, and the holy angels, at the day of judgement? *Children* of the Most High!

*keep*

*keep yourselves from idols (b).* Stand fast in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Sensible of your own utter weakness, take unto yourselves the whole armour of God. Of yourselves you can do nothing: but through the all-sufficient Grace of Christ you can become more than conquerors. Set your faces as a rock against sin, which encompasses you every instant. You have made your choice: you have taken the side of the Lord: cleave with simplicity and singleness of heart unto Him. Be not deterred, be not enticed, from your holy resolution by a world, whose friendship is enmity against the sovereign to whom you have vowed your allegiance. The world cannot love you, because you are not of the world. Will you temporise in your conduct? Will you compromise your principles? *Come out from among them, and be ye separate. saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you: and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (i).*

(b) 1 John, v. 21.

(i) 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

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## S E R M O N   V I I I .

On the Sin of dissembling with God.

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JEREMIAH, xlii. 20.

*Ye dissembled in your hearts when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying ; Pray for us unto the Lord our God : and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.*

**T**HE wisdom of the supreme Intelligence, so conspicuous in his works, shines equally in the structure of the writings which he has inspired. Scripture is not a dry code of laws, a barren system of prohibitions and commandments. Its ordinances and injunctions are continually enlivened, illustrated, and enforced, by examples. Search throughout the old Testament and the New. Examine the historical, the prophetic, the epistolary compositions.

tions. Carry on your scrutiny to those portions of the sacred records, which are avowedly the most preceptive. You will perceive almost in every page the blessings which flow from righteousness, and the miseries attendant on guilt, delineated and impressed in descriptions derived from real persons and actual events. The word of God, like his book of nature, teems with life. Every part is animated by incident and character. Past generations return from the dead, ages unborn press forward before their time into being, to admonish the existing inhabitants of the earth. In the Son of God become man we behold an all-perfect model of universal holiness. In the proceedings of numberless other individuals, who stand pourtrayed in the living colours of truth; we behold patterns to imitate, or beacons to shun. On the one hand, faith, holiness, charity, truth, steadfastness, patience, meekness, purity, compassion, and the rest of the train of heavenly graces, are exhibited; each distinct and prominent, yet with greater or less strength of representation in different characters. On the other, unbelief, unrighteousness, selfishness, deceit, irresolution, fretfulness, arrogance, uncleanness, cruelty, with other criminal passions, display their dominion, more or less limited,

over multitudes held in bondage. That the interesting picture of human nature may be in every point complete, the assemblage of good and evil blended in the same bosom; and even the grievous transgressions, sources of bitter remorse, into which patriarchs and prophets and apostles were occasionally betrayed; are painted with unfailling impartiality and precision. Man is taught to know what he is, **that** he may the more easily and the more willingly learn what he ought to become.

The portion of sacred history which I am about to propose to your view unfolds a scene of disobedience characterised not by sudden error and unforeseen timidity, but by bold and hypocritical premeditation. When Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had entirely subdued the Jews, whom God, on account of their obstinate impiety, had at length delivered into his hand; he destroyed Jerusalem by fire, and carried away captive into a distant quarter of his dominions the principal part of the nation. A considerable number however of the poorest class of the people he permitted to continue in their native land. He distributed among them fields and vineyards: and appointed Gedaliah, one of their  
own

own countrymen; to be their governor. In a short time Gedaliah was treacherously killed by Ishmael, a Jew of the royal blood, who appears to have envied his pre-eminence, and at the instigation of the Ammonites had formed a conspiracy against him: and together with him were slain the Chaldean soldiers, whom Nebuchadnezzar had left under his command. Ishmael was speedily overcome, and driven into banishment by the surviving friends of Gedaliah. But all the inhabitants of Judea trembled at the prospect of the indignation, which they foresaw would be kindled in the breast of the king of Babylon when he should receive tidings of the murder of his governor and his soldiers. They purposed therefore to fly for refuge into Egypt. But they deemed it becoming in the first instance to apply for directions from God. They requested the prophet Jeremiah to consult the Lord whether they should depart into Egypt, or not: and solemnly declared, that with implicit deference they would obey the answer which should be returned to them. *All the captains of the forces, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest came near, and said unto Jeremiah the prophet: Pray for us unto the Lord thy God, that the Lord thy God may shew us*  
*the*



*the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things, for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send thee: that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.* After an interval of ten days, the word of the Lord came in reply, by the mouth of Jeremiah, to the people. God commanded them to remain in Judea: and promised, on condition of their obedience to his mandate, that he would be with them, that he would save them from the king of Babylon, and would cause them to dwell in security and peace. But the all-knowing Searcher of hearts clearly discerned, that their application to him for direction, and their deliberate engagement that they would be entirely guided by his counsel, were pretence and mockery. He saw that they had decidedly purposed from the beginning, and, notwithstanding his prohibition, were still resolutely determined, to remove into Egypt. Jeremiah therefore proceeded, according to the orders of the Almighty, to denounce that if they persisted in their design, they should be overtaken by the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar in that very land

of Egypt, where they supposed that they should be completely beyond its reach : that they should perish there by famine, by pestilence, and by the sword ; that their name should become a reproach, an astonishment, and a curse ; and that not even a single individual should again behold the land of Judea, or escape from the evil which God would bring upon them.

Let me endeavour, under the blessing of divine grace, to elucidate and to apply to your edification, the instruction which may be derived from this narrative.

I. Consider, in the first place, what was that great and general duty, against which the Jews, on the occasion now before us, rebelled.

*Ye dissembled*, said Jeremiah, *in your hearts*. The first duty of religion is to surrender the heart to God. Without that surrender there can be no religion. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart*. This is the great commandment to the Jew and to the Christian. To the observance of this commandment the promises of divine favour have ever been annexed. *If thou return unto the Lord*, saith Moses, *with all thine heart ; the*

*Lord will have compassion upon thee (a). Ye shall find me, saith God, by the voice of Jeremiah, when ye shall search for me with all your heart (b), If thou believest with all thine heart, saith Philip to the Ethiopian, thou mayest be baptized (c). The Jews of whom the prophet speaks in the text resembled their future countrymen in the days of our Saviour. They were a people that drew nigh unto God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips; but their heart was far from him. Ye dissembled in your hearts when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying; Pray for us unto the Lord our God: and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. They dissembled; though they had bound themselves in the presence of God by the most sacred promises, that they would scrupulously perform whatever he should command. My brethren! you have bound yourselves to the performance of the same duty by promises no less sacred. You yourselves, no less solemnly than the Jews, even all the people from the least unto the greatest, have come near and said; The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us that we will obey the voice of the Lord our God.*

(a) Deut. xxx. 1—3.

(b) Jerem. xxix. 13.

(c) Acts. viii. 36, 37.

At your baptism, you drew near and promised by your sureties that you would obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. Most of you have again drawn near at the office of confirmation, and renewed the solemn promise and vow which were made in your name at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to practise all those things which your sureties then undertook on your behalf. A large proportion of you have frequently drawn near to the sacramental table; and have there professed repentance of your sins, and a full purpose to lead a new life, to follow the commandments of God, and thenceforth to walk in his holy ways. On this very day, and on every day when you have attended the public worship, you have drawn near and requested of God, that he would give to you that due sense of all his mercies, that your hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that you may shew forth his praise, not only with your lips but with your lives, by giving up yourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all your days, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Jews, in their solemn

solemn professions, dissembled. My brethren, have you dissembled in yours?

Diffimulation, like other sins, admits of degrees. The heart may dissemble radically and entirely, so as to be wholly hypocritical; so as not to feel any portion of that love to God, of that faith, of that gratitude, of that sense of duty, of that purpose of obedience which the tongue expresses. Or it may dissemble partially; feeling weakly and insufficiently those sentiments towards Him, which dwell with parade and seeming warmth upon the lips. The doom which awaits the complete hypocrite, cannot be doubted. Let the partial hypocrite beware, lest he at last come to the same place of torment.

II. Consider, in the next place, each of you for himself, how strong is the probability that you may be guilty, in a greater or a less degree, of dissembling in your heart before God. Remember the natural corruption of the human heart. The heart is originally averse to holiness, replenished with the seeds of every sin, and scarcely to be searched or penetrated by human eyes. *The imagination of man's heart, saith the Scripture, is evil from his youth. The heart of the sons of men is full of evil. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know*

*it (d)?* Have not you reason to dread that your heart thus subjected originally to the dominion of sin, may not yet be purified from dissembling against God? Have you not reason to dread that your heart, by nature thus stored with duplicity, thus difficult to be discerned, may deceive yourself? Reflect farther, of what multitudes the Scriptures make mention; multitudes existing at different periods, and among the very people peculiarly favoured with the knowledge of true religion, and in the most impressive manner dedicated to God; as having dissembled against Him, even so as utterly to have departed from Him. At the time of the deluge, only eight persons out of the whole human race were preserved by divine mercy from destruction. When the Israelites were commanded to enter the land of Canaan; Caleb and Joshua, together with Moses and Aaron, and perhaps some few individuals besides, were the only persons of the whole congregation of Israel who remained faithful to the Lord of Hosts. When the Jews, to whom Jeremiah addressed the words of the text, were commanded to render the promised obedience to their God, and to abstain from going down into Egypt; *all the people*, with the exception as it should seem.

(d) Gen. viii. 21. Eccl. ix. 3. Jerem. xvii. 9.

only of the prophet himself and his friend Baruch, *obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah.* When Jesus Christ called the world to repentance, and manifested himself to be the Son of God by the most decisive miracles: how few were there out of the multitudes which had flattered him with their lips who did not speedily prove that they had dissembled with Him in their hearts! How few who preferred to walk with him in the narrow way that leadeth unto life, compared with the crowds which thronged the broad road that leadeth to destruction! What is the case in the present day? I wish not to encourage myself or you in drawing invidious comparisons. But we cannot be blind to plain and notorious facts. We have in our hands the word of God, which describes the character of a true Christian. We have before our eyes the practice of the world. We cannot but compare the one with the other. When we compare them, we cannot but perceive how vast is the number of professed Christians, who evince little of the spirit of true christianity in their principles and conduct: and therefore stand self-convicted as dissemblers in their hearts before the Most High. When you call to remembrance the multitudes

even among those who styled themselves the followers of God, which in ancient times the sinfulness and deceitfulness of the heart betrayed into hypocrisy : when you survey the multitudes of his professed followers, which in this your day the same sinfulness and deceitfulness render hypocritical before Him : have you not reason for serious dread that you may yourself be found a dissembler in his sight ?

III. I proceed to lay before you, and to exemplify by some instances, a scriptural rule, which may assist you in discovering whether, if the Son of God were now to call you to judgement, you would be found dissemblers in your hearts.

*Where your treasure is, saith our Lord, there will your heart be also (e).* In other words, Whatever be the object which you judge and feel to be the most valuable ; concerning that object will your heart shew itself to be the most steadily and the most deeply interested. Apply this rule to yourself. Examine yourself by it. It is thus that you may discover with absolute certainty whether your heart is fixed upon God, or whether it dissembles before Him.

(e) Matt. vi. 21.



Compare then the pains which you employ, the vigilance which you exercise, the anxiety which you feel, concerning worldly objects, on the one hand; on the other, concerning religion. When you hear your friend slandered or your parent injuriously treated; you are moved with indignation, you are distressed and afflicted. When you hear the name of God profaned; are you more deeply grieved? When you perceive Him to be slighted and insulted; are you more severely troubled in your heart? If not; you do not give the first place in your heart to God. You do but dissemble with him when you profess that you love him above all things.

Again. When you receive a kindness, a great and an undeserved kindness, from a friend; you feel, I presume, warm and durable emotions of gratitude, and an earnest desire to render to your benefactor such a return, in proportion to your ability, as may be acceptable to Him. You are receiving every day from God blessings infinitely superior to all the kindnesses, which can be conferred upon you by any of your fellow-creatures. Do you feel then still more lively and durable emotions of gratitude to Him? Do you feel a still more earnest desire to render to Him through Christ that acceptable tribute

bute of faith and love and holiness of life, which his grace is ever ready to enable you to offer? If not; you do not give the first place in your heart to God. You do but dissemble with Him, when you profess that you love him above all things.

Again. Your worldly prosperity is an object which you pursue with industry and solicitude. Are you still more diligent, more anxious, in pursuing the welfare of your soul? Are you more earnestly bent on growth in grace, than on the accumulation of property? Are you more eager to advance in religious knowledge, than in knowledge which will enable you to augment your wealth? Are you more watchful to seek for religious friends and connections, than for those which may forward your present interest, or that of your family? If not; you do not give the first place in your heart to God. You do but dissemble with Him, when you profess that you love Him above all things.

Again. You have various occupations to which you resort, as opportunities offer themselves, from inclination and choice. Among these is religion to be found? Does religion stand at the head of them? Do you delight in the study of the scriptures? Do you delight in public worship; in its adorations, its prayers, its praises, its thanksgivings? Do you delight in

in commemorating the atoning death of your Redeemer at his Sacramental table? Do you delight in meditations upon God; upon his goodness and mercy; upon salvation through Christ; upon the hope of dwelling with Him in holiness and happiness hereafter? Do you delight to converse privately with your family or with a Christian friend, on these subjects? Do you find all other pleasures and satisfactions uninteresting and dead, when compared with those which have religion at their root? If not; you do not give to God the first place in your heart. You do but dissemble with Him, when you profess that you love Him above all things.

I will mention only one example more. When you are informed of the events, which befall another person, you rejoice, if they are such as promote his worldly advantage; you lament, if they impair it. Do you experience greater joy, when you are assured of his advancement in religion? Do you experience greater sorrow, if you learn that he has gone backward in the ways of righteousness? Do you judge of all changes in the situation of a person for whom you are interested, principally by the influence which they seem likely to have on his religious prospects? You hear that he has entered into the state of marriage.  
Do

Do you at once feel more solicitous to enquire whether his wife be steadily pious; than whether she be of superior understanding, accomplished, and rich? He removes to a distant part of the country. Are you more grieved to learn that he is thrown into the hands of companions calculated to endanger his salvation; than to be informed that his new place of abode will probably be destructive of his health? He has lost his child or the wife of his bosom. Are your prayers that his affliction may be sanctified more fervent than those for its removal? You ponder on schemes and labour in exertions for his benefit. In all your plans, in all your efforts, are you more anxious to be made the instrument of strengthening him in faith and good works, than of forwarding his temporal success: of guarding him from those evils which war against the soul, than from those which assault the body? If not; you do not give to God the first place in your heart. You do but dissemble with Him, when you profess that you love Him above all things; that all which the Lord your God commandeth, you will do.

IV. My brethren! a part at least of the words of the prophet, as delivered in the text,  
is

is applicable to your conduct this day. By presenting yourselves in this house of God, you have in fact said to his ministers, *Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us and we will do it.* “Offer up  
“ unto God on our behalf the supplications  
“ recorded in the liturgy of our church. And  
“ in your discourse from the pulpit, explain  
“ to us from the word of God our duty as  
“ Christians, and we will perform it.” Whether the remaining words of the text, the charge which Jeremiah pronounced against the Jews, *Ye have dissembled in your hearts,* be also applicable to you, is a question which it is not mine to decide. The truth is known to the Searcher of hearts. It is open and naked before the eyes of Him from whom no secrets are withdrawn. It is discoverable by you: by every one for himself. Examine yourselves, when you are returned to privacy at home, by that scriptural rule, which I have stated and endeavoured to exemplify for your instruction. Accompany that examination with humble prayer for the grace of the holy Spirit; that he may enlighten your understandings, awaken your consciences, and enable you to judge sincerely and impartially whether your hearts are steadfast with God,

or whether you are dissemblers in his sight. The necessity, the supreme importance, of such an examination I would press upon you in the strongest language. Do I recommend it to any among you even with greater earnestness than to others? It is to those, who flatter themselves that they stand in need of it the least. I would detain you from it no longer than while I recal to your thoughts the vengeance which has overtaken those, who in former ages dissembled with God; vengeance ordained to be an emblem and a pledge of the certainty of that perdition, which shall for ever overwhelm all who dissemble with Him in their hearts. What befel the dissemblers of the old world? They perished to a man in the deluge. What befel the congregation of Israel, when they refused to render to God their covenanted obedience, and to march forward at his command into the land of Canaan? They perished to a man in the wilderness. What befel the Jews who refused to listen to Jeremiah, and obeyed not the voice of the Lord to dwell in Judea? They were overtaken in Egypt by the king of Babylon, from whose power they imagined themselves secure; and were utterly and miserably destroyed. Concerning the dissemblers in the old world, God proclaimed; *I will destroy them*

*them from off the face of the earth.* Of the dissembling congregation of Israel in the days of Moses, he solemnly affirmed; *They shall not see the land. I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my rest.* Of the Jews who dissembled when they enquired concerning his will by Jeremiah, he pronounced; *Behold I will send Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon; and will set his throne in Egypt. Ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn. None shall escape.* All these predicted judgements were punctually accomplished. So shall be accomplished every word of God. Where are all the unrepenting dissemblers of all past ages now? They are reserved in chains and darkness unto the judgement of the great day. Where shall be all the unrepenting dissemblers of the present age? They shall be reserved in the same chains under the same darkness to the same judgement. *All liars,* saith the Lord;—and of all liars who is the most guilty, but he who dissembleth with his God?—*All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (f).* Whoever thou art, who dissemblest in thine heart with thy Judge; look forward to the hour that

(f) Rev. xxi. 8.

awaiteth thee if thou abidest in thy dissimulation. Look forward to the hour, when those dreadful words, *Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God*, at the sound of which Ananias fell down dead, shall be to thee the sentence of death eternal.

And is hope then excluded? Is the dissembling heart irreclaimable? There is One, to whom nothing is impossible. There is One whose transforming power hypocrisy itself cannot escape. *The preparation of the heart is from the Lord (g)*. In his hand the stone becomes flesh, the scarlet white as snow. In his hand all things are renewed. *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners: purify your hearts, ye double-minded (h)*. Behold, we were born in sin: how shall we be cleansed? We are altogether vile: how shall we be purified? *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you, my Spirit remaineth among you. Fear ye not (i)*. Allelulia! Glory be to thee, Lord God Omnipotent! Light is arisen on my darkness. *I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me*. Do we yet lin-

(g) Prov. xvi. 1. (h) James, iv. 8. (i) Zech. iv. 6. Haggai, ii. 4, 5.



ger? *Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord (k).* Let us be wise, while there is yet time for wisdom. *Let us rend our hearts and turn unto the Lord: let us fear and serve him in sincerity and truth.* Let us defer not to pay our vows unto the Most High. *Let us join ourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten (l).*

(k) Philipp. iv. 13. Ifaiah, ii. 5. (l) Joel, ii. 13, Jolhua, xxiv. 14. Eccl. v. 4. Jerem. l. 5.

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## S E R M O N IX.

On the Nature and the Consequences of  
Excuses for not giving up the Heart to  
Religion.

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LUKE, xiv. 18.

*And they all with one Consent began to make  
Excuse.*

**I**NSTRUCTION possesses peculiar force, when derived from incidents which interest the mind. Facts seize upon the memory more powerfully than precepts. The recollection of the former recalls the remembrance of the latter. The precept, thus recalled, presents itself under characters of animation and propriety, which confer additional energy on its native importance.

It was the usual practice of our Saviour, when favourable opportunities arose, to take advantage of circumstances immediately passing before the eyes of his followers for the  
purpose

purpose of impressing religious truth. When he spoke the words which have been recited, he was sitting at meat at the table of a wealthy Pharisee. From the antecedent part of the chapter it appears that he had already taken occasion twice, from incidents which occurred at this entertainment, to deliver an important lesson to those who were present. First; in reproving the pride which impelled them eagerly to contend for the places accounted the most honourable; he taught the excellence of humility in the sight of men as well as of God. And afterwards, he admonished them not to be anxious, when they prepared a dinner or a supper, to assemble their opulent relations and neighbours, in order that they might be themselves invited to feasts in return: but rather to call to their table the poor, the blind, and the distressed, from whom they could look for no retribution, that God, the friend of the wretched, might bless them, and recompence them at the resurrection of the just. A person of the company was forcibly struck with these discourses; and exclaimed, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*: blessed is he who shall be received as an associate of the promised Redeemer; and after having been admitted as a member of his kingdom

upon earth, shall finally become a partaker of the glories and happiness of heaven. Whether this man believed Jesus Christ to be the promised Redeemer is very doubtful. Our Lord however replied to the observation by a parable: in which he predicted that numbers, who professed a zealous desire to hear and obey the gospel, would disregard and reject it when preached to them; and would prefer the pursuits of the present world to the salvation of their souls. *A certain man, said he, made a great supper, and bade many.* God has prepared a glorious kingdom for those who shall embrace and stedfastly obey the gospel of his Son; and has invited all the human race to participate in its blessings. *And he sent his servant at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready.* At the period ordained from eternity Jesus Christ appeared upon earth, and preached the gospel to the Jews. After his ascension he preached it by his disciples to many other nations. At this day he preaches it by his ministers to you, and to millions in various parts of the world. He now invites you, as in former ages he invited the Jews and the Gentiles, to come unto Him for salvation; and encourages you with the assurance that you cannot be more solicitous to

to ask than he is to bestow. How did the Jews, to whom the offer was first made, receive it? *They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife: and therefore I cannot come.* The nature of these excuses will be examined hereafter. At present it is sufficient to observe that all the rest who were invited had their pretences ready, some of one kind, some of another, for not going to the feast. *All began to make excuse. So that servant came, and shewed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city; and bring in hither the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind.* The Jews refused to receive Jesus Christ; and completed their guilt by crucifying him. The anger of God was kindled. He cast them off from being his people. He commanded the ministers of his word to go forth, and to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: to the nations whom the Jews abhorred as outcasts from the divine mercy; whom they beheld with an eye of superiority not less contemp-

tuous than that with which the poor, the halt, and the blind, if stationed as guests at the table, would have been viewed by the proudest of those originally invited to the feast. Still however the guest-chamber was not full. *The servant said; Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded: and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant; Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, by urgent importunity and persuasion constrain them to enter, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* Though the apostles preached the Christian religion with great success among many nations of the Gentiles, both in Asia and Europe, and also in some of the coasts of Africa; yet the kingdom of heaven was not replenished with inhabitants, nor was the mercy of God exhausted. He has therefore continued during more than seventeen hundred years to provide a constant supply of ministers of his gospel; and to send them forth even to the most distant corners of the earth, and to persons sunk in the lowest state of ignorance and wretchedness, with the kindest offers to every man of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus, and with the most urgent invitations to accept it. And we know from the certain de-  
clarations

clarations of prophecy, that he will graciously persevere, until the close of all things, to invite by his messengers all mankind to repent and believe; and that all *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*. We know that at last even the Jews themselves shall look on Him whom their forefathers pierced; that they shall mourn with the deepest humiliation and anguish for the crucifixion of the great Redeemer; and with contrite hearts and faith unfeigned shall embrace the gospel, and shall again be received as the people of God. But those who deny the Lord of glory, those who slight his offers of salvation, shall neither be admitted into his church on earth, nor into the glorious inheritance which he has prepared beyond the grave for his servants.

Such is the general import of this parable. Let us study through the blessing of God to apply it to ourselves.

I. We learn in the first place the guilt and the dreadful consequences of rejecting Christ; of refusing to believe his religion, or of believing without obeying it. *Not one of those who were bidden shall taste of my supper*. When we had no claim to be delivered from

the punishment, which by our sins we deserved; much less to extend our views to an eternity of happiness: the God of mercy was pleased of his own infinite goodness freely to offer to us both these blessings. He offered them to us through the blood of his own Son Jesus Christ. His own Son undertook for our sakes to come down upon earth; to assume the nature of man; and to die upon the cross, that he might make atonement for our sins, and purchase immortal glory for all who would accept him as their Saviour and faithfully obey his commandments. This is that love of Christ towards sinful man, which astonishes, as the scriptures teach us, the very angels. This is the appointed method of salvation, by which alone we may be saved. It is in vain for presumptuous men to seek to find fault and raise objections as to the plan, which the wisdom and the inconceivable kindness of God have chosen for the recovery of the children of fallen Adam. It is in vain for any man to hope that he may be justified in any other method, or be rendered meet for glory through the attainment of any other qualifications, than those which are plainly stated in the gospel. If you will not accept salvation in that method; if you will not labour to acquire those qualifications: you will assuredly perish, you will  
will



will perish by your own choice. If you reject the Son of God ; he will be no Redeemer to you. If you profess to believe in him, but will not make it your constant aim through the influence of divine grace to obey him ; you will as certainly perish as if you openly denied him. You do in fact deny him in the most decisive manner. You deny him by your actions. Whatever your lips may affirm, your actions proclaim ; “ I do not acknowledge Christ to be my Master : I will not be subject to his laws.” He was ready to receive you : but you would not listen to his call. The guilt is your own : and the consequences are your own. You refuse pardon and eternal happiness : and the arm of divine justice plunges you into hell.

Do you complain of hard measure in these dealings of God ? Turn to the parable. Suppose a person of wealth and eminence to have sustained reiterated injuries from an inferior. Suppose the offender overtaken by misery, and on the brink of ruin. Suppose the man whom he had injured generously to interpose in his behalf ; to invite the criminal to his mansion, and spontaneously to offer to make important sacrifices for the sole purpose of restoring him to safety and happiness. Suppose this benignity to be met with a disdainful

ful refusal. Is the victim of his own obstinacy and pride to murmur because he is abandoned to the consequences of his choice? Or to raise the illustration, if it be possible, to a resemblance somewhat less faint and imperfect of the transaction which it purposes to pourtray: suppose a subject indebted to the bounty of his sovereign for every earthly blessing to renounce his allegiance, and to crown his ingratitude by the most daring treasons. Suppose him arrested by the arm of justice, and even now standing on the scaffold. Suppose his royal master to dispatch without sollicitation an offer of pardon; to fling open for his admission the doors of the palace; to hold forth to him unqualified forgiveness; to propose to him not merely the renovation of favour, and re-establishment in all his antecedent honours and possessions, but additional wealth and privileges and dignity and power in a measure far surpassing the utmost stretch of his imagination. Suppose that the extension of this compassion, the exercise of this ineffable goodness, could not be rendered consistent with the attributes of sovereignty, and the general welfare of nations, by any methods except such as would necessarily require the only son of the monarch previously to become the representa-

tive of the traitor, and in his stead to submit to degradation, to sufferings and to death. Suppose the son of his own accord to offer to become the sacrifice. Suppose the father to assent to the offer. Suppose the sacrifice to have taken place. Now fix your eyes on the object of these stupendous mercies. How do you behold him? Is he dissolved in tears? Is he rent by agonizing remorse? Is he fervently devoting in the sincerity of his soul the remainder of his life, the whole of his exertions, of his faculties, of his heart to the service of his matchless benefactor? Behold him, if you are able to form to yourself the picture, continuing unmoved, devoid of gratitude, with enmity unmitigated, rejecting the offered pardon and all its consequent blessings with carelessness and contempt. Behold an emblem, a most inadequate emblem, of your own madness, of your own guilt, if you disregard the salvation offered through the blood of the Son of God!

II. Advert in the next place to the excuses, which are stated as having been advanced by some of those who rejected the invitation of the Lord of the feast. The spirit of the excuses alleged by the rest, for all the excuses flowed from the same principle in the heart, may be inferred from those which are specified.

fied. One said; *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.* Another said; *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.* Another said; *I have married a wife.* And for these several reasons each of them professed that he could not come to the entertainment. Our blessed Saviour well knew what was in man. He knew that the human heart, unrenewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, would naturally be in all times and places the same. The excuses which he represents these despisers as alleging for not attending the entertainment purposely and gratuitously provided for them, are precisely such as in this our day numbers allege for not attending to religion. They are such as numbers are bold enough openly to avow, when expediency requires the production of an apology; or such as when pricked by conscience they secretly offer to their own bosoms. "Religion," it is declared or whispered by these apologists for practical irreligion, "is undoubtedly a very excellent thing; and in its proper measure justly to be expected from all. From every man is required a decorous regard to morality: from persons whose age or station prescribes gravity, a higher degree of strictness: from the unoccupied and the unhappy, still

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"greater

“ greater attention to pious studies and em-  
“ ployments: from the clergy all imaginable  
“ sanctity. Nay we acknowledge, that in all  
“ men as much religion as is attainable is  
“ highly to be desired. We lament that few  
“ persons attend to religion so much as they  
“ might attend. And we are particularly  
“ scandalized at the deficiencies of those, who  
“ have professionally taken upon themselves  
“ to be our instructors. But on ourselves  
“ no demand beyond our present practice can  
“ reasonably be made. Our time and our  
“ thoughts are already absorbed by necessary  
“ or inevitable avocations. We are engaged  
“ in the active business of life; and cannot  
“ find leisure for books and speculative re-  
“ tirement. Our estates or our mercantile  
“ concerns call for continual care: and  
“ we know that he, who makes not provi-  
“ sion for his family, neglects the duty of  
“ a parent and *is worse than an infidel*. Or  
“ we are occupied in serving our country as  
“ members of her legislature, or as magistrates,  
“ or as officers in her fleets or armies, or as  
“ belonging to some of the numerous pro-  
“ fessions by which society is held together:  
“ and we are not ignorant that *mercy is better*  
“ *than sacrifice*. .. Or, if we are unencumbered  
“ with any of the engagements which have  
“ been

“ been mentioned ; we are continually pressed  
 “ by others no less difficult to be avoided or  
 “ postponed. Family connections, numerous  
 “ acquaintance and friends, the ordinary re-  
 “ ciprocation of civilities and visits, the stated  
 “ recurrence at home and abroad of innocent  
 “ diversions, bring the day to a close almost  
 “ as soon as we perceive it to have begun.  
 “ Man was born for society. *It is not good*  
 “ *for man to be alone.* The social intercourse  
 “ of life must be maintained by the requisite  
 “ observance of that courtesy, which an apos-  
 “ tle has enjoined on all men. Harmless  
 “ amusements, essential to mental refreshment  
 “ and alacrity of spirits, cannot but be ap-  
 “ proved by a religion which exhorts to cheer-  
 “ fulness and joy. And, however absurd may  
 “ have been the disputations of ignorant men;  
 “ we are for our parts satisfied that friend-  
 “ ship is inculcated by Christianity. At any  
 “ rate,” it is finally observed, “ be it business  
 “ or some lighter occupation which has  
 “ swallowed up our time ; and even if it be  
 “ acknowledged that with livelier vigilance we  
 “ might have snatched somewhat more fre-  
 “ quent and somewhat longer intervals for re-  
 “ ligious meditation : we trust that our inat-  
 “ tention has not been such as to expose us  
 “ to any extravagant censure. We have al-  
 “ ways

“ ways professed our belief in religion. We  
“ have occasionally been present at its ordi-  
“ nances. We have been indulgent husbands,  
“ careful parents, kind neighbours, useful mem-  
“ bers of society. And we are universally re-  
“ garded as having regulated our conduct by  
“ the nicest principle of *honour*.”

Vain and empty sophistry, to disguise the un-  
subdued *enmity of the carnal mind against God(a)!*

III. Farther: with respect to the excuses described in the parable, there are two remarks, which I would recommend to your serious consideration. First: all the employments and engagements, which the persons who were invited pleaded in apology for their absence, were in themselves perfectly lawful. To purchase a piece of ground and to go to inspect it was a circumstance in its own nature untinged with guilt. The cultivation of the earth, and industry in our proper callings, are duties which we are repeatedly commanded to practise. Neither is there any thing naturally blameable in purchasing five yoke of oxen and going to prove them. Then with respect to marriage; we know that it is the appointment of God, and is declared in the Scriptures to be honourable for all. Yet ob-

(a) Rom. viii. 7.

serve, secondly, that the persons who made these excuses were every one of them condemned. *I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* If these men were thus condemned; how much more dreadful would have been their punishment, if they had excused themselves for the purpose of prosecuting some sinful enterprize: if instead of lawful industry they had meditated some dishonest undertaking; if, instead of honourable marriage, some plan of criminal indulgence had been in view! But, though their pursuits were all lawful; every one of the persons was condemned. Why was it thus? Because every one of the persons was worldly-minded. His heart was not fixed upon promoting the glory of God, and proving by faith and holy obedience his love and gratitude to his Maker and Redeemer. His first object was not to be religious; but to be wealthy, or to prosecute his own pleasure. The man that purchased the land, and the other that bought the oxen, were immersed in solicitude concerning their property and possessions. *The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choked the word; and it became unfruitful (b).* Land and oxen, and the profit which land and oxen

(b) Matt. xiii. 22.



were to produce, were their idols. God and his laws, Christ and the wonderful mercies which had been offered at his hand, had little if any share of their thoughts. The man who had married a wife, had contracted an irreligious marriage, or was ensnared by the consequences of his marriage into impiety. He had shewn, we may conclude, in that transaction the unconcern respecting religion which pervaded his character. He had selected his consort merely for her personal appearance; or because she had an ample fortune; or because her relations were able to push him into lucrative business; or for some other worldly reason. He had not made it his first and great study to learn before-hand whether she was a truly pious woman, a faithful servant of the Almighty; whether she would be a partner likely to help him forward in the way of salvation, and by instruction and example to train up a family in holiness. Or subsequently to his marriage he had permitted attention to his wife to supersede that which was due to his God. Each therefore of the persons invited, having preferred things temporal to things eternal, was justly condemned. *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit,*

*the things of the Spirit. To be spiritually-minded is life and peace : to be carnally-minded is death (c).*

My brethren ! the parable which has been explained, while it affords an exact picture of the present state of multitudes who profess themselves to be Christians, holds forth a solemn warning to all persons, who are at this day endeavouring to make excuses for denying to religion the empire of their hearts. If in tempers or in conduct you are an open transgressor of the gospel ; as surely as the word of God is true, you are in a state of damnation. The gulf of destruction stares you in the face ; and, unless you repent and become a new man, will close upon you for ever. But this parable, in conformity to many other passages in the New Testament, teaches you the no less awful lesson ; that you will be condemned at the day of judgment, if you suffer any one of the lawful occupations or lawful pleasures of this life to be the principal object of your pursuit. Yet how frequently do we see people resigning themselves to such idols ; and find every argument ineffectual to convince them that they are in the direct road to eternal ruin. With

(c) Rom. viii. 6, 7.

some, wealth is the idol. They rise up early, and go late to rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, day after day, and year after year. Their minds are filled with plans for the improvement of their ground, and the advantageous disposal of its produce; or with schemes to draw customers to their counting-house or their shop, and to lay in their commodities at the cheapest rate; or to place out their money on the best security, and at the highest interest. At the end of every year they are become richer: but they are not become more inclined to religion. They have increased in possessions: but they have not grown in grace. They have accumulated substance on earth: but have not laid up treasure in the sight of God. During all this time they imagine that they are religious: and are even ready to profess a conviction that this scraping laborious life is one proof of religion. How hardening is the deceitfulness of sin (*d*)! How darkening the influence of a worldly spirit! What specious evidence have they to produce of their religion? Let their cause be exhibited in the most favourable light. They have not been spendthrifts. They have observed common honesty in their dealings. They have seldom omitted their forms of devotion at the returns of night

(*d*) Heb. iii. 13.

and of morning. They have attended public worship, and even the sacrament, with decent frequency. But let every person of this description answer to himself a short question: Where has your heart been fixed? On the next world, or on this? Your answer will tell you that, if you die in your present state, your condemnation is certain and just. Others make pleasures and amusements their idols. They conceive that, because they are under no pecuniary necessity of addicting themselves to business, they need not disappoint their inclinations. They do not mean, they profess, to live wickedly: but they think that they have a right to entertain themselves. Amusements accordingly constitute their leading pursuit. Hounds and horses, or other sports of the field; or public places and unprofitable visiting and the indolent perusal of trifling and uninstruative books, take possession of their time and their thoughts. The amusements which each person selects for himself depend on his situation, and other accidental circumstances. But of all such persons, amusement, whatever shape it may assume, is the object. And because they follow such amusements as are not in their own nature necessarily sinful; and because they are not regardless of the forms of devotion, and some other outward duties

duties of religion; they flatter themselves that they are sufficiently good Christians. But let such persons also be asked: Where has your heart been fixed? Can you think that the life which you have led has been to live unto God and unto Christ? Has your life been that of a man who seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? The persons who were previously described perish by the cares and the riches of the world. You perish by its idleness and its pleasures. Industry, grounded on Christian motives, and governed by Christian rules, is not only not a sin, but an absolute duty. Recreations, innocent in their nature, and moderate in degree, are at proper times beneficial and necessary. But if either the acquisition of money, or the pursuit of amusement, be the leading object of your thoughts and wishes, the ruling principle of your heart: cease to imagine that you are religious; anticipate the condemnation which awaits you. I dwell not on other idols. What though power and learning, and reputation, have also their worshippers? Is the idolatry of another man a vindication of yours? God acknowledges none as his servants, except those whose predominant desire and delight is to promote his glory and obey

his commandments. To no others does he promise pardon and grace and salvation through Jesus Christ. Deceive yourself no longer. Lean no longer on a broken reed. Away with ever excuse for delaying to resign your whole heart to your Redeemer. Some excuses may be more absurd, some may be more presumptuous, than others. But if you trust to any excuse whatever, you will fall into everlasting condemnation.

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## SERMON X.

On Stedfastness in Obedience to God.

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NUMBERS, xiv. 24.

*But my Servant Caleb, because he had another Spirit with him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the Land.*

**T**HE children of Israel, about fifteen months after their departure from Egypt, were now arrived on the borders of the land of promise. Moses, according to the command of God, sent forth twelve chosen men, one from each tribe, to examine the country: and directed them to bring accurate information to their brethren, whether the soil was rich and fruitful or lean and barren; whether the inhabitants were few and feeble, or numerous and warlike; whether they were

dwellers in tents, or in cities and strong holds. The twelve spies, after having been engaged during forty days in executing the commission, returned. They delivered a most favourable account of the fertility of the land of Canaan. They described it as indeed flowing with milk and honey. And among other specimens of the luxuriance of its productions, they brought with them a cluster of grapes so vast in size, that it was carried between two of them upon a staff. But the remainder of their report filled the camp of Israel with alarm. They represented the people of Canaan as men of great stature, some of them even as giants; and as dwelling in very large and fortified cities. And ten of the spies vehemently dissuaded the Israelites from attempting to enter the country; and averred that its inhabitants were far too mighty to be attacked by them with any hope of success. The other two spies, Caleb and Joshua, remained firm in dependence upon God. They protested against the impious cowardice of their associates. They earnestly entreated their countrymen not to rebel against the ordinance of the Lord, who had commanded them to go up and take possession of the land; who had promised to bestow it upon them and their children for ever; and



who had proved himself able, by his former glorious deeds on their behalf, to crown them with victory over the most powerful enemies. Their entreaties and exhortations were thrown away. The congregation of Israel prepared to stone to death these faithful servants of the Most High. The divine indignation was awakened. God instantly destroyed the ten spies who had impelled the Israelites to transgress: and pronounced this awful sentence on all among the rebellious congregation who had attained the age of twenty years, that they should wander until they died in the wilderness, and should never set their feet on the promised land. But to his servants Caleb and Joshua, who had fully followed him in stedfast obedience, he repeated his gracious assurance, that they should enter into the land and possess it.

The events, which on this occasion took place in the host of Israel, bear a striking resemblance to those, which at the present day are frequently seen to occur on the subject of religion. We perceive numbers pursuing the example of the ten spies and their disobedient countrymen. And some, through the blessing of God, we behold walking in the steps of Caleb and Joshua. On the conduct of persons of each of these two descriptions

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I propose separately to offer some observations : and shall afterwards endeavour to furnish you with the means of judging for yourselves which of the two classes of men it will be your wisdom to take for your pattern. May the divine grace render what you hear conducive to your edification!

I. Let me in the first place call your attention to a class of men very numerous in the world ; men who allow that piety is commendable, and even profess that they are desirous of paying what they term a reasonable regard to religion : but, having no true love of holiness in their hearts, are continually taking alarm at difficulties, and on the watch to raise objections. Observe how nearly the character and conduct of such persons resemble those of the ten spies. The ten spies acknowledged the excellence of the land which they had searched. They said unto Moses; *We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey : and this,* added they, while they pointed to the figs and the pomegranates and the wonderful cluster of grapes, *this is the fruit of it.* So the professed Christians of whom we speak are ready to say : “ We know what religion “ is ; we have examined it, and we understand “ it.

“ it. We admit that the Scriptures are excel-  
 “ lent books ; and that the gospel gives many  
 “ admirable directions. We are fully of opi-  
 “ nion that christianity is well adapted to  
 “ produce tranquillity and good order, and  
 “ honesty, and charitable actions, and other  
 “ valuable fruits among men. And we doubt  
 “ not that it secures great rewards in re-  
 “ version to all who lead exemplary lives.”

On the spiritual nature of true piety, on the intrinsic odiousness of sin, on the necessity of a radical change of heart, and on other distinguishing features of the *doctrine which is according to godliness*, such persons commonly are silent. They commend religion, as the ten spies commended the land of Canaan, loudly as to some particulars, but with various objections in reserve : objections which in their case weigh, like those of the spies, much more than all the subjects and circumstances of their praise.

*Nevertheless*, said the ten spies, *Nevertheless the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.* The heart now began to unfold itself. The real disposition began to produce its natural effects upon the conduct. These men had no sure confidence in God. They placed no firm reliance on his promise of protection.

They possessed not that fervent love for him, which fills the bosom with a prevailing desire to obey him. They secretly hankered after the flesh-pots of Egypt: and did not regard the promised land with all its blessings as worthy of being purchased by the trouble and exertions, which were necessary in order to obtain it. Hence they looked around for objections, which might serve as excuses for their own disobedience, and might also deter their countrymen from making the attempt. They brought up an evil report on the land which they had searched; saying, *It is a land which eateth up the inhabitants thereof.* Thus the class of professed Christians now under consideration, men whose desire is to live not unto Christ, but unto themselves; men who acknowledge the truth of the gospel, but love not the doctrines which it reveals, and still less the holiness which it requires; such men gladly try to shelter their breach of duty by bringing up an evil report on a life of godliness. "The service of religion," they exclaim, "is a hard service. It is a service which wears away and consumes those who engage in it." Again; the spies proceeded to set forth and to magnify the difficulties which must be sustained, and the obstacles which must be surmounted, previously to the day when the land

land of Canaan could be secured. *The people, said they, be strong, that dwell in the land: and the cities are walled and very great. We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.* So these nominal Christians eagerly bring forward into notice, and heighten with every extravagance of exaggeration, the trials which attend a Christian life. They describe the temptations, against which the Christian has to maintain a conflict, as almost irresistible. "His duty," they cry, "is most severe; his watchfulness  
"unremitting; his labour extreme; his suc-  
"cess very doubtful, and in appearance nearly  
"hopeless." *And moreover, continued the spies, we saw the children of Anak there: there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak which come of the giants.* "In addition too," exclaim the nominal Christians, "to the hardships al-  
"ready enumerated as awaiting us in the  
"paths of religion; we there perceive those  
"enemies of happiness, those objects of our  
"abhorrence and our dread, obloquy, mortifi-  
"cation and self-denial. Who," they de-  
mand, in the language of St. Paul, but in a spirit directly opposite to that by which the apostle was governed; "Who is sufficient  
"for these things?" Inwardly averse to that righteousness which the Scriptures enjoin; they

they studiously represent it as unattainable, and labour to render it unacceptable. Intent on framing apologies for declining to devote themselves to God; and solicitous to vindicate themselves by the authority and support of companions in sin: they scruple not to delineate the Father of mercies as a hard Master; and his service as difficult and toilsome beyond the ability of man, and therefore, as in forgetfulness or contempt of the promised grace of the Holy Spirit they blindly and presumptuously pronounce, exceeding in its prescribed extent the bounds of human duty.

II. *But my servant Caleb, saith the Lord, had another Spirit with him, and hath followed me fully. He stilled the people before Moses, and said, together with Joshua; Let us go up at once and possess the land: for we are well able to overcome it. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into the land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord: neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us. Their defence is departed from them; and the Lord is with us. Fear them not. Caleb had no apprehensions; he looked not around for objections; he raised up no difficulties.*

culties. And why? Because *he followed the Lord fully*. He placed entire confidence in God. He knew that whatever God promised, he was able to perform. The strong people that dwelt in the land, the cities walled and very great, the sons of Anak who were giants, he regarded as nothing. He beheld with the eye of faith the Lord of hosts going before him to battle, and casting down all enemies under his feet. His heart was with his God. He delighted to obey the divine commands. *Only rebel not ye against the Lord*. This was his main desire both for his countrymen and for himself. To the protection of the God whom he loved, he committed himself. Consequences he left to Omnipotence. His own concern was duty. "All the labours, all the sufferings, to which it may please my heavenly King to summon me, will be lightened by his never-failing goodness, and will be abundantly overpaid by his promised inheritance." His heart spoke thus; and was at rest.

Through the grace of God, and it is through that grace alone, there are those among the Christians of our own days who are animated by the spirit of Caleb and of Joshua. They follow the Lord fully. Religion

gion is their choice ; holiness their delight. Thoroughly convinced of the truth of God, of the mercies of redemption, of the glories of the world to come ; they hesitate not to encounter the toils of Christian warfare. They are not ignorant of the strength of their enemies. They are aware that it is far greater than it is imagined or represented to be by the worldly-minded men, who refuse to encounter it. " We know," they reply to the deceivers who would persuade them to shrink back from the course of duty ; " we know that we have to contend with the " flesh and the world ; with the corruption of " our own hearts ; with your evil customs, " your scoffs and your snares ; with Satan and " his angels, the principalities and powers of " darkness. But we are ready to set the " battle in array. We are ready to go forth " in the name of our God. Mightier is he " that is with us than they that are against " us. His strength is perfected in our weak- " ness. His grace is sufficient for us : and " is able to make us more than conquerors " through him that loved us, even through " Jesus Christ."

III. You are now acquainted with the different spirit of two different classes of persons to be  
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be found among modern Christians. Which of the two do you judge to be in the right? Which of the two do you esteem the wiser? *Come and let us reason together* on this subject. The Israelites were directed to search out and examine the land of Canaan by means of their spies, before they should attempt to take possession of it. In the same manner Christ admonishes those, who are desirous of becoming his disciples, to *sit down first and count the cost* (a). Not that the Israelites were left at liberty in point of duty to choose and determine for themselves whether they would proceed into Canaan, or not. Neither are you left at liberty in point of duty to determine for yourselves whether you will be religious or not. The Israelites were commanded to proceed into Canaan, and you are commanded to be religious, under pain of the wrath of almighty God. Why then are you required to sit down and count the cost of being religious? For the same reason for which the Israelites were instructed to search out the land of Canaan: namely, that through the promised assistance of Him *from whom is the preparation of the heart* (b), you may prepare your minds beforehand for the task which you

(a) Luke, xiv. 28 - 33.

(b) Prov. xvi. 1.

have to perform ; and may thoroughly understand the greatness of the promised reward.

Do not imagine that for the purpose, as it were, of deluding you into the service of religion I would represent that service as easy. Whatever may be the blessings, present or future which it may hold forth ; unquestionably it abounds with difficulties, and requires constant and laborious exertion. And what valuable pursuit is there which does not ? But with respect to every valuable pursuit the decisive question is not whether difficulties and sacrifices are to be expected : but whether there be solid ground for trusting that the difficulties and sacrifices will be compensated by the attainment of the object which you pursue. The husbandman cheerfully gives up his time and ease, and submits to watchfulness and hardship, in cultivating his fields : for he hopes for an ample retribution in the harvest. The merchant commits his property to the winds and waves, traverses the ocean, faces the vicissitudes of climates, recoils not from fatigue and danger, from suspense and anxiety : for he looks forward to a cargo, which shall abundantly remunerate his labours. Consider whether the rewards, which religion ensures to her followers, are proportionate to the nature of the service which she demands. But  
beware

beware of estimating among hardships injunctions which are blessings.

What then are the difficulties and sacrifices to which you must submit, if you would be servants of religion? "There are many things," you reply, "many things rooted in our nature, and dear to flesh and blood, which we must renounce." What must you renounce? "We must renounce our evil passions; as pride, anger, fretfulness, envy, revenge." And is this a grievous sacrifice? Will anger make you happy? Will fretfulness make you happy? Will pride, or envy, or revenge, make you happy? When you have indulged any of these wicked tempers, does the recollection of them diffuse comfort over your bosom? Can you seriously say; "As I wish to be happy to-morrow, I therefore hope that to-morrow I shall be actuated by passion, that I shall be fretful, and proud, and envious, and revengeful?" Can you seriously say, that you believe men of such dispositions to be more happy than those, whom religion has rendered mild, contented, humble, rejoicing in the prosperity of others, replete with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness? Your own hearts tell you that the real sacrifice is not to renounce these

tempers, but to retain them: that their service, not that of religion, is the hard service.

Let us proceed in our examination. What more does religion require you to renounce? "She requires us to renounce intemperance, and other sensual pleasures." And are these grievous sacrifices? Compare the gratification which the sinner obtains from his brutal indulgences with the present blessings which he loses by them. Take drunkenness for an example. Does the drunkard derive as large an amount of pleasure from drunkenness, as the temperate man from temperance? Contemplate the drunkard drenching himself in the poison which is secretly destroying him; roaring out curses in the midst of companions like himself; and joining in their profane songs and licentious merriment. Follow him to his home, to the wife and children whom perhaps he starves: see them terrified by his fury, or sunk in anguish by his guilt. Visit him the succeeding morning. Behold his reddened eyes, his bloated visage, his trembling hands, his listless and languid frame. Behold him racked with remorse for the sins of the past evening; or in a state infinitely more pitiable, utterly insensible of them, and prepared for the next opportunity of

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of repeating his iniquity. Now turn to the man whom religion renders temperate. Observe his serene brow, the emblem of a peaceful bosom. Mark the healthiness of his countenance, the alacrity of his step, See him pressing forward with cheerful industry the business of the day. See his family in tranquillity, and comfort, and harmony around him. Judge for yourself, whether the son of temperance or the drunkard be the happier man. Compare thus in detail the man who abandons himself to any other unlawful gratification with his neighbour whom the fear of God preserves from that sin: and the conclusion will be no less clearly in favour of religion. You will again discover that to be wicked requires the real sacrifice; that the hard service is the service of guilt.

What more have you to object to the ways of religion? "We are commanded to believe every doctrine which is declared in the scriptures; and to practise every duty which they enjoin." And do you place these obligations in the catalogue of hardships? Is it a hardship to believe the word of the God of truth? Is it a hardship to obey the commandments of a wise and holy and merciful father: commandments all of them

of such a nature that, as you have already been constrained to acknowledge, in proportion to your obedience to them will be your present happiness? "But our assent is required to doctrines which we cannot fathom." Can you explain the growth of a blade of grass? Do you expect then to fathom the nature and the counsels of the Godhead? "But religion makes no allowances. She proscribes even little and venial sins." Whence have you learned that any sin is little? Whence have you learned that any act of rebellion against God is venial? Do human laws allow petty thefts, petty frauds, petty outrages? Do not you know that petty thefts, if unchastised, advance to burglaries, petty frauds to forgeries, petty outrages to murder? How shall religion secure you from the blackest enormities otherwise than by prohibiting the first rudiments of guilt? How shall the perfect holiness of the Deity tolerate the slightest infraction of his righteous law? "But Christianity calls us to constant watchfulness and prayer!" Those duties then you account hardships! You account it a hardship to be obliged constantly to watch against sins, which you know will make you miserable even in this world: and

a hardship to be required to be constant in prayer to God, by whom alone your watchfulness can be rendered successful, from whom alone flows every blessing which you enjoy. These duties, did you possess any true wisdom, you would range among your blessings. Would you be preserved from the deepest snares and the strongest chains of iniquity? Watchfulness against temptation is indispensable. Prayer, more especially, is your most valuable privilege. For, though a religious life brings no hardships; it is attended with difficulties naturally unsurmountable by man. It is an unceasing struggle against sin and the author of sin. It is a continual mortification of corrupt appetites, a constant denial of selfish passions. It is a warfare to which of yourselves you are utterly unequal. How great a blessing is it to be permitted at all times to apply by prayer to that almighty Protector, who alone can give you the victory, who is ever ready to hear the supplications of his people!

Thus then is it evident that the region of guilt is *the land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof*. Thus is it evident, on a just comparison, that *godliness has the promise of the life which now is*. How much more has

it the exclusive promise of *that which is to come* (c)! Here you behold the grand superiority of religion. Here you behold the everlasting triumph of the righteous. However distressed may be his situation in this world; however real and however great may be the sacrifices, however continual and severe the mortification and self-denial, to which religion binds him to submit; he reposes with full confidence on his God. He looks forward beyond the grave; and exclaims with the apostle, *My light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for me an exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (d). He knows that, as long as he remains in the flesh, he is liable to fall; that if he forsakes his Redeemer he shall be a cast-away. But he walks humbly with his God, and therefore leans upon his mercy: he keeps his holy commandments, and therefore relies upon the continuance of his preserving grace. Would you attain to these glorious hopes, before which the world and its brightest prospects fade away: to this peace of soul, the delight of which they only who have felt it can comprehend? Follow the Lord fully. Remember the example of the rebellious Is-

(c) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

(d) 2 Cor. iv. 17.



raelites who listened to the ten unfaithful spies and that of the two steadfast followers of God. *As truly as I live, saith the Lord, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. As truly as I live, so will I do to you who have murmured against me. Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, save Caleb and Joshua. My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully; him will I bring into the land.* The decree was punctually fulfilled. The ten spies were instantly struck with death. The whole rebellious congregation, one man after another, was consumed in the course of nearly forty years spent in wanderings in the wilderness. But after the expiration of that period their children and descendents, under the command of Joshua, who was assisted by his faithful friend Caleb, entered the land of Canaan and took possession of it. They believed in God: and he drove out and destroyed their enemies.

“ But was not Caleb,” you enquire, “ by this time declining into the vale of years, and incapable of enjoying the promised  
“ heritage?”

“heritage?” When God promises, fear not lest the performance should prove delusion. Hear this stedfast servant of the Lord, when he had now employed several years after his arrival in Canaan in combats for the establishment of his brethren in their allotments stating his own claim before Joshua. *Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea. And Moses swore on that day, saying; Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever: because thou hast wholly followed the Lord thy God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. And now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day (for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and, that the cities were great and fenced): if the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him (e): and according to the promise*

(e) Joshua, xiv. 6—14. xv. 13, 14.

of Moses assigned to him the mountain and city of Hebron, which were inhabited by those giants, the sons of Anak, at the name of whom the whole congregation of Israel had trembled : and the Lord was with Caleb ; and he utterly destroyed them. The words of the Lord will be fulfilled as punctually with respect to you. The wicked *shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal* ( *f* ). If the gospel is preached to you in vain ; if your lives are not lives of faith and holiness through Christ : you will perish everlastingly, where the worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched. *These are the true sayings of God.* If you have *another spirit* with you, even that new spirit which is created in the heart by the eternal Spirit of sanctification ; if you *follow the Lord fully* in godliness, and humility, and prayer, and perseverance unto the end : the inheritance of the spiritual Canaan, the kingdom of heaven, will be yours, by the blood of Jesus, for ever.

( *f* ) Matt. xxv. 46.

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## SERMON XI.

On the Character of Naaman.

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2 KINGS, v. 2, 3.

*The Syrians had gone out by Companies, and had brought away captive out of Israel a little Maid ; and she waited on Naaman's Wife. And she said unto her Mistrefs ; Would God my Lord were with the Prophet that is in Samaria : for he would recover him of his Leprosy !*

**T**HAT the name of God might be glorified among the heathen was one of the leading purposes, for the furtherance of which the children of Israel were selected to become a peculiar people to the Most High. In the victories which from age to age have attended the standard of the cross, this plan of mercy has advanced many steps towards its completion. In the universal triumphs which await Christianity, when the conversion and re-establish-

establishment of the Jews shall bring the fulness of the Gentiles into the church, it will receive its perfect accomplishment. But during the whole period of the Mosaic covenant; from the day when the magicians said unto Pharaoh, *This is the finger of God*, to the moment when the Roman centurion exclaimed, *Truly this Man was the Son of God*: the deliverances miraculously wrought amidst the chosen race shook successive kingdoms and generations of unbelievers with terror; and concurred with the conspicuous purity of the Jewish religion to extort from reluctant idolaters the tribute of praise to Jehovah.

In the narrative of which the portion of Scripture already recited forms a part, we perceive the Omnipotent gaining to himself from among the heathen an acquisition which his mercy never despises, the acquisition of a faithful worshipper. I propose, in the first place, to state and briefly to illustrate the circumstances of the transaction: and, in the second place, to point out some of the methods, in which we may derive benefit from the consideration of them.

I. The kingdom of Syria bordered upon Israel. In consequence of disputes respecting their boundaries and various other causes, there  
arose

arose frequent wars between the two nations. About the time of which we are speaking, some troops of Syrians had effected a successful incursion into the land of Israel: and, according to the cruel custom of those days, had carried back with them into captivity such of the inhabitants as they had been able to seize. Among them was a young woman, who became a servant in the family of Naaman. Naaman was captain of the host, general of the whole army, of the king of Syria. *He was a mighty man in valour. He was also a great man with his master, and honourable; because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria.* But in the midst of his grandeur and high renown, he was subjected to a very severe affliction. He was infected with the leprosy; a loathsome disorder not uncommon in the East. The Israelitish maiden felt compassion for his distress. Her mind, fondly reverting to her native soil, dwelt on the wonderful works which God had there wrought by the hand of Elisha. She thought that this minister of heaven, on whose prayer the son of the Shunamite had been restored to life, would be enabled to heal the disease of her master. *She said unto her mistress; Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria: for he would recover him of his leprosy.*

*leprosy.* Naaman was informed of her afflictions: and speedily commencing his journey to Samaria, conveyed with him for the prophet a present of immense value; and a letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel desiring, in authoritative language, that Naaman might be healed. The king of Israel perused the letter with astonishment and alarm. *He rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive; that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?* And he concluded that the purpose of the Syrian monarch was to seek a pretence for quarrelling and entering into war with him. When Elisha heard the news, he reproved the king of Israel for yielding to fear, instead of humbly confiding in God, who was ready to protect all that put their trust in him; and had even then raised up a prophet in Samaria able to cure the leper. *Let Naaman,* he added, *come unto me: and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.* Naaman accordingly proceeded with his chariot and attendants to the door of Elisha: and there received a message from the prophet, directing him to go and wash himself seven times in the river Jordan, and assuring him that his leprosy should thus be immediately removed. The haughtiness of Naaman burst  
into

into open fury, when he heard the message. He instantly departed. He considered the river Jordan as utterly contemptible in comparison with the rivers of his own country. He expected too that the prophet should instantly have appeared before him with ceremonious deference: and that he should have performed the cure publicly in the sight of the people, and in a manner calculated to render the highest honour to so great a man as the captain of the host of the king of Syria. *Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said; Behold I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage.* Happy was it for him that he had some attendants of a spirit different from his own. *They came near, and said unto him; My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing: wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith; Wash and be clean?* Here was the language of reason and kindness. The language of reason unaccompanied by kindness will often fail of making an impression. It has no effect



fect on the understanding, because it touches not the heart. The language of kindness unassociated with reason will frequently be unable to persuade: because though it may gain upon the affections, it wants that which is necessary to convince the judgement. But let reason and kindness be united in your discourse; and seldom will even pride or prejudice find it easy to resist. Thus it was with Naaman. His pride and prejudices yielded at once. He went forward to the river Jordan; dipped himself seven times; and ascended out of the water perfectly healed of his disease. He hastened back to the prophet in the fervor of gratitude and piety. He was eager to load Elisha with costly gifts: But Elisha sought not by healing Naaman to enrich himself. His object was to promote the glory of God. Urged again and again with the most importunate earnestness, he steadily refused to receive a reward. Naaman avowed his conviction that the God of Israel was the God of all the earth: and solemnly protested that from that moment he renounced the worship of idols, and would adore the true God alone. He returned into Syria completely changed not in outward appearance merely, but in heart.

II. I proceed to explain in some of its branches the instruction to be deduced from the history of Naaman.

I. The power of the Deity is conspicuously exalted, when he accomplishes his gracious purposes by means which are undervalued or despised. Naaman for a time would not bear the idea that a river in the land of Israel, a land which he beheld with scorn, a land which he probably had trampled down at the head of his victorious host, could be the instrument by which God would remove his leprosy. Does the New Testament supply no parallel? When Christ appeared on earth to save mankind by his atoning death and by his sanctifying doctrine; all the world took offence at him. To the Jews, he was a stumbling-block; to the Greeks, foolishness. The Jews expected their Redeemer to manifest himself in worldly magnificence and grandeur; to place himself in triumph on the throne of David in Jerusalem; and to render the people of Israel the glory and the dread of the whole earth. A Saviour who was found in the humblest rank of life; who disclaimed all human dignity and power; who submitted to be treated as a malefactor, to be put to death upon the cross; they were too proud and too ignorant to acknowledge.

*Is not this the Carpenter, the son of Mary? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth (a)?* The Greeks had fixed their hearts on the ostentatious subtleties which they denominated wisdom. They despised all doctrines which were not distinguished by intricate, refined, and disputatious learning, and decorated with a parade of eloquence. The simple, pure, and holy gospel of Christ they regarded as unworthy of the notice of informed and cultivated minds. Are humility and discernment universal among ourselves? Even in our own days, the divine authority of our crucified Lord is by many persons scornfully decried: and the righteous instructions and commandments which he delivered are represented by blind and presumptuous sinners as possessing no particular merit, and as in some respects hard, unreasonable, and pernicious. To such scoffers what shall be our reply? We reply to them in the words addressed by Christ to the unbelieving Jews: *Wisdom is justified of all her children (b)*. They who understand the Christian plan of salvation, they perceive it to be the power of God and the wisdom of God.

2. Observe, secondly, that if there be any blessing which you are desirous of obtaining

(a) Mark, vi. 3. John, i. 46. (b) Luke, vii. 35.

from the hand of God, it must be sought in the manner which he enjoins. If you seek but the smallest of his gifts; pursue the appointed track: turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left. Would you atchieve the greatest, even salvation? Seek it through that channel which he has ordained. You cannot attain it through any other. The mercy of God will be exercised, the grace of God will be bestowed, in his own method, and in that only. If you will not accept his bounty in the way and under the qualifications which he proposes; you never will obtain it. Could not the Omnipotent have removed the leprosy of Naaman by various means? But the waters of Jordan were the instrument which he thought fit to appoint. If Naaman had obstinately persevered in refusing to make use of them; he never would have been healed. He might have bathed in Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus of which he so highly boasted: he might have consulted the most skilful physicians: he might have applied the most celebrated remedies: he might have practised every method which his imagination could devise for the recovery of his health: and all would have been entirely in vain. He would have remained a distempered and a miserable

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object,

object, grievous to himself, and offensive to others: he would have gone down to his grave a leper as white as snow. If you wish to be saved; remember that you can be saved only through Christ. There is salvation in no other. And, if you would be saved through him; remember that he will be no Saviour to you, unless through the grace of God it be your constant study and endeavour to believe what he has commanded you to believe, and to practise what he has commanded you to practise. It is a very afflicting and a very alarming truth, that in most congregations there are many professed Christians, who will not take Christianity as they find it in the Scriptures. Puffed up with self-righteousness, or proudly confiding in their own imaginations and reasonings, they shut their eyes against the plainest declarations of Jesus Christ: and frame to themselves such ideas of the divine method of salvation as the gospel not only does not authorise, but positively contradicts. Some men become arrogant and daring enough to think that they have but little occasion for the atoning blood and mediation of Christ: that their lives have been in the main sufficiently good: and that if God were not to admit them into the glories of heaven, their exclusion would

scarcely be less than partiality and injustice. Others, who have not so far lost the sense of their own radical guilt and deep unworthiness, take the gospel piecemeal. They would be surpris'd and offended, were any doubt expressed as to their reverence of the Scriptures. But what is the method in which such a person treats the Scriptures? Some parts he perceives to accord with the opinions which he has formed concerning the duties of religion. Those he mentions with respect. Other parts he discovers to be in a certain degree at variance with his private sentiments and prepossessions. Of them he speaks with less regard. "These things," he remarks, "may prove thus, or they may not. It is a very doubtful matter. It is probable that we misunderstand the passage; and that the true meaning is very different from that which is commonly assumed." But towards other passages, which are absolutely irreconcilable with some favourite prejudice of his own, he uses no ceremony or moderation. "This position," he pronounces at once, "cannot be. This precept is intolerable. To follow this direction is impossible: and to attempt to follow it would not only be ineffectual, but would be to expose myself to continual disadvantages, mortification, and ridicule.

" It

“ It clearly was never intended that in the  
“ present state of the world we should ob-  
“ serve these rules. At least it is very evi-  
“ dent that we need not be at all strict as  
“ to the observance of them.” He proceeds  
in the same manner with respect to doctrines :  
and such as do not satisfy his preconceptions,  
and coincide with his theories, he makes no  
scruple of neglecting, nor of explaining away,  
nor even of openly denying. Now one part of  
the character of a good man, as it is delineated  
in the Scriptures; is to walk humbly with his  
God. Do such persons walk humbly with  
their God ? Is not their conduct the counter-  
part of that of Naaman, while his mind was  
enslaved by pride ? A part of the measures ne-  
cessary for his cure he was willing to adopt. He  
did not hesitate to undertake a journey even as  
far as Samaria to the prophet. But when he was  
directed to proceed to the river Jordan, and  
wash himself in the stream ; he immediately re-  
belled. He thought the direction unreasonable,  
absurd, and degrading ; and refused to pay any  
regard to it. My brethren ! Be assured that the  
whole of the Scriptures is the word of God.  
If it is your duty to obey one part, it is your  
duty to obey every part. And those persons  
who presumptuously take upon themselves  
to separate those things which God has

joined together ; to detach and select from the sacred writings some doctrines, and some precepts, as proper to be received, and to reject others as unworthy of God and not designed to be binding upon man ; are in the utmost danger of finding themselves at the day of judgement as fatally disappointed of salvation, as Naaman would have found himself disappointed of a cure, if he had persevered in refusing to depart and dip himself seven times in Jordan.

3. Receive instruction, in the next place, from the unfeigned repentance, and pious gratitude of Naaman. He came in haste from the river, and presented himself before the prophet. He openly acknowledged that there was no God but the God of Israel. He solemnly renounced the idolatrous worship to which he had been accustomed ; and declared that from that moment he would adore the true God and Him only. He who had so lately regarded with contempt all the waters of Canaan ; now humbly requested permission to carry back with him into his own country two mules' burthen of earth from the land of Israel, that he might raise with it in Syria an altar to Jehovah. You have inherited a corrupt nature, infected with a disease far more loathsome, far more dangerous, than that



that of Naaman ; infected with sin, the leprosy of the heart. How may you be preserved from the mortal effects of your malady ? By one method only : by a method analogous to that by which Naaman was healed : by flying for help to the great prophet of Israel, Jesus Christ the Lord. He has opened in his gospel a fountain for the washing away of guilt. He has made atonement for sin by the shedding of his own blood. He promises pardon to every penitent. He promises to his followers the aid of all-sufficient grace. He invites, he exhorts you to accept deliverance, to be cleansed, to be made whole. Have you hitherto despised the call ? Naaman gave ear to the counsel of his servants. *We are ourselves your servants for Jesus's sake. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's stead ; be ye reconciled to God (c).* Or do you profess that you have already listened to your Saviour's voice, and known the riches of his redeeming love ? *We beseech you then that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (d).* The change in Naaman was total. And what saith the apostle ? *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away : behold*

(c) 2 Cor. iv. 5. v. 20.      (d) 2 Cor. vi. 1.

*all things are become new (e).* Art thou, like Naaman, purified from unbelief, from pride, from hardness of heart? Hast thou renounced, like Naaman, thy former idols? Like Naaman, hast thou dedicated thyself to the living God? Like Naaman, dost thou respect and love those objects, which heretofore thou contemnedst; the commands of God, the ordinances of God, the altar of God, the servants of God? If thou wouldest know thy real state, turn not away from searching questions. Does conscience constrain thee to silence? Does thy heart secretly delight in the pursuits of the old Adam? This Syrian shall rise up in the day of judgement and shall condemn thee. The leprosy still cleaveth unto thee. Fly to *the fountain of living waters, the fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness, the fountain that cometh forth of the house of the Lord (f)*; lest thy leprosy cleave unto thee for ever.

4. Finally, let Naaman admonish you to tenderness of conscience. *In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant; that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow*

(e) 2 Cor. v. 17.  
Zech. xiii. 1.

(f) Jer. ii. 13. Joel, iii. 18.

*down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.*

It is not a little singular, that these words of Naaman, which originated in a scrupulous desire to avoid every degree of offence against God, should have been interpreted into an application for a licence to commit idolatry. It is still more extraordinary that the reply of Elisha, *Go in peace*, should have been regarded as an assent to such a request. As though the Syrian convert, who in the preceding moment had solemnly declared that he knew that there was no God in all the earth but in Israel; who had spontaneously averred that he would thenceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah alone; would instantly solicit permission to worship an idol! As though the prophet of the Most High would have been seduced from his allegiance by a worldly fear of dealing too strictly with so recent and so dignified a proselyte, to countenance and sanction a crime which it was the object of his life to oppose (g)! As though he would not instantly have replied: *Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*

(g) See in particular the indignant benedictions which he reproved his own idolatrous sovereign. 2 Kings, iii. 1. 3. 13, 14.

*What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What agreement hath God with idols? Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee (b).* The commission of idolatry entered not into the imagination of Naaman or Elisha. The office which Naaman held in his own country required that at certain seasons he should attend his master to the Temple of the Syrian deity Rimmon. On those occasions the king *leaned upon Naaman*. This apparently trifling circumstance is recorded, we presume, as an explanation of the whole transaction. How could the king bow down before his God, unless Naaman, on whom he leaned, should bend himself forward also? But when Naaman had discontinued his former sacrifice to Rimmon, and to every other idol; when he publicly professed another faith, the exclusive belief of another God; when he publicly offered up his sacrifices to Jehovah on the altar constructed with the soil, which he had openly brought for that especial purpose from the land of Israel; was it possible that the act of his bending forward merely in avowed accommodation to his master, who

(b) Acts, viii. 21, 22. 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

leaned

leaned upon him, could be deemed an act of homage to Rimmon, a participation in the crime of idolatry? Naaman, however was not without apprehensions that it might not be lawful on any account, and under any circumstances, to adopt in the temple of an idol a posture similar to that, which others employed as a sign of reverence. And while he expressed his hopes that the proceeding which he had described would not be offensive to God; he expressed them with enquiring solicitude, and with evident tokens of deference to the prophet's expected determination.

*Whatsoever*, saith the apostle, *is not of faith*, whatsoever is performed without a full persuasion of its lawfulness, *is sin (i)*. If you are duly solicitous to preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; you will turn an inquisitive eye on your general conduct, and especially on those parts of your proceedings which may bear the appearance of evil. The self-righteous feel no scruples: the careless examine none, The former have no diffidence; the latter no spirit of investigation. But the man of the truly Christian temper is the *man who feareth always*: the man who, because he

(i) Rom. xiv. 23.

feareth always, in the word of God is pronounced *happy* (*j*): the man who, because he feareth always the corruption of his own heart and the deceitfulness of sin, scrutinises his motives, his tempers, his actions, his objects: is suspicious of being biassed in his judgement of right and wrong by prepossessions, by inclination, by custom, by interest, by a desire to please men, by erroneous expectations of forwarding the glory of God: and being forewarned by the remembrance of past incautiousness, of past mistakes, of past transgressions, proceeds not with careless precipitation, decides not according to first appearances, but strictly examines his purposes on every side, weighs them in the balance of the sanctuary, measures them by the standard of righteousness, notes every defect, every aberration; and changes his plans and desists from his undertakings, when he can no longer lay his hand on his bosom, and affirm according to the complete import of the apostolical injunction; “In my mind, O Lord, I am fully persuaded “of their rectitude (*k*).” Such, in proportion to the degree of knowledge attained by a convert just emerging from idolatry, was the spirit of Naaman. Thou, who hast

(*j*) Prov. xxviii. 14.(*k*) Rom. xiv. 5.

been nursed up from thy cradle in the arms of Christianity ! Is not such thy spirit ? Then shall this Syrian rise up in the day of judgment, and shall condemn thee. *They shall come from the East and from the West, and from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness (l).* There are those, saith the Scripture, whose consciences are *evil (m)*. There are those, whose consciences are *defiled (n)*. There are those, whose consciences are *seared with a hot iron (o)*. What is the first step towards a conscience that is evil, a conscience that is defiled, a conscience that is seared ? A careless conscience. *If through faith in Christ thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (p)*. If thou wilt keep the commandments, *exercise thyself to have always a conscience void of offence (q)*. Exercise thy conscience in a scrupulous investigation of duty ; train it to a quick perception and a lively abhorrence of guilt ; if thou wouldest *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (r)*.

(l) Matt. viii. 11. Luke, xiii. 29. (m) Hebr. x. 22.  
 (n) Tit. i. 15. (o) 1 Tim. iv. 2. (p) Matt. xix. 17.  
 (q) Acts, xxiv. 16. (r) Luke, i. 6.

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## S E R M O N    X I I .

On habitual Remembrance of God.

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PSALM xvi. 8.

*I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right Hand, I shall not be moved.*

**S**UCCESS is not the reward of inconstant aims and desultory efforts. When the mind is divided, we lose sight of our object. When exertion is interrupted, we recede from it. It is the part of wisdom to select from the various objects presented to her choice that which is the most worthy of regard ; to hold it stedfastly in view ; to cherish the impression of its excellence ; to sacrifice to it all inferior gratifications ; to pursue it with firmness, with ardour, with unabating perseverance.

In



In the passage of holy writ which has been recited, the Psalmist directs your thoughts to the greatest of all beings, the source of all happiness. By the weight of his own example, by the result of his own experience, he admonishes you to an habitual remembrance of God. Of the prophetic import of the passage ; of its ultimate and its most important reference to that descendent of David, who alone among all the generations of men kept completely and invariably before his eyes the presence of his Almighty Father ; I speak not now. Contemplate the words in their primary acceptation. Contemplate them as descriptive of that predominant desire of the heart of David, which he fervently expresses in almost every psalm : a desire which, notwithstanding occasional infirmities and one most signal scene of transgression impartially recorded in the scriptures, is proved by the extraordinary commendations bestowed upon him in the sacred writings to have brought forth, through the influence of divine grace, the fruits of faith and holiness in his general conduct, and deep self-abhorrence and genuine repentance for the guilt into which he was betrayed. What was that desire ? To set the Lord his God always before him. What was his recompence ? That God was on his

right hand as his guardian and friend : that God gave him full assurance that he should not be moved.

I. Let us, in the first place, enquire what it is to set God always before us.

Represent to yourself the proceedings of men, who have proposed to themselves as their main pursuit the possession of some worldly attainment. Observe in what manner they set their object, be it what it may, always before their eyes. Contemplate the votary of science. Behold him absorbed in laborious researches: in the investigation of causes and effects; in the construction of theories, and the explanation of the phenomena of nature. Behold him day after day bending all the powers of his mind to the invention and application of mechanism; to the arrangement and superintendence of experiments; to the developement and illustration of philosophical truth. At home and abroad; in cities and in the fields; in solitude and in society; behold him steadily bearing in mind the object, to which he has dedicated his life. Survey the votary of ambition. Behold every nerve, every faculty, upon the stretch to supplant to undermine or to surpass his rivals, and to attain the dizzy  
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pre-eminence to which he aspires. Mark the votary of interest. Behold him toiling early and late; self-immured in a contracted abode; breathing the unhealthy atmosphere of crowded streets; and in his eagerness to accumulate additional wealth, denying himself the enjoyment of that which he possesses. Follow the votary of fame. Behold him careless of repose, patient of fatigue, fearless of death. Behold him indifferent to seasons to climates and to dangers, crossing continents, traversing oceans, facing the bayonet, storming the breach. Widely as these men differ, each from the other, as to their pursuits; in the leading principle of their conduct they are perfectly united. The heart of every man is fixed upon his object. His object is ever before his eyes. To his object his time is appropriated; his faculties are devoted; his indulgences are sacrificed; his plans are made subservient. *The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light* (a). Whosoever thou art, who hast chosen the favour of God for thine object: receive a lesson from the children of this world. Contemplate their ever-wakeful remembrance of the idols which they worship: and thou wilt discern what it is to set the Lord thy God always before thee.

(a) Luke, xvi. 8.

II. Let us, in the next place, investigate the distinct characters, under which it is our duty to set the Lord our God before us.

I. In reflecting on the different characters, under which we may regard the Deity as having manifested himself towards man; the first which naturally strikes the mind is that of Creator. He made us and all the world. There was a period when this earth was not in existence; when there was neither sun nor moon nor star; when neither mankind, nor any of the innumerable tribes of living creatures, which have inhabited and still inhabit this world, were in being. God, in his unbounded goodness, determined to create all these things. He called the earth into being, and separated the land from the seas. He said, *Let there be light; and there was light*: and he made the returns of morning and evening to praise him. He created and placed upon the earth a countless variety of animals, to dwell on the land, in the air, and in the waters, and to possess the happiness which he had made all, each according to its nature, capable of enjoying. And last of all he created man. On man he conferred dominion over all other living creatures. On man he showered down a superior measure of understanding. Within man he implanted the light of conscience. And to crown every other gift with one still

greater, to man alone he unfolded the prospect of a glorious immortality.

If then you deem life a blessing, remember Him who bestowed it. Remember that it was the Lord God Almighty who formed you from the dust of the ground, and breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, so that you became a living soul. Remember that your Creator formed you of his own free will, of his own unbounded mercy: not because he needed your existence; but in order to display the riches of his goodness, to render you happy here, to train you up for blessedness hereafter. Set the Lord your Creator before you. Remember the wonders which he has wrought for you in bringing you into the present scene of existence, and inviting you to look forward to a better. *O come and worship, and bow down and kneel before the Lord your Maker (b).* From the gracious Author of your existence withhold not the poor tribute of gratitude and love.

2. In the next place, when you contemplate yourself as an inhabitant of the earth, and turn your thoughts to the Supreme Being; you cannot fail to recognise Him as your Preserver. To what cause is it owing that you are at this moment alive? To what cause

(b) Psalm xcvi. 6.

is it owing that you have escaped the innumerable snares of death, by which you have continually been encompassed? To what cause is it owing that you have not been afflicted with severer sicknesses; that you do not labour under heavier and more numerous infirmities; that you have not drunk more frequently and more deeply of the cup of distress? To the preserving mercy of God. How many persons, whose constitution and general state of health were in human estimation at least as firm as your own, have you seen snatched away to the grave! How many have you seen laid on the bed of lingering decay, maimed and crippled by accidents, or reduced to misery by losses and misfortunes! Who has guarded you under similar dangers, and saved you from similar calamities? God your Preserver. What claim had you to this compassion and goodness at his hand? Have you performed greater deeds in the service of God than others? Have you displayed a more lively faith? Have you manifested a more devout and holy life? Have you surpassed the rest of the world in kindness to your fellow-creatures? You fix your eyes on the earth, and confess that you advance not any plea of superiority. Remember then that to the

loving kindness of God, unmerited on your part, you owe the security which you have enjoyed from the perils and tribulations, by which so many others have been overwhelmed; and the possession of all the comforts, all the happiness, with which you find yourself surrounded. Set the Lord your Preserver before you.

3. Farther, remember God as your Redeemer and your Sanctifier. Adam, by wilful disobedience, forfeited the state of happiness and immortality for which he was created. His nature became corrupt; and he was made subject to death. You are the children of Adam. You have inherited from him a corrupt nature alienated from God; and a bodily frame which is soon to be turned into dust. You have provoked the wrath of your Heavenly Father by offences without number. You have continually done those things which you ought not to have done, and left undone those things which you ought to have done. You have broken his laws, disregarded his warnings, and made light of his favour. You have subjected yourselves by spontaneous transgression to the everlasting punishment which he has denounced against sinners; which, during the time when you have been committing sins, you

knew that he had denounced. You had no power to avert his vengeance, to satisfy his justice. You could not hope to pass even a single day unstained by fresh offences against him. But his free mercy has provided for you the means of deliverance, of forgiveness, of restoration to the inheritance of heaven. God so loved the world, that he sent his only Son Jesus Christ to redeem it, by making atonement for the sins of mankind upon the cross. Through faith in his blood you may receive pardon and peace. Believe in Him as your Saviour, and truly repent of your sins. So shall the punishment which you have deserved be turned away, for the sake of the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ. Nor is this the whole extent of his mercy. He who in his unbounded compassion undertook to become a sacrifice in your stead; He who now intercedes for you at the right-hand of God; has purchased for you the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Though you are prone to evil, and unable of yourself to withstand temptation: the Spirit of God is ready to strengthen and support you. Though you have to contend against the malice and the snares of the devil and his angels; yet, if with sincerity and fervency of prayer you address yourself to God,  
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he will enable you to conquer by the grace which he will pour into your heart. If you depend on yourself you are undone for ever: but they that trust in the Most High shall not be confounded.

4. Set the Lord before you as your Sovereign and your Judge. He has stationed you upon earth that you may perform his good pleasure; that you may be put to the proof whether through his offered grace you will keep his commandments or no. He has revealed to you his righteous laws: and he requires you to love and obey them. He has placed the Bible in your hands, that you may possess a recorded declaration of his will. He has appointed two sacraments, by one of which you are dedicated to his name; by the other you are taught habitually to bear in mind your redemption through Jesus Christ his Son. He has enjoined you to give diligent attendance on public worship, that you may unite with your fellow-Christians in prayers, praises, and thanksgivings; that you may reverently listen to his holy word; that you may thus have the mercies which you have received, the blessings of which you stand in need, and the duties which you are to fulfil, perpetually brought to your remembrance. He has forewarned you that a day is  
approach-

approaching, when this earth and all that it contains shall be destroyed; when throned in the clouds of heaven and encircled by angelic hosts, Christ shall return to summon the living and the dead to judgement. He has announced to you the sentence which awaits you against that dreadful day, accordingly as you shall be found in the number of those who have accepted the gospel and obeyed it from the heart; or among those who have continued obstinately or carelessly in sin. He has apprised you that your state will then be fixed in happiness or in misery for ever: that you will be exalted into heaven, into glory and happiness which shall never fade away; or be cast into hell, the prison of apostate spirits, into the lake of fire which is the second death.

III. Suffer me to illustrate by some examples the duty of setting Almighty God *always*, at all times, and under all circumstances, before you.

Be it supposed that you are prosperous. Your prosperity you owe to God. It is to Him, and to Him only, that you are to look for the continuance of the whole and of any part of your happiness. It is He who has filled your cup with blessings, and who keeps  
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it full. It is He who has conferred success on your industry and exertions. It is He who has raised you up friends. It is He who has given you cause to rejoice in your relations and in your children. It is He only who can bestow upon you farther mercies in addition to the blessings which He may permit you to retain, or in the place of those which His wisdom may take away. Be grateful then for every mark of His loving-kindness with which you have been favoured. Give daily proof that you are sincerely and warmly thankful for His bounties by possessing them with an humble heart; and by cheerfully employing a large portion of them for the good of your fellow-creatures. *Why dost thou glory? Who maketh thee to differ from another? Freely thou hast received: freely give. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus; how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (c).*

But you are encompassed by adversity and affliction. Your comforts are curtailed: your diligence fails of its reward. Sicknes preys upon your strength. The stroke of death deprives you of near kindred, and even of your offspring. Fix your eyes on the Lord your God. Remember that no affliction

(c) 1 Cor. iv. 7. Matt. x. 15. Acts, xx. 35.

overtakes you without His permission. Remember that the event, which you now deem a calamity, may hereafter prove to have been most conducive to your eternal interests. Remember that distress and sorrow are mercifully sent by your Heavenly Father as chastisements for your good in the end. You are by nature disposed to dote on the present world; and to think little of that which, whether you think of it or not, is assuredly to come. If God were not pleased continually to admonish you by crosses and disappointments, by infirmities of body and anxieties of mind, that here you are not long to remain, that on earth no durable happiness is to be enjoyed: you would dismiss the next life from your thoughts; you would forget to work out your salvation with fear and trembling; you would make no serious and habitual preparation for your appearance before your Judge. Consider, what numbers there are, who, in contempt of all these warnings, set their hearts upon the present world, and neglect and despise their God. Consider whether, notwithstanding all these warnings, you are not yourself neglecting or despising Him. Think then to what excesses of carelessness and presumption you would probably have been carried, if such warnings had not been commissioned  
perpe-

perpetually to remind you of your duty. Bear your tribulation, whatever it be, patiently. Rejoice in it as the appointment of the wisdom and the mercy of God. Rejoice in it as a lesson of faith and righteousness and true holiness. Are your sufferings and your afflictions great? How little in comparison of your sins! Glorify the Lord your Redeemer. Look up to Him, trust in Him, and be comforted.

You are flourishing in the vigour of youth: Shall the tree withhold from the planter the prime of its fruit? When wilt thou serve thy God, if not now? Dost thou count on years to come, thou who art a passing shadow, a dew-drop of the morning, a flame which an instant may extinguish? *I have seen the young man in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea I sought him, but he could not be found (d).* Dost thou postpone the remembrance of thy Creator unto the evil days of old age? Hear then the language of thy thoughts. “O God! I love  
“ Thee not. Power I love: riches I love:  
“ pleasure I love. To these objects I have  
“ devoted my heart: to these I would wil-  
“ lingly dedicate my whole life. But on that

(d) Pf. xxxvii. 35.

“ resolution I dare not venture. Though I  
 “ love Thee not; I am afraid of Thee. I  
 “ will therefore take a middle path. The  
 “ noon of life I give to my darling pursuits.  
 “ And when declining years shall have  
 “ stripped indulgence of its relish; I will  
 “ assign a portion of my time to Thee.”  
 Dost thou recoil from such baseness? Dost  
 thou tremble at such ingratitude? Set the  
 Lord thy God before thee. Honour Him  
 with His own gifts. Consecrate to Him thy  
 present strength. Consecrate to Him the  
 best of thy strength. Consecrate to Him the  
 whole of thy strength. Be thou *like a green  
 olive-tree in the house of God, that bringeth  
 forth its fruit in its season* (e).

But age has already stamped its characters  
 upon thee. Does the ancient tree count on  
 length of years? Does it refuse to its owner  
 the scanty produce, which it still has energy  
 to supply? Its summit is bare: its branches  
 are sapless: its trunk is hollow: its roots are  
 decayed. The earliest blast may lay it low.  
 Even sooner, it may perish by the sentence;  
*Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground* (f).  
 Planted in the Christian church, the garden  
 of God, hast thou been wilfully barren dur-  
 ing the fulness of thy vigour; and art thou

(e) Ps. lli. 8. i. 3.

(f) Luke, xliii. 7.

wilfully barren still? Or, if hitherto productive, dost thou now at length refuse to thy God the tribute, which his nurturing grace even yet enables thee to offer? Remember the Lord, thy rock; and the High God, thy Redeemer. Let it suffice that youth deludes itself with distant prospects. Thou art about to put off thy tabernacle: the time of thy departure is at hand. The night cometh: work, while it is called to-day. In the grave is no repentance: seek mercy while yet it may be found.

I close these illustrations in reminding you that to set the Lord constantly before you is no less your duty while you are following the daily business of your station, than while you are employed in public worship, in private prayer, or in any other special act of religion. Your whole life is to be one continued act of religion. *Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ (g).* Thus if you are engaged in a mercantile transaction; reflect that God sees your proceedings, and the train of thought which passes in your heart. He sees whether you demand an unreasonable profit. He sees whether you are desirous of imposing on the other party. He sees whe-

(g) 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

ther you take pains to conduct yourself towards the person with whom you are dealing, not only with fairnes and moderation, but also with kindness. All these things He sees, and marks them down against the day of judgement. If you have covenanted to execute a piece of work for an employer; consider that the eye of God is fixed upon you. He observes whether you perform your undertaking, whatever it be, carefully and effectually, as you would act under similar circumstances for yourself. He observes whether you honestly consign to your employer's service all the time for which he pays you: or whether you defraud him, when you presume that you shall escape discovery, by wasting part of it in idleness, or by expending it on business of your own. These things he observes; and marks them down against the great day. If you are cultivating your farm; if you are selling your articles in the market or in a shop; if you are serving a master in your daily labour; if you are managing the concerns of your friend or of your country: remember that God is contemplating all your motives, all your thoughts, all your words, all your actions; and that for all your motives and thoughts and words and actions you will have to render an account at the  
judge-



judgement-seat of Christ, when *the books shall be opened and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works* (b).

IV. Direct your attention to the recompence of those, who set the Lord always before them. *The Lord is on their right hand: they shall not be moved.*

*Them that honour me, saith the Lord; I will honour* (i). *If a man love me, saith Christ, my Father will love him: and we will come unto him and make our abode with him* (k). The habitual piety of David was recompensed with the protection of his God. The habitual piety of a Christian shall not receive a less bounteous reward. The God whom he places before his eyes, the Lord his Redeemer whom he serves with singleness of heart, will shelter him from evil, will rescue him from danger, will crown him with blessings, will make all things work together unto him for good in the end. *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with*

(b) Rev. xx. 12.

(i) 1 Sam. ii. 30.

(k) John, xiv. 23.

*him in trouble. I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation (1).*

In the psalm from which the text is taken, no less clearly than in that which has recently been quoted, a greater than David presents himself. *I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy: and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.* In Jesus the Saviour, in the Son of God become man, in Him who alone was by nature without sin, in Him who alone was perfect in obedience to the will of his Father; these promises received a literal accomplishment. His Father sustained Him in His anguish. His soul speedily returned from the abode of departed spirits. His body saw not corruption. He ascended, as man, to everlasting life, to the presence of God, to unchangeable blessedness, to the Mediatorial throne of the universe. But through the atonement of his

(1) Psalm xci, 14—16.

blood the promises are substantially extended to every individual among his faithful followers. The true Christian, like his Master, must suffer: but, like his Master, he looks to God, and is supported. His body must see corruption. The child of Adam must bear the full penalty of temporal death. He must return unto the dust from whence he was taken. He shall *say to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister* (m). Yet his heart is glad and his glory rejoiceth: his flesh also shall rest in hope. For *though worms destroy this body; yet in his flesh shall he see God. For this corruptible shall put on incorruption; this mortal shall put on immortality* (n). He shall behold the path of life. He shall hear the voice of his Redeemer; “Because I live, thou shalt live also (o).” He shall meet the Lord in the air. He shall ascend to the presence of God. He shall stand before the Most High justified and accepted in the righteousness of Christ. He shall enter into bliss; into bliss that fadeth not away; the bliss of *angels, to whom he is made equal; the bliss of the children of God in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb* (p). He shall be with

(m) Job, xvii. 14.

(n) Job, xix. 26. 1 Cor. xv. 53.

(o) John, xiv. 19.

(p) Luke, xx. 36. Rev. xxi. 23.

Christ, he shall be for ever with the Lord, and behold his glory, and see him as he is, face to face, and be like unto him. (*q*). He hath overcome: and he shall sit with Christ on His throne, even as Christ also overcame, and is set down with His Father on His throne. He shall reign with Christ for ever and ever (*r*).

(*q*) John, xii. 26. xvii. 24. 1 Theff. iv. 17. 1 John, iii. 2, 3 Cor. xiii. 12. (*r*) Rev. iii. 21. xxii. 5. 2 Tim. ii. 12.

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## S E R M O N    X I I I .

On the Character of Herod Antipas.

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MARK, vi. 16.

*When Herod heard thereof, he said; It is John whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.*

**A**T the time of which the Evangelist is speaking, the fame of Jesus Christ had diffused itself over the land of Judea. Multitudes had seen the wonderful works which he had performed. Those who had not seen them had heard of them. The sick whom he had healed, the blind, the deaf; and the dumb whom he had restored; filled every part of the country with their gratitude and praises. "But who is he," demanded the people; "by whom these signs and wonders

“are wrought?” This question was variously answered. Some affirmed our Lord to be the promised Saviour. Others conceived that he was one of the ancient prophets returned to life. Others imagined that he was a messenger of God like unto the prophets of old. But all men plainly discerned that he exercised powers out of the common course of nature; and that he must have been sent upon earth for some very interesting purpose. Accounts of these singular events soon reached the palace of Herod Antipas (*a*); and came so frequently repeated, and so strongly confirmed, that it was impossible not to credit them. The king, however, concluded that the Jews were led astray by erroneous conjectures respecting Jesus Christ; and felt assured that he was himself able to pronounce who this extraordinary person was. *It is John, said he, whom I beheaded. He is risen from the dead.*

Herod, in defiance of the Mosaic law, had contracted a marriage with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. John the Baptist, whom God had ordained to be a preacher of righteousness, and had commissioned to call

(*a*) He was son to that Herod who is memorable for the slaughter of Bethlehem; and successor to part of his dominions.

every man to repentance, was upright and resolute in the discharge of his duty ; and would not suffer even his king to commit so flagrant a sin without rebuking him to his face. John could not but foreknow the dangers, to which he exposed himself by his plain-dealing. But he disregarded them. He was solicitous to be faithful to God : and feeling that solicitude, he felt no other. The event was such as he had reason to expect. Herodias set her heart upon vengeance. She persuaded Herod immediately to throw John into prison ; and exerted all her influence to procure an order for his death. For some time her machinations were fruitless. The king would not comply. He *feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man* : and even yet would listen gladly to his preaching, and would do many things which he desired. But he still detained the man of God in prison. The artifices of that abandoned woman at length prevailed. She found *a convenient time*. Her daughter pleased Herod by dancing before him on his birth-day : and the king having inadvertently promised with an oath that he would bestow on the young woman whatever recompence she should ask, she desired, in consequence of having been prompted by

her mother, that the head of John the Baptist might be delivered to her in a charger. The king, though shocked at the iniquity and scandalous cruelty of the request, was ashamed, after his public declarations, to refuse it. He issued orders to the executioner. The righteous man was put to death. And the daughter of Herodias carried his head, bleeding as it was, to her mother.

Such is the summary of this transaction, I proceed to comment with due particularity on its prominent features: and purpose afterwards to lay before you some observations, which may assist you in applying the history to your own improvement.

I. Contemplate in the conduct of Herod and of his queen the natural progress of depravity. Look primarily to Herodias. She in the first place married the brother of her former husband, and while that husband was alive. Of so flagrant a nature was this crime, that if we had heard nothing farther, even charity itself, which hopeth all things, could not have persuaded itself that she had sinned through ignorance. And the remainder of her history precludes all palliation of her guilt. She is informed that a great prophet, John the Baptist, has presented



sented himself before Herod; and has charged him, as he values the mercy of God, to put her away. What effect has this intelligence? Does she humble herself before her Maker? Does she bewail her sin in bitterness of soul? Does she instantly separate herself from Herod? From that moment she is determined on the destruction of the prophet; and continues with Herod as before.

What in the mean time is the conduct of Herod? He despises the warning of John, and refuses to dissolve his unhallowed marriage. He yields to the malignant importunities of Herodias, seizes the holy man who has reproved him, and shuts him up in prison. Yet hardened as he is, he has not arrived at that point in the scale of depravity to which his guilty partner has attained. She hesitates at no crime; she is lost to all feeling, past all compunction. Her heart *is seared*, as St. Paul expresses himself, *with a red-hot iron*. But Herod has still some misgivings of conscience left. There are yet some crimes on which he is afraid to venture. Though he has imprisoned John, and well knows that he has imprisoned the prophet for speaking the truth and adhering to the path of duty; he shrinks from the idea of killing him. One of the reasons which deters him from con-

senting

senting to the murder is his fear lest the people of the land, who all believe John to be a prophet, should rise in arms to avenge his death (*b*). But it is evident that Herod has also scruples of conscience which contribute to his reluctance. For he has long been thoroughly acquainted with the manner of life and the conduct of John. He has been accustomed to frequent attendance on his instructions. He still listens to them at times with gladness; and in many respects regulates his own proceedings in conformity to the exhortations of the prophet. Sunk in sin, he trembles in the presence of holiness. Enslaved to Satan, he reverences the servant of God. "Let thy imprisonment," he whispers to himself, "let thy unjust imprisonment satisfy the queen. Thy blood shall not be upon my head."

The malice of Herodias is unabated. The king, it is true, has not yet consented to her purpose: but she does not despair. She has already proved herself able to persuade him to detain John in prison; and she hopes by seizing some favourable opportunity, to obtain a mandate for his execution. A favourable opportunity arrives; and she does not let it slip. In a moment of riotous festi-

(*b*) Matt. xiv. 5.

vity Herod promises to grant her daughter's request even though it should amount, according to his own figurative expression, to the half of his kingdom. The young woman retires to consult her mother. In her absence behold Herod amusing himself with conjectures concerning the nature of the recompence which she will prefer. "Will she demand a jewelled robe? A sumptuous palace? The revenues of a city? The government of a province?" He knows not what is passing in the mind of Herodias. He knows not that vanity and pride and avarice and ambition have retired, and have relinquished the whole heart to revenge. His speculations are interrupted by the entrance of her daughter. Mirth and curiosity sparkle in his eyes. She advances *straightway with haste*. All is silent. She requires the head of John the Baptist! She requires that it be produced without delay. She requires that it be delivered to her in a charger, that her mother may glut herself with the spectacle. How does Herod receive the demand? Does he aver that no promise, no oath, can bind him to do that which he has no right to do, that which God has forbidden, to commit murder? Does he reject the claim with abhorrence? Does he punish these

those who urge it? Herod *loves the praise of men more than the praise of God.* He is *exceeding sorry* when he hears the request of the daughter of Herodias. But habits of sin have perverted his understanding, clouded his conscience, undermined his steadfastness, enslaved him to false shame. He is perplexed by indistinct scruples, or pretends to be perplexed by scruples, respecting his oath. He apprehends that his nobles will censure him if he departs from his word. He immediately commissions the executioner to behead John in the prison.

Within no long time afterwards, Herod is apprised of the wonderful actions of Jesus Christ; and of the different opinions which men entertain concerning him. His own opinion is speedily formed. He concludes that John the Baptist is restored to life. Whence is this conclusion? Whence, but from the remembrance of his guilt, which haunts him night and day, and menaces him with the sure chastisement of heaven? Overwhelmed with terror and consternation, he concludes that God has undertaken the cause of his servant; that God has raised the murdered prophet from the grave, and has sent him again upon earth armed with the power of working the most stupendous miracles, that he  
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may avenge himself on the wretch who despised his reproof and shed his innocent blood. *It is John, he cries, whom I beheaded. He is risen from the dead: and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him!* Such are the terrors of a wounded conscience!

II. Let me add some observations, applicable to your own conduct, which are suggested by the history before us.

1. In the first place, allow not yourself to be entrapped into sin by the solicitations and importunities of others, not even of your friends and your nearest relations, should you be unhappy enough to perceive tempters among them. That you may encounter a tempter in your own family, in your children, in the husband or the wife of your bosom, is not impossible. You will not be urged, it may be presumed, to procure the imprisonment or the murder of another. But were tempters ever at a loss for grounds of temptation? If you are in poverty; may they not impel you to meliorate your condition by depredations on the property of a neighbour: to conceal from the owner that which you have found: or to excite charity by exaggerated representations of your distress? Are you moving in a higher  
sphere?

sphere? May they not ensnare you into captivity to ambition? May they not mould you into slaves of fashion? May they not transform you into votaries of worldly praise? May they not seduce you into the habit of squandering in dissipation that sacred talent, time, entrusted to your charge; while negligent of the glory of God, and practically careless of salvation, you hurry and flutter across the stage of life, until death suddenly shifts the scene, and unveils the judgements of eternity? And whether you occupy a lower or a higher station, may they not encourage you to over-reach an ignorant or a careless man in a contract; to revenge yourself on some person who has offended you, or whom you envy, by spreading a slanderous tale to his disadvantage; to withhold reparation from those whom you have wronged; to surrender your heart to things temporal; to live not unto God and Christ, but unto the world and yourself? Stand prepared upon the watchtower. Obey the Lord Omnipotent, not man. Resist the assaults of the devil, whatever be the instruments which he employs. Away with fear, with irresolution, with false shame. Be strong in the grace of Christ. *Fight the good fight of faith. Let no man deceive you with vain words: follow not a multitude to do evil:*

*evil: and be not ashamed when it concerneth thy soul (c).*

2. Remember, secondly, that one sin naturally leads to another: that, if you indulge in small offences, you will be carried headlong into greater. You have drawn up the flood-gates: and who shall pronounce where the torrent shall be stayed? The whole of Herod's guilt flowed from his unlawful marriage. Observe him progressively advancing through additional degrees of iniquity. When John rebuked him for having married his brother's wife, he disregarded the warning; but he offered no violence to the prophet, and permitted him to retire in safety. In a short time, his wrath became hot; *and he sent forth and laid hold on John, and bound him in prison.* Speedily afterwards he completed the measure of his crimes, and caused the innocent man to be murdered. How frequently doth a similar progress occur! In the humbler ranks of life you see a man beginning to be idle, and to neglect his business. This evil habit grows upon him. His time soon hangs heavy upon his hands: and he fills it up at the public house; at first going thither sparingly, but ere long, to be

(d) 1 Tim. vi. 12. Eph. v. 6. Exod. xxiii. 2. Ecclef. iv. 20.

found there almost every day. Now drunkenness is added to idleness. These two sins speedily make him poor: and he resorts to dishonest means of gaining money: venturing at first only upon petty acts of fraud and rapine; but presently growing bolder in wickedness, till justice overtakes him, and he finishes his days in exile or on the gallows. The criminal of high life, in the mean time, pursues a kindred career, but in a wider and a more splendid circle. He commences with fashionable extravagance. He steps forward to fashionable profligacy. He grows hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. He becomes abandoned to selfishness, to sensuality, to depravity, to fearlessness of God. He lives an object of detestation; or dies by the hand of the law, by that of a duellist, or by his own. Make your stand through divine grace against *the beginnings of sin*; for you know not what will be the end thereof.

3. Thirdly: contemplate the inconsistency, the weakness and the corruption of human nature. Conclude not, because you have been repeatedly enabled by the Holy Spirit of God to resist a particular temptation, that you may deem yourself capable of resisting it always. Herod withstood for a season the arts and importunities of Herodias. She



waited until she found *a convenient time*; renewed the attempt, and succeeded. The great enemy of man, who instigated this murderer and rendered her successful, is ever on the watch to betray you. He is waiting for the hour, when you shall no longer be on your guard; or when you shall have grieved by a recent offence the Spirit of God; or when a concurrence of ensnaring circumstances shall heighten the allurements of sin. The birth-day of Herod shall arrive. Thy heart shall be opened to enticement. The year shall not revolve without bringing *the convenient time*. Mirth shall render thee thoughtless: or sorrow shall bow thee to despondence. Pride shall inflate thee with confidence: or sloth shall indispose thee to exertion. Then shall the temptation present itself afresh: perhaps in its original garb; or, if need be, in colours more attractive. *What I say unto you, I say unto all; Watch. Resist the devil; and he will flee from you. Be not high-minded; but fear. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Strive against sin: strive according to His working, which worketh in you mightily. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you (d).*

(d) Mark, xiii. 37. James, iv. 7, 8. Romans, xi. 26. 1 Cor. x. 12. Luke, xiii. 24. Hebr. xii. 14. Col. i. 29.

4. Let me in the next place advert to a consideration, which, however it may in some measure have been implied in the preceding remarks, requires, on account of its high importance, to be expressly stated by itself. It is this: that nothing short of a settled determination to labour to avoid *all* sin, joined with constant application to God, through Christ, for the influence of his sanctifying Spirit, can authorise you to hope that you shall preserve for a single hour a conscience void of offence. Nothing short of this determination is religion. If you refuse to surrender yourself wholly to God; you are a rebel. If you refuse the unqualified surrender of yourself to Him, and profess to be religious; you are an hypocrite. The dominion of the entire heart, the sovereignty of the whole soul, the possession of the affections in a measure so predominant that your tenderest feelings for the earthly objects which you hold most dear deserve, when placed in comparison with your love to God and your Redeemer, the denomination of hatred (*e*): this is the homage required from the disciple of Christ. *Herod feared John and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.* But he retained his brother's wife. Is there an

(*e*) Luke, xiv. 26. John, xii. 25.

Herodias whom thou wilt not put away? Is there some sensual gratification, which thou wilt not abandon? Is there some unlawful gain which thou wilt not renounce? Is there ridicule which thou wilt not encounter? Is there hardship which thou wilt not sustain? Thy pleasure, thine interest, thy reputation, thine ease, thou lovest more than thou lovest Christ. Why boastest thou of thy partial obedience? Of what avail are thy regular devotions, thy kindness to thy friends, thy liberality to the poor, thy usefulness to society? Thy heart is unsound. Before God thou art a rebel and an hypocrite. What is thy language to thy Saviour? "Behold these subordinate indulgences, which at thy command I disclaim. Be contented with the sacrifice. Expect not the surrender of my favourite object. Thou didst lay down thy life for my sake: but I will not relinquish this sin for thine." Sayest thou thus to thy Saviour; and callest thou thyself his disciple?

The propensity of the heart to self-delusion exceeds all previous computations. Man is continually devising by all conceivable methods to ascribe merit to himself: and at the very time when he confesses that he is regularly proceeding in some wicked line of conduct, is

prone to value himself highly for having refrained from a more flagrant transgression. It is not in the least improbable that Herod, conscious as he was that he most unjustly detained John the Baptist in prison, applauded himself with complacency, and assumed in his own estimation great credit for virtue, because he had withstood the solicitations of Herodias for his death. Have you not also, while aware that you have lived under the habitual influence of some unchristian temper, in the habitual indulgence of some unchristian practice; have not you also been proudly congratulating yourself on your goodness, because you have abstained from other crimes to which you were tempted? Have not you been satisfying yourself for yielding to the one temptation, by reminding your conscience that you did not yield to the other? Have not you hankered after a compromise with divine justice; and meditated with complacent self-righteousness the production of a balance of imaginary merit to countervail the penalty of guilt? *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Consider your ways (f). How long shall a deceived heart turn thee aside (g)? How long shall it be ere thou knowest that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and*

(f) Haggai, i. 5. (g) Isaiah, xlv. 20.

*naked (b)?* How long shall it be ere thou understandest the curse of the law; *Curfed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (i)?*

If example can affect you, look to that of Herod. Behold in him an illustration of the consequences entailed on perseverance in a single sin. In him behold a picture of that abandoned depravity, of which perseverance in a single sin is naturally the forerunner. To *all the evils which Herod had done* we have seen him *adding yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison (k).* We have seen him farther advanced in the road to destruction, and taking away the Baptist's life. We have still to behold him surpassing all his former guilt. Behold him, a worthy descendant of his Father, plotting the death of the Saviour of the world (*l*). Behold this murderer, when the Saviour of the world was delivered into his power by the Romans, triumphing over his captive with studied bitterness of insult; exposing him to the brutal scoffs of the soldiery; mocking him, and setting him at nought; and finally sending him back to the Roman governor arrayed in a gorgeous robe, intended at once to throw derision upon his claim to be the Messiah,

(b) Rev. iii. 17. (i) Gal. iii. 10. (k) Luke, iii. 19, 20.  
(l) Luke, xiii. 31, 32.

and to ensure his death by confirming the charge of treason against Cæsar (m). Is there an Herodias whom you will not put away? Let suitable temptations arise: and guilt equal to that of Herod may become yours. *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation. If he that despised the law of Moses died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden 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 grace (n)?*

I would leave on the recollection of the careless sinner one additional truth, to which Herod, could his voice reach our ears, would bear witness. It is possible for you to resign yourself to habitual wickedness, until your hardened heart lose all sense of its enormity. It is possible for you to add crime to crime, until you entirely forget numbers which you have committed. But an hour when they shall be remembered is approaching. *The guilty deed is not dead, but sleepeth.* When you are laid on your death-bed, all your

(m) Luke, xiii. 6. 12. Acts, iv. 27, 28. (n) Hebr. x. 26—29.

crimes shall return to life: and as the supposed revival of John the Baptist dismayed the king who had murdered him, shall rack your soul with horrors known only to the sinful wretch when he trembles on the brink of the grave, and shrinks from the prospect of damnation. May your heart be renewed by the Holy Spirit! May you fly without delay to Christ. May you surrender yourself to Him without reserve. By His blessed atonement may you be rendered acceptable to God. May your last hours be cheered by scriptural hopes of entering through His merits into everlasting glory!

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## S E R M O N   X I V .

On the Extent of genuine Religion.

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MICAH, vi. 8.

*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?*

**I**N urging upon men their various obligations as servants of the Most High, the Holy Scriptures have recourse in different places to a diversity of arrangement. Most commonly, they press upon us in the first instance that supreme and affectionate faith towards God and Christ, which is the foundation of every Christian virtue: and then proceed to inculcate those pure principles, those holy tempers, and those good works, which  
genuine



genuine faith in God and Christ will necessarily produce. Sometimes, however, solicitous to recommend the tree by a reference to the excellence of the fruit, they specify works in the outset: and then direct our views to that faith, from which every acceptable work is to spring. And though, in delivering a statement of human duties, they usually commence with those of which the Almighty is the immediate object; the order is sometimes changed, and the duties which we are to perform towards our neighbour are presented first to our consideration. Let the ministers of religion, solicitous that they *may be found in the day of Christ not to have run in vain, neither to have laboured in vain*, pursue the several tracks of argument and persuasion, which they see recommended by the footsteps of prophets and apostles. Yet whatever be the course to which the *ambassador of Christ* resorts in his exertions to conciliate a refractory world to the offer of pardon and peace; love to God and our Redeemer, whether mentioned first or last, must be the fountain from which every human duty is derived. Christ is the corner-stone of the belief and the practice of a Christian. Is faith preached? It must be faith in Christ. Are good works inculcated? They must be

good works growing out of that faith. Are holy principles and views and tempers required? It is that your souls may be conformed to the image of Christ. Is love to your neighbour enjoined? It is in imitation of that love wherewith Christ loved him, and gave himself for him an offering and a sacrifice unto God. Whatever is taught, whatever is commanded, whatever is forbidden; whether we exhort, or persuade, whether we speak of *the glory that shall be revealed*, or as *knowing the terrors of the Lord*: this is our ground-work and our purpose, *that God may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.*

On the present occasion I purpose to explain the different branches of human duty according to the order, in which they are arranged by the prophet.

The chapter, whence the passage before us is taken, opens with singular magnificence. Jehovah commands his chosen people to arise, and plead their cause against Him: and summons *the hills and the mountains*, and *the strong foundations of the earth* to hear and to decide the controversy between his rebellious servants and Himself. Scarcely has he made mention of his mercies in rescuing the  
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the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt and the machinations of Balak; when he is represented as suddenly interrupted by the impassioned exclamations of one of the multitude pierced with a conviction of his own sin and of the divine goodness, and eagerly enquiring after the means of making atonement for his guilt and regaining the favour of Omnipotence. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? 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 (a)?* The prophet, in the name of God, returns the answer. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

The question is as interesting to us as it was to the Jew. Let us consider the reply as addressed to ourselves.

(a) A critic of great eminence considers these words as spoken by Balak. To that opinion another assents, with the exception of attributing the first part of verse 7 to Balaam. The context, I apprehend, alligns the whole passage to the mouth of a Jew. But its import, whoever be the speaker, is the same.

I. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.* So clearly hath God made known whatever is necessary to salvation, that they who attain not salvation shall stand without excuse. In the breast of every man he hath implanted a natural conscience, capable of discriminating between good and evil, prepared with secret stings for the chastisement of guilt, and with silent approbation for the encouragement of obedience. But conscience may be blinded and led astray, may be hardened and deadened by the practice of sin. God has therefore given to us His written word. In the Old Testament by the mouth of His holy prophets, in the New Testament by the mouth of His own Son, and of the apostles of His Son, He replies in the plainest terms to the momentous question, *What must we do to be saved?* He sets before us the way of life and the way of death; the road to heaven, and the road to hell. He has distinguished them by marks so striking, that it is impossible that the one track can be mistaken for the other by a sincere and humble enquirer. He has shewn them to be as different as light and darkness, as widely separated as the east from the west. By hope and by fear, by argument and by entreaty, by mercy and by judgement, he  
urges

urges us to choose the path of life and to fly from the way of destruction. On every man he bestows power to attain eternal life. He ensures to every faithful suppliant the all-sufficient influence of His Holy Spirit, not only that it may enlighten the mind to understand the Scriptures, but may also give grace to obey them. He commands his ministers to *preach the gospel throughout all the world to every creature*; to proclaim the offer of universal salvation, to call sinners to repentance, to instruct the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to denounce vengeance on the careless and the obstinate, to confirm and animate the pious. Thus truly may it be affirmed, that God hath shewed us what is good. Thus truly may it be affirmed that God willeth not the death of the wicked, but that all should be converted and live. If you know not your duty; it is because you will not know it. If you perish through ignorance; it is because you prefer ignorance to understanding.

II. What then must we do to be saved? The prophet answers the enquirer, Do justly: love mercy: and walk humbly with your God.

1. First; you must do justly. You must be just in every part of every one of your pro-

proceedings. You must render to every man, you must render cheerfully and without delay, that which belongs to him.

This rule obliges you on all occasions to speak the truth. For a lie is not only a breach of your duty to God, who is a God of truth and hateth deceit; but is also a breach of your duty to your neighbour. The man to whom you address a lie, you seek to deceive. You lead him astray. You cause him to form expectations, or to cherish hopes, or to adopt measures, upon the strength of your words; and these words are false. Thus, as far as depends on yourself, you injure him. A lie therefore is a breach of justice. And whenever you are guilty of a lie, you are guilty of a crime which belongs to the same class with theft and robbery. Beware then of deeming yourself an honest man, if you are a wilful liar: and least of all if you are a slanderer, robbing your neighbour of that which is more valuable, that which is less recoverable than riches, his good name.

The rule of doing justly constrains you, in the next place, to be a faithful subject to the King; to submit to all who are entitled to authority over you; and to obey all the laws of your country. For obedience is due to the king, and to all inferior magistrates, according

ording to their several stations. If you fail in rendering obedience; you defraud them of their right. You receive the protection of the laws. Are you not then bound and pledged to obey them?

Again: justice prohibits you from injuring the person and restraining the liberty of your neighbour. The free enjoyment of his life and limbs is a right conferred upon him by his Creator, and guaranteed by the statutes of the realm. Do you interfere with the possession which he holds under the sanction of his country and his God; and pretend that you deprive him not of that which is his own?

Again: justice requires that you should in no respect injure your neighbour's property. The methods by which another may be injured in his property are numberless. In some cases the guilt is so palpable, that it cannot be mistaken. If a man commits a forgery; if he robs on the highway; if he steals an article privately; if he maliciously damages the possession of another; he is instantly pronounced unjust. But there are other cases in which the sentence is equally deserved, and is assuredly pronounced by the all-seeing Judge; while the criminal perceives not, or perceives with more than usual reluctance, the extent

extent of his injustice. Thus a person, it may be, who has found property which does not belong to him, *takes no pains* to find out the right owner; but satisfies his conscience with thinking that he is ready to make restitution, if the owner, should unluckily find out him. Another perhaps, who is engaged in a lawsuit, contrives to entail on his adversary unnecessary expence or delay; and excuses himself by professing that it is not unfair to seize any advantage which offers itself in a contest. Another circulates counterfeit money, pretending that as he has received it, he has a right to pass it; in other words, that because he has carelessly permitted an imposition to be practised on himself, he has acquired the right of imposing upon the rest of the world. Another conveys false intimations respecting the nature or the intrinsic worth of an article which he sells: and thus induces his customer to give a higher price than he would otherwise have consented to pay. Another loiters away part of the time during which he has engaged to work for a master; and claims a whole day's wages, when in fact he has *worked* but three quarters of a day. Every one of these persons injures his neighbour in his property; and breaks the commandment of God, to *do justly*. Your own thoughts,



thoughts, if you direct them to the subject, will supply additional examples. In all your dealings with others, remember the short rule with which Christ has furnished you. *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye ev'n so to them.* Ask yourself in every instance, "Am I now acting as I would wish others to act unto me?" Try yourself fairly by that question; resolve under the grace of God, to act as your conscience answers; and you scarcely can fall into injustice.

2. Secondly: You are *to love mercy.* Mercy signifies Christian charity in its largest sense. It includes every thing which we mean by affection, benevolence, kindness, tenderness, mildness, meekness, patience, forgiveness: and by every other expression, which implies good will to men. It comprehends every humane, gentle, and compassionate disposition; as well as all those actions, by which the existence of such dispositions is to be proved. Observe now the difference of the terms in which God requires from us first justice, then mercy. We are to *do justly*: we are to *love mercy.* Not but that we are also to love to do justice. But the difference in the words of the commandment respecting these duties naturally arises from the difference

rence between the duties themselves. Justice admits of no degrees. We are just, or we are unjust. If we are not perfectly just, we are unjust. If you withhold from your neighbour a single penny which belongs to him ; if in any transaction you defraud him of the smallest sum ; if you impose upon him ever so little, if you injure him in any one of his rights, though it be of all his rights the least considerable ; you are unjust. God therefore simply commands you *to do justly*. These words require of you to do justice in every particular ; for otherwise you do unjustly. They comprehend every act of duty which is a branch of justice. They leave nothing unrequired. But mercy is in its own nature capable of gradations. Of two persons, of each of whom it may not improperly be affirmed that he is merciful, the one may be more merciful than the other. The commandment therefore does not say, “Thou shalt do mercifully ;” or, “Thou shalt shew mercy.” Had such been the expression, men would industriously have persuaded themselves that by small, or moderate, or occasional acts of mercy they sufficiently obeyed the commandment. What is the injunction ? “Thou shalt *love* mercy :” thy heart shall be constantly set on deeds of mercy :  
they

they shall be thy study : they shall be a delight unto thee. Hear with what energy of language mercy in all its branches is enjoined throughout the Scriptures. *Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Walk in love as Christ loved us. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you; pray for them which despitefully use you. Be ready to distribute, willing to communicate. If any man seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him: how dwelleth the love of God in him? Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (b).* Take your Bible into your hand. Examine yourself by these passages of holy writ. Consider them one by one. You will thus discover whether you love mercy. If you truly love mercy: it

(b) Luke, vi. 36. Rom. xii. 10, 15. Ephes. iv. 31, 32. v. 2. Matth. v. 44. 1 Tim. vi. 18. 1 John, iii. 17. Acts, xx. 35.

will be your pursuit and your pleasure to perform acts of mercy. You will not idly wait until opportunities of exercising kindness may chance to force themselves upon your notice. You will anxiously search for them: you will delight in availing yourself of any one, however small, which may arise. In every one of your fellow-creatures you will behold a brother whom God, your Creator, formed; for whom Christ, your Redeemer, died. The temporal welfare, the everlasting interests of that brother, will be dear to your heart. You will bear with ignorance, with peevishness, with enmity, with ingratitude, as a Christian. You will regard the offences of others against yourself as wisely adapted to admonish you of your own infinitely greater offences against God. You will not conceive that you discharge your duty as to almsgiving, by accommodating the scale of your gifts to such a portion of your income as would remain not only when the demands of reasonable prudence but when the claims of fashion and pleasure should have been satisfied to the uttermost. You will habitually discipline and moderate your desires, and curtail all needless expences; that you may have the more to give to him that needeth.

3. Thirdly:

3. Thirdly: You are to *walk humbly with your God*. To walk with God, signifies, in the language of Scripture, to be a faithful and zealous servant of God. Thus it is said of Enoch, that he *walked with God: and he was not*. He was no longer to be found on earth; *for God took him*. His piety and holiness were so eminent, that God distinguished him by translating him alive into heaven. Again, we are told that *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God*. And his heavenly Master as a signal reward preserved him and his family from the deluge. We, like these holy men of old, and like the righteous in all ages who have trodden in their footsteps, are also to walk with God. And, like them, we are to walk *humbly* with our God. We are to bring our whole hearts as well as our actions into subjection to the divine will. If you would obtain salvation, you must become like the Israelite to whose enquiries the words of Micah were a reply, humbled to the dust in sorrow for your guilt, and fervently desirous of submitting to any method of reconciliation with the Majesty of heaven. But are you, like that Israelite, looking round for *burnt-offerings* to present unto the Lord? *My Son, God will provide*

*himself a lamb for a burnt-offering (c).* Would you give your first-born for your transgression; the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul? Not your first-born is the atonement; but the only begotten Son of God. His must be the blood wherewith you come before the Lord and bow yourself before the Most High. Look to the cross of Christ, and to that alone. Disclaim all presumption, all boasting, all self-righteousness, all dependence on your own strength to will or to perform. Present yourself before God, not as a Pharisee demanding reward as a debt: not as a vaunter professing to be rich, and bearing payment in his hand for a blessing which he would purchase: but as a sinner imploring pardon and mercy through Christ, as otherwise totally unattainable, as in every point and circumstance the free and unmerited gifts of divine grace. Look through Christ to the Holy Spirit for power to resist temptation, for power to form good resolutions, for power to carry them into effect. Remember that, while *God resisteth the proud*, it is *to the humble that he giveth grace (d)*. When you have done all, confess that you are an unprofitable servant to your Lord; that you have done only that which was your

(c) Gen. xxii. 8.

(d) 1 Pet. v. 5.

bounden duty. This it is to walk *humbly* with your God in the general frame and temper of your soul. In all the changeful situations of your life evince by your conduct this characteristic temper of a Christian. Are you in prosperity? Walk humbly with your God. Confess, that it is he, who of his own loving kindness giveth you all things richly to enjoy. Confess, with the Patriarch Jacob, *O Lord I am not worthy of the least of these thy mercies (e)*. Let the Giver be glorified in his gifts. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich.* Be it so. *Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it; why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it (f)?* The more distinguished is your prosperity, the more earnest be your solicitude to become meek, humble, and sober-minded. Remember that he who listeth up, can cast down; that he who bestoweth can take away. Remember that thou hast here *no continuing city*. Look at that withering flower; and behold how perishable are all the glories which derive their nutriment from earth. Has adversity overtaken you? Have trials and afflictions and sicknesses clouded your days?

(e) Gen. xxxii. 10.

(f) Cor. iv. 7, 8.

Walk humbly with your God. Humble yourself under his chastising hand. *It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good (g)*. Reflect on his unbounded wisdom, his inexhaustible loving-kindness. *What! shall we receive good at the hand of God; and shall we not receive evil (h)?* Knoweth he not what is fittest for you? Loveth he not the work of His own hand, the soul for which he gave His Son unto death? *Verily he chastiseth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.* And although *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (i)*, and walk humbly with their God. Finally, observe his laws with reverence; and humbly render equal obedience to them all. Presume not to think that you may venture to neglect any commandment which God has pronounced. Dost thou refuse submission to any one of His injunctions, and sayest thou that thou walkest humbly with Him? Be diligent in frequenting the public worship of your Lord; and receive His word with humility. Slight not any opportunity of attending the holy communion, in humble and thankful remembrance of your

(g) 1 Sam. iii. 18. (h) Job, ii. 10. (i) Hebr. xii. 10, 11.



crucified Master. *In every thing by prayer and supplication, public and private, let your requests be made known unto God (j).* And humbly offer up to Him all your petitions in the name of the appointed Mediator and Intercessor, Jesus Christ.

III. It appears then that to the Jew and to the Christian the sum and substance of religion have ever been the same. To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God in grateful dependence and universal obedience; this it has been, this it is, to be a servant of the Most High. The duties of justice and of mercy, duties placed within the sphere of human reason, were developed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to the Jew. Before the Christian they stand arrayed in brighter radiance borrowed from the precepts and the example of his Lord. To the Jew the general obligation of walking humbly with his God was unfolded. The Christian, surveying it in clearer lustre, ascribes the accession of light to his Saviour. But as to the greatest of the events in the divine economy to which that general obligation pointed, the Jew was comparatively in darkness. He little understood the method, by which ex-

(j) Philipp. iv. 6.

piation was to be made for guilt. He looked for justification to his burnt offerings and sacrifices; to *the blood of bulls and of goats which could never take away sin* (k). Through the veil of types and emblems he discerned not the true atonement. He had heard of One who should save Israel. But he looked to deliverance from worldly foes, to pre-eminence over prostrate kingdoms. He had heard of One who should *redeem Israel from all his iniquities* (l). But he looked only to the fuller establishment of the Mosaic law. He was assured that the Redeemer should be stricken for the transgression of his people; that he should pour out his soul unto death; that he should make his soul an offering for sin: that he should bear the sins of many, and make intercession for the transgressors (m). But pride stupified his heart. Vain of his exclusive privileges, he deemed them all-sufficient. Averse to the *righteousness of God*, he stood upon the *deeds of the law*. Dazzled by phantoms of temporal grandeur, he shut his eyes against the image of a suffering Messiah. To the Christian these mysteries are revealed; these shadows are become realities. He knows that *by the deeds*, whether of the

(k) Hebr. x. 4. (l) Psalm cxxx. 8. (m) Isaiah, liii.

ceremonial or of the moral law, *shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.* He renounces all claim to merit even in the least imperfect of his works; and pleads for pardon and justification solely through the propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God. *In Christ Jesus,* contemplated by the eye of faith on the cross, he beholds *wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; that, as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord*(n).

Survey then, my brethren, your advantages. *From him to whom much is given, much shall be required* (o). Have you pondered this rule? Have you considered the consequences of falling short when tried by this standard? Most conspicuously hath God shewed you what is good; what he requires you to believe, and what he requires you to perform. Have you observed then to do justly? Are you upright and faithful in all your words and in all your actions, as justice indispensably demands? You may forget justice: but God will not forget it. You may refuse to render to others that which belongs to them: but He will render to you according to your works. *God is not a man, that he should lie. Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? The Lord*

(n) 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. (o) Luke, xii. 48.

*knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished (p). He will surely fulfil his word; he will accomplish his threatenings. The hope of the unjust man perisheth (q). He may flatter himself with hopes of heaven: but, as surely as the word of God is true, he will find himself among the wicked who are turned into hell. Do you love mercy? Have you not only proved yourself gentle, kind, tender-hearted, compassionate, and charitable, in your ordinary proceedings; but have you diligently sought opportunities of exercising these Christian virtues, and placed your delight in the exercise of them? Have you remembered the infinite and unmerited mercy of Jesus Christ in dying on the cross to make atonement for your sins, that if through his offered grace you repent and believe and obey you may be received for His sake into heaven? He who sheweth no mercy shall have judgement without mercy. If you forgive not men their trespasses against you, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses (r) against Himself. Do you walk humbly with your God? Do you acknowledge your utter unworthiness in his sight? Do you confess the original corruption*

(p) Numb xxiii. 19. 2 Pet. ii. 9.

(q) Prov. xi. 7.

(r) James, ii. 13. Matth. vi. 15.

of your nature, and your numberless transgressions by thought and word and deed of the righteous laws of your God? Have you fled for salvation to Christ, through whom alone man is to be saved? Have you taken him for your Lord and Master? *Are old things passed away, and all things become new?* Has the Grace of the Spirit of Christ transformed you into a *new creature* (s)? Do you pray for the continued influence of that Spirit to enable you to shew yourself a sincere servant of the Lord Jesus? Do you humbly submit your imaginations and desires to his gospel? Do you strive to love what he commands you to love, and cheerfully to renounce what he forbids? Follow him now, that he may acknowledge you hereafter. If you are not one of his faithful followers on earth; he will deny you and cast you out at the great day. Love Him with your whole heart, humbly and stedfastly serve Him here; and he will own you before assembled angels, and receive you for ever into glory.

(s) 2 Cor. v. 17.

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## SERMON XV.

### On Presumptuous Plans.

[Preached at the Commencement of a new Year.]

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JAMES, iv. 13—17.

*Go to now, ye that say ; “ To-day, or to-mor-  
“ row, we will go into such a City, and con-  
“ tinue there a Year, and buy and sell, and  
“ get Guin.” Whereas ye know not what shall  
be on the Morrow. For what is your Life ?  
It is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a  
little Time, and then vanisheth away. For  
that ye ought to say ; “ If the Lord will, we  
“ shall live and do this or that.” But now  
ye rejoice in your Boastings : all such Rejoicing  
is Evil. Therefore to him that knoweth  
to do good, and doeth it not ; to him it is  
Sin.*

**T**HE Scriptures abound with admonitions  
calculated to undeceive mankind re-  
specting the importance and the natural effects  
of wealth. *If riches increase, faith the warn-  
ing*

ing voice of the Old Testament; *set not your heart upon them. Let not the rich man glory in his riches: he that trusteth in his riches shall fall. He that trusteth in the abundance of his riches, strengtheneth himself in his wickedness. Give me not riches; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord (a)?* In the New Testament, the awful exclamation of our Saviour, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God (b)*, would of itself be sufficient, after the most ample deductions which could be required on account of the peculiarity of the occasion on which it was uttered, to establish by the sanction of his immediate authority the antecedent declarations of prophets, and the subsequent testimony of apostles, concerning the destructive influence of the idol of mankind. That *the love of money is the root of all evil*; that there is no degree, no species, of criminality to which the thirst of gold may not prove a successful incentive; that *they who will be rich, they who are resolved on the accumulation of possessions, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition: that, while some have coveted*

(a) Psalm lxxii. 10. Jer. ix. 23. Prov. xi. 28. Ps. lii. 7.  
Prov. xxx. 8, 9. (b) Mark, x. 23.

*after wealth, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows, they have apostatized from Christianity and overwhelmed themselves with remorse, anguish, and despair: this is the recorded result of the judgement and experience of St. Paul (c.).* But among the sacred writers there is no one more frequent or more energetic than St. James in denunciations against transgressors, whom riches plunge into enormities. The two leading sources of evil, which are represented in the inspired writings as derived from the influence of riches over the heart, are worldly-mindedness, and self-dependence. Against these fortresses of guilt, sometimes battered separately, sometimes assailed in the same onset, the sacred artillery of Scripture is unremittingly directed.

In the verses immediately under your consideration the apostle points the vehemence of his attack against self-dependence. *Go to, now, ye that say, "To-day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year; and buy and sell, and get gain." Whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth*

(c) 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.



*away. For that ye ought to say: If the Lord will, we shall do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth do do good, and doeth it not; to him it is sin.*

These words comprehend several lessons highly important in themselves, and closely connected with each other. My intention is to set them before you in order; and to apply them, one by one, under the blessing of God, to your edification.

I. *Go to now, ye that say; "To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city; and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get again."* In this passage St. James directs his reproof against that disposition so common among men, to form distant and presumptuous plans. Did you know nothing more concerning human life than is to be collected from the ordinary language which resounds in our dwellings and our streets; you might conclude that every circumstance in this world is capable of being fixed and settled beforehand by us almost, if not altogether, to a certainty. You hear men expressing their purposes respecting their future proceedings in terms, which scarcely admit the supposition that there can be any doubt whether the

scheme on which they meditate will be accomplished. If a person mentions a journey which he proposes to undertake some months hence ; how usual is it for him to speak of it as though it were an affair placed wholly within his own power, and to be decided merely by his own inclination. If sickness, or some other change of circumstances, prevent him from executing his design: how ready is he to give way to fretfulness, and to adopt the language of disappointment ; as though he had experienced some strange and unusual event contrary to the natural course of just expectation. Others you hear speaking in terms equally confident concerning projects still more distant. One person informs you, that when he shall have employed two or three future years in making himself master of his trade or profession at the place where he now resides ; he shall remove to such a town, or into the neighbourhood of such a manufactory, where like others before him, he shall speedily acquire a fortune. Another observes, that after he shall have conducted his business until his children, who are now scarcely advanced beyond infancy, are able to take the management of it upon themselves ; he shall then withdraw from the concern, and shall enjoy himself in leisure and retirement. Another

wearies

wearies you with a detail of the alterations which he means to carry into effect, and the manner in which he designs to live, when upon the death of some relation, at present neither old nor unhealthy, he shall inherit an addition to his estate. Another is occupied in laying plans for the disposal of a succession of daughters in marriage: and tells you that when he shall have settled the youngest, he shall detach himself from the large circle of society in which he deems it necessary to continue until that object is attained, and shall remove into a more private and quiet part of the country. These remote purposes are stated with decision and unconcern, as though they could be completed to-morrow. Or if an expression, alluding to a possible uncertainty in human affairs, be interwoven: it is too often accompanied with a tone and a countenance which evince that it comes not from the heart, but is inserted only to preserve appearances. The end to which St. James intimates that these schemes are most commonly directed is *gain*. It is the end of the pursuits of most men. Our blessed Lord looked upon riches with an eye very different from that of the world. He saw, that they generally proved grievous hindrances to religion. To that memorable expression, in

which he avers that, but for the grace of God with whom all things are possible, they would prove themselves insuperable obstacles in the path of salvation, I have already had occasion to refer. At another time he describes riches by the names of *the Mammon of unrighteousness, the unrighteous Mammon*; because they are so continually abused to purposes of unrighteousness, to covetousness, to pride, to dissipation, to sensuality, to corruption. Yet on this dangerous acquisition what multitudes set their hearts! The hope of obtaining wealth, or of indulging in the enjoyment of it, ensnares men into forgetfulness of God, into disregard of salvation, into guilty enterprises and pursuits, into deliberate fraud and open violence: and is one of the principal causes of that daring self-dependence, that proud security, which encourage them presumptuously to form schemes of distant execution, to utter *great swelling words of vanity*, and to triumph long beforehand in the supposed accomplishment of their extravagant expectations, as though they were themselves entrusted with the management of earth and its concerns, and exalted beyond the reach of opposition from their fellow-creatures and of control from above.

II. The next observation furnished by the text proves the extreme folly of such presumption. *Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Take thine ease; said the rich man to his soul. Thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink, and be merry. But what said God? Thou fool! This night shall thy soul be required of thee (d).* Suppose your plans free from those causes of failure, which the world, willing as it were to exclude God from the government of his own works, denominates *accidental* events. Suppose every precaution which prudence can devise to have been adopted for the furtherance of your designs. Suppose fortune, as the phrase is, to smile upon you. Suppose every thing, to speak after the manner of men, to turn out well. Have you any certainty of the fulfilment of your wishes? Have you the slightest assurance that you have in reality advanced one step towards the attainment of your object? "I look not forward," you reply, "to distant years. The complete success of my undertaking is close at hand. To-morrow it will be within my grasp." *Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest*

(d) Luke, xii. 19, 20.

not what a day may bring forth (e). Death comes : and in a moment sweeps away thee and thy plans for ever. *As for man, his days are as grass : as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone : and the place thereof shall know it no more (f).* Can riches bribe death, or make a bargain with the tomb ? *As the flower of the grass shall the rich man 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 of it perisheth : so also shall the rich man fade away (g).* During the period which has elapsed since I first undertook the office of instructing you, however imperfectly yet according to the extent of my knowledge, in the word of God and the gospel of his Son ; how many schemes and projects formed by your neighbours and by your relations have been disconcerted by death ! How many persons, whom in successive years I have beheld and addressed from this place, have vanished from among the children of men, and have left their stations to be filled by you ! Where are now the plans to which many of them had given up their hearts ; the confident expectations

(e) Prov. xxvii. 1. (f) Psalm ciii. 15, 16. (g) James, i. 10, 11.

of worldly acquisitions which occupied their bosoms ; the health and length of days which they had promised themselves that they should enjoy ! All are utterly at an end. The plans, the expectations, the promise are no more. And they who formed and cherished them, for ever removed into another state of being, are awaiting a *resurrection of life*, or a *resurrection of damnation*. If other warnings are ineffectual ; receive instruction from your departed parents and near kindred. Think what would be the advice which they would now convey to your ears, were it possible that from their present abode they could hold communication with you. *For what is your life ? Is it not a vapour that passeth away ?* Who is there among us that can assure himself that he shall see the close of the year, which is now begun ? Who is there among us, my brethren, that can promise to himself that he shall be found to-morrow in the land of the living ? We may all be alive to-morrow. But that we who are now assembled together shall not all be alive when twelve months shall have performed their course, is as nearly certain as any thing is upon earth. If but one of us shall before that time be numbered with the dead : who is that person ? Every one of us

may look up to heaven in awful suspense and say, *Lord! is it I?* Learn then through the grace of God *so to number your days, that you may apply your hearts unto wisdom (b)*. Form no plans in your own strength. Form no distant plans. Form one plan, and one plan only, with solicitude: and let that plan be to be religious. On earth you are sojourners and pilgrims. Of the world to come you will be inhabitants for ever. *The things that are seen are temporal; the things that are not seen are eternal (i)*. If you are not yet a true servant of Christ Jesus; if you have not yet that genuine faith which worketh by love; if it be not yet your *meat and drink*, your support and your comfort, steadfastly to live unto God and unto Christ, habitually to strive in every particular to perform at all hazards as an obedient and affectionate son the will of your heavenly Father: seek the grace of God while yet it may be found. The present year may look upon your grave.

III. The apostle, in the next place, teaches us what is the frame of mind, with which all our purposes should be formed. *Ye ought to say: If the Lord will, we shall do this or that.* In all our undertakings, in all our in-

(b) Psalm, xc. 12.

(i) 2 Cor. iv, 18.



tentions and our prospects, let us remember that God is the Master, that we are the servants; that we are nothing, that God is every thing. He sitteth in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He listeth up, and he casteth down: the disposal of the lot is with Him: and in his hands are the issues of life and death. He is the God of all power. To Him we ought in all things cheerfully to submit ourselves. For what can Man do against Him? What can man do without Him? How shall any plan take effect but by his support? How shall any plan fail, if it be supported by Omnipotence? He is the God of all wisdom. Man is lost in ignorance. He knows not what objects to pursue. He knows not what measures will contribute to the success of his pursuit. How shall he choose aright? How shall he direct his steps aright? By committing himself to his Maker. Set your affections on those objects, which God in his holy word points out as alone worthy of a Christian's regard. Pursue them on those principles, and by those methods, which the same holy word enjoins as alone lawful to a Christian. Then will the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Wisdom, maintain you under his unerring guidance. God is the God of all goodness. It is he who of his own free bounty  
has

has bestowed upon you life, and all its blessings. What good gift is there, which he is not ready to bestow upon you? *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all: how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things (j)?* Will you not trust your interests, present and future, in the hands of your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer? Let his power, his wisdom, his love be your confidence. Let his pleasure be your delight. When you meditate upon any design; let it be the language not merely of your lips, but of your heart, “*If the Lord will, my purpose will be established.*” Entertain not a wish that it should be accomplished, unless it be wholly conformable to the will of God, *Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass (k)*; if it be for thy good that it should be brought to pass. Or if he foresees that its accomplishment would not be for thine advantage; he shall provide for thee real blessings in the place of that imaginary good, that actual evil, which thou hadst ignorantly chosen for thyself.

IV. The apostle proceeds to admonish us, that the presumption with which men look forward to the accomplishment of distant

(j) Rom. viii. 32.

(k) Psalm xxxvii. 5.

plans as to certain events, presumption which he had already shewn to be the height of folly, is equally to be stigmatised as guilt. *But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.* The presumptuous men, to whom his epistle was in the first instance addressed, prided themselves in their self-dependence; and openly took pleasure and triumphed in their vain-glorious boastings. Well would it have been for the Christian world, if the spirit of those vaunters had died with them! Well is it for yourselves, if no portion of it has descended unto you! Every degree, even the smallest degree, of such triumph, of such confidence, is sin. For what is it, but to exalt man against his Maker; to gratify human arrogance at the expence of the glory of God? Is it not sin to refuse unequivocally to submit yourself to the government of infinite power: of that infinite power which moulded you out of nothing, and conferred upon you those very faculties which you are employing as instruments of disobedience? Is it not sin to refuse to resign yourself to the direction of infinite wisdom: of that infinite wisdom which has unceasingly displayed itself in providing for your welfare; and has devised for your deliverance from sin and death eternal a plan of redemption so stupendous

as to fill the hosts of heaven with admiration and amazement? Is it not sin to refuse joyfully to acquiesce in the determinations of infinite goodness: of that infinite goodness which is every moment ministering to you comfort; which drew down the Son of the Most High from the bosom of the Father, to die for you while you were yet enemies, that He might reconcile you to God by His blood? Where is rebellion, where is pride, where is ingratitude, if not here? Where is your faith in God, if you hesitate unreservedly to confide in Him? Where is your reverence for Him if you scruple any token of obedience? Where is your humility, if you abase not your own judgement before His counsels? Where is your resignation, if you surrender not all your wishes to His choice? Where is your patience, if you are not content to await his pleasure? Where is your fortitude, if you shrink from bearing the absence of that which He sees fit to withhold, the loss of that which He sees fit to take away? Where is your love for Christ, if you decline any submission, any sacrifice, for His sake? Where is the spirit of a Christian, if you daringly form plans, or boastfully proclaim them, as though you were independent of God? Where is the imitation of your  
Lord,

Lord, if you refuse to pray, like Him, in the sincerity of your soul; *Father! Not my will but thine be done?*

V. The inspired penman, having thus set forth the proneness of men presumptuously to promise to themselves the success of distant schemes and undertakings, the folly and the sinfulness of such conduct, and the submissive and pious temper of mind with which the plans and purposes of a Christian must be accompanied; concludes the subject with a most important admonition. *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to him it is sin.* The knowledge of our duty, since the Giver of good gifts offers to all men ability to perform that which they know him to require, takes away all pretences for not performing it, and leaves us without excuse. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, said Christ, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. If ye were blind; if you had not the natural capacity of understanding your duty, or if you had never possessed the means of ascertaining the will of God; ye should have no sin. But now ye say, We see: therefore your sin remaineth (1).* Ignorance, not if it be wilful, but if it be un-

(1) John, ix. 41. xv. 22.

avoidable, is an apology for neglect and transgression. The times even of comparative ignorance God may have winked at. But now commands he every man every where to repent. You may have been, and it is probable that most of you have been, of the number of those who have again and again committed that very sin, concerning which St. James discourses in the passage which you have heard. Reflect, and call yourselves to an account. Consider whether you have not indulged yourselves in the habit of laying plans including a large space of time, and of looking forward to expected events still at a distance without a due and lively sense of the uncertainty and the shortness of life, the vanity of all worldly wisdom, and the perpetual changes, impossible to be foreseen by man, to which all human affairs are every moment exposed; in a word, without a faithful and lively recollection of the overruling providence of God, a cheerful submission to His counsels, and a grateful dependence on Him alone for strength, protection, and success. Consider whether your language, when you have communicated your designs to others, has not been a counterpart, in spirit if not in expression, to that of the boasters in the days of St. James, who arrogantly declared their intentions of going to  
traffic

traffic for a year in this or in that city with as much confidence as though there had not existed a God to controul or to cut them off. Consider whether, if on such occasions you have introduced some mention of reference to the divine pleasure and permission, the expression of resignation and dependence has flowed warmly from your heart; or has been a cold and formal phrase produced only to sustain a decorous appearance among men. Does your conscience reply that in spirit and in language you have resembled those children of pride? I fear that you have little to plead in extenuation on the ground of ignorance. In this country, and in your situation, you cannot have remained venially ignorant of your duty. In this country, and in your situation, in proportion as you have been ignorant, you have been ignorant wilfully. Humble yourselves and repent. In the sincerity of humiliation and penitence supplicate the Father of mercies, that through the atonement and the intercession of the Lord Jesus your sin may be blotted out: that for His sake the presumptuous devices of your heart and the boastful language of your lips may be forgiven; and that grace may be bestowed upon you by the Holy Spirit to preserve you from repeating

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ing the offence. By whatever clouds your mind may heretofore have been obscured, you now know *that which is good*: and, if you do it not, to you it is sin. Be conscientious in acting conformably to the full extent of your knowledge. Be careful for nothing, except faith and holiness. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all things essential to your earthly welfare shall be added unto you. Stretch not your thoughts forward to remote plans of worldly interest. In all your plans remember that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and distributeth all things to every man severally as He will. Leave all things in His hands, with gratitude for His past mercies, with undoubting reliance on His wisdom and his love. In discoursing concerning your future purposes, *be not ashamed when it concerneth thy soul*. Let it be visible, unostentatiously yet clearly visible, that you refer and commit every event to the good pleasure of your Father who is in heaven. *Why takest thou thought, why art thou disquieted with anxiety; for the morrow? The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself*. Why strainest thou thine aching eyes in speculating on airy phantoms? *Why buildest thou for thyself visionary palaces amidst the vapours that hang on the extremity*  
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of the sky? Thou hast here no continuing city. Seek one to come. Seek *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens : a city having foundations, whose builder and maker is God (m).*

Finally: remember that the concluding admonition which St. James has so pertinently applied to the immediate subject of his discourse, is in its nature a general precept, applicable to every branch and circumstance of duty. Whether faith or practice, whether doctrines to be received, tempers to be cherished, or actions to be performed, be in question: whether to govern or to serve, to labour or to endure, to glorify God through the Lord Jesus by evil report or by good report, by life or by death, be the office to which the Christian is called forth: it is equally and universally true, that, *to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* Restrict not to special occasions, circumscribe not by unwarranted limitations, a precept comprehensive as the sphere of human agency. Are you weary of well-doing? Are you solicitous to curtail the required tribute of obedience? Are you inclined to cherish ignorance, or to dissemble know-

(m) 2 Cor. v. 1. Hebr. xi. 10.

ledge, if you may thus escape from the obligation of rendering an additional testimony of love and gratitude to God? Is there any love, any gratitude, in the bosom where such thoughts are harboured? Is there any sense of equity in that bosom? Has thy Creator merited thus at thine hand! Has He been a niggard in His mercies to thee? Has He pared away from thy portion every superfluity of comfort? When thou wast in bondage to sin and death eternal; did His power make no exertion, did His wisdom devise no counsel, did His goodness suggest no sacrifice, for thy sake? Out of thine own mouth shalt thou be judged, thou wicked servant! Is this *the free-will offering* of the heart? Is this to serve God *not grudgingly, and as it were of necessity?* What is the language of genuine gratitude, of genuine love? *I am thine: I have longed after thy precepts. With my whole heart have I sought thee. In the path of thy commandments do I delight. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it. I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold. I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. All thy commandments are righteousness. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed when*

*when I have respect unto all thy commandments*(*n*). If you lay claim to the denomination of a disciple of Jesus Christ, be it in every point and on every occasion your main concern to fulfil your known duty to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and your duty to your neighbour, as a branch of your duty to God. Without that steadfast concern, you possess not the disposition of a Christian. If, through the renovating influence of divine grace, you have attained by effectual prayer this regenerate frame of soul ; and if, through the same grace, you hold it fast unto the end : then are you *in Christ a new creature*. Then have you scriptural authority for your hopes that, whether in the course of the present year you shall be numbered with your fathers, or shall be preserved unto the dawning of another, you shall be found of your Lord in peace, and be accepted through the righteousness of Christ.

(*n*) Pf. cxix. 5, 6. 10. 35. 40. 94. 127, 128. 140. 162. 172.

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## SERMON XVI.

On the Guilt and the Consequences of despising the Divine Threatenings.

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GENESIS, xix. 14.

*And Lot went out, and spake unto his Sons-in-law, which married his Daughters, and said: "Up; get you out of this Place: for "the Lord will destroy this City." But he seemed as one that mocked unto his Sons-in-law.*

**M**AN, fallen from original holiness, darkened in his understanding and perverted in his desires, transforms blessings into evils. The means of happiness consigned by the divine goodness to his application become, under his blind and unhallowed management, causes and instruments of ruin. The food, by which his body is to be sustained in health

and vigour, he employs to pamper intemperance; and corrupts into a source of disease, of weakness, of anguish, of decay. From the word of God, the bread of life, he contrives to extract poison. Expert in devising mischief against himself, he draws from the fountain of pure doctrine and unfulfilled righteousness imaginary cordials for unchristian opinions, and imaginary palliatives for unchristian practices. *Unlearned and unstable, he wrests at present, as in the days of St. Peter, the Scriptures to his own destruction.* In no instance is the depraved perverseness of the human mind more glaring than in the abuse of the long-suffering mercy of God. The divine forbearance, deferring from time to time the already protracted vengeance; prolonging the hitherto neglected interval of probation; raising again and again with louder summons the hitherto unregarded call to repentance; renewing and enlarging the hitherto despised means and wasted opportunities of grace: is beheld as ministering encouragement to carelessness in sin. Man, obstinately insensible to the accustomed dispensations of mercy, hardens himself against extraordinary interpositions of Providence: and will not repent and believe, *though one should rise from the dead,* nor though an angel should

bear to him a special warning from the Most High.

Among the different nations which, in the days of Abraham, inhabited the land of Canaan, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were distinguished by superiority in wickedness. The cry of the cities arose unto heaven; and called for vengeance on the grievousness of their sin. The long-suffering of God was exhausted: the season of trial was fulfilled: the hour of mercy was past: the storm of fire and brimstone was ready to descend. Among these habitations of guilt Lot, the nephew of Abraham, had been unhappily induced, by the fruitfulness of the surrounding country, to take up his abode. He was *a just and righteous man*, saith St. Peter; and *in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds* (a). In consideration of his general righteousness, and from tender regard to Abraham, God mercifully pardoned the criminal conduct of Lot in continuing to dwell in so impious a region; and determined by a special interposition of providential grace to send him forth from the impending destruction. The two angels, the ministers of divine wrath, said unto Lot; *Hast thou any*

(a) 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

*here*

*here besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will destroy this place: because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.* The words filled Lot with dismay. That his wife and his unmarried daughters, inhabitants of his own house, and accustomed to look up to him for direction, would obediently accompany his flight, might be no presumptuous expectation. But for his sons-in-law, dwelling apart in houses of their own, and free from his control as to the guidance of their personal conduct and that of their families, his heart trembled. He went out and spake unto them, and said, *Up; get you out of this place: for the Lord will destroy this city.* How was the exhortation received? *He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law!* His words seemed unto them as idle tales: and they believed them not. They beheld terror painted in his countenance: they beheld the anxious earnestness of his demeanour: they heard him announce nothing less than utter destruction: they heard him announce it solemnly in the name of God. What was the effect? Hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, they turned from him as an unwelcome disturber of their tranquillity, a trou-  
Z 4 blefome

blesome and unseasonable interrupter of their pleasures. They regarded him as a dreamer; a self-appointed prophet of evil tidings; a gloomy and over-righteous enthusiast, fearing where no fear was, and needlessly tormenting himself and others by discoursing of the anger of God, when no such anger existed, and of judgements and overwhelming vengeance never destined to take place. *He seemed unto them as one that mocked.* They despised his counsel: they refused to fly for deliverance from that seat of corruption: and within the space of very few hours, they perished in the universal destruction of the guilty land.

I proceed, in humble reliance on the divine blessing, by which alone religious instruction, whether public or private, is rendered efficacious, to apply for your edification those circumstances in the history of Lot and his sons-in-law, which are particularly mentioned in the text.

Perhaps, however, you may be disposed to say within yourselves; “ Why represent  
 “ as applicable to us, the case of the most de-  
 “ testable transgressors whom the world has  
 “ witnessed? Are we, like unto them, sinners  
 “ above all? Are we the by-word and scandal  
 “ of the land? Are we, beyond all others,  
 “ notorious for disobeying and disregarding  
 “ reli-



“ religion ? ” God forbid. But were not all things, which were written aforetime in the Scriptures, written for our learning? Is it foreign to the purpose, for which we are assembled, to set before you any example of divine indignation poured out upon wickedness? Do not two of the apostles of Christ, St. Peter and St. Jude, apply this very example to you, and to all mankind? Do they not aver that Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, condemned with an overthrow, turned into ashes, and suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, are set forth for an ensample unto all that afterwards shall live ungodly; an ensample that all who shall thenceforth live ungodly shall be reserved unto the day of judgement to be punished (*b*)? Does not our Saviour himself apply to you and to all men this identical example? Does he not solemnly affirm to his disciples concerning all who should not hear and receive their words; and consequently concerning all who should not receive and obey the gospel, whoever may be the preacher of it; that in the day of Judgement it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them (*c*)?

(*b*) 2 Pet. ii. 6—9. Jude, 7. (*c*) Matth. x. 15.

1. Let

1. Let us in the first place attend to the exhortation addressed by Lot to his sons-in-law; *Up; get you out of this place: for the Lord will destroy this city.*

Consider what was the situation of these men. They dwelt in a city subject to the dominion of sin. They had constantly before their eyes the example of numbers living without the fear of God, and in the grossest disobedience to His holy commandments. They were continually exposed to the danger of being rendered, by becoming familiar with wickedness, insensible of the heinous guilt of offending God. They dwelt in a city which in consequence of its sinfulness deserved immediate destruction; in a city which, when time and opportunity abundantly sufficient for trial and repentance had been afforded, was devoted to immediate destruction. The divine mercy still extended to them one respite, one opportunity, one warning more. "To-day, if ye will hear  
" my voice, harden not your hearts. Flee  
" for your lives. If you linger, you are un-  
" done. Get you out of this city; for the  
" Lord will destroy it. Come out of this  
" city, that ye receive not of her sins, and  
" that ye be not partakers of her plagues."

Such

Such was the admonition, such the injunction, which God delivered by His angels to the sons-in-law of Lot.

Is there not a real, is there not a near resemblance between the outward condition of those unhappy men and your own? You dwell in a world which the Scriptures pronounce to be under the dominion of sin; a world subject to the power of Satan, the *prince of this world*, the *God of this world*; a world to which you are not to belong, a world to which you are not to be conformed, a world which you are not to love, a world to which you are to be crucified, a world whose friendship is enmity with God. You, like the sons-in-law of Lot, are incessantly obnoxious to the contagion of pestilent example. You are encircled by multitudes living in wickedness; regardless of God, transgressing His commandments, neglecting His ordinances, wilfully ignorant of His written word, profaners of His day and of His name. With persons of this description you are constrained, more or less, by the business of life to associate. You witness their practices; you hear their sentiments; you become conversant with their principles. To the infectious influence of these practices, of these sentiments, of these principles, you are exposed

posed day by day. You dwell in a world deserving of destruction; and condemned, if the appointed season of repentance shall have passed away in vain, to destruction for ever and ever, to the vengeance of eternal fire. To you, as to the sons-in-law of Lot, life and the means of salvation are afforded. To you the exhortation is still addressed; “Arise, and flee for your lives. Flee from the wrath to come. Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Come forth, and be ye separate. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world, that ye be not condemned with the world.”

Such then is your situation. Such is the situation of every one, who hears the sound of the gospel. Contagion surrounds you: destruction lies before you. You are defiled, miserable, and helpless. Yet still there is a call of mercy; still there is a way to escape. The God whom you have offended places deliverance within your reach. The Son of God becomes man, and gives his life to purchase your salvation. He commands, he invites, he encourages you to fly to Him for salvation. He promises to you not only the pardon of sin, not only the enlightening and supporting grace of the Holy Ghost; but a crown of glory that fadeth not away,  
a king-

a kingdom of blessedness in his presence, at his right-hand, throughout eternity. This is the blessed hope which he sets before you, provided that your life on earth be dedicated to Him : that you renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil ; that you live not unto yourselves, but unto Him who died for you. At the same time He forewarns you in terms as strong as language can supply that, if you refuse his offered grace, the punishment into which the sentence of divine justice is prepared to plunge you will be proportioned to the happiness which you have obstinately and ungratefully renounced : that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin : there remaineth nothing for you to eternity but wrath, tribulation and anguish, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ; the lake of which the burning flood wherein Sodom and Gomorrah were engulfed was an emblem, the lake of fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched.

II. Consider, in the next place, the manner in which the sons in law of Lot received his awful admonition.

*He seemed unto them as one that mocked.* Their conduct discloses to us their character. They had evidently set their hearts on the  
worldly

worldly advantages which, in their apprehension, attended the place where they resided: and they made little account of its wickedness. They saw that the surrounding country, even all the plain of Jordan, was well watered and luxuriant; offering abundant pasturage at all seasons for their flocks and herds; and promising a great and continual increase of wealth. They beheld with complacency the licentious manners of the city devoted to constant revellings and riot. Like the men of Athens when St. Paul discoursed of Jesus and the resurrection; "*Thou bringest,*" said they to their father, "*strange things to our ears.*" When he described to them the sudden appearance of the angels; they perhaps exclaimed, like Festus, when Paul related the manifestation from Heaven of Jesus Christ for his conversion, "*Thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad.*" When he testified to them, that God was about to overwhelm the city with terrible and extraordinary judgements: they probably replied in language like that of the scoffers mentioned by St. Peter; "*Where is the promise of his coming? For all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*" The love of profit, or of pleasure, blinded their understandings and seared their  
their

their consciences. They were puffed up with self-conceit. They were hardened in unbelief. They treated the messenger, whom God had commissioned to warn them of their danger, and to point out the method of escape, as one that was ignorant or an impostor; as one who was himself deceived, or desirous of imposing upon them; as one who pretended to knowledge beyond his reach, and held forth a false representation of his Master's will. They gave not themselves the trouble to enquire and examine into the truth of Lot's declarations. They did not return with him to his house to satisfy themselves whether in reality two angels were there; whether any communication as to the purposes of God had been vouchsafed to their father-in-law; whether the city, as he affirmed, was about to be destroyed. They listened to him with carelessness and contempt. His message did not suit their inclinations and their prejudices: and they at once rejected and despised the monitor, and the warning.

My brethren! In many respects the conduct of a large portion of the world bears at this day a close resemblance to that of the sons-in-law of Lot, and arises from the same principles. When the great doctrines of the gospel are proposed as comprehending and disclosing the  
appointed

appointed method of falvation ; what numbers difregard or defpife them ! When the holy commandments of God are explained and enforced as indifpenfably and in every particular binding upon every man ; what numbers withhold their affent from the ftrictnefs of fuch interpretations of the Scriptures ! When the terrors of the world to come are difplayed, when the wrath and vengeance of God, the everlafting flames of Hell, are revealed againft all ungodlinefs and unrighteoufnefs of men ; what numbers refuse to credit the tremendous truth ! The minifter of the gofpel feemeth unto them as one that mocketh. Many fcrupe not openly to treat as idle tales propofitions fo little indulgent to felf-righteoufnefs, to unholy deeds, to pride of underftanding, to flight ideas of the guilt of fin, to blind and arrogant fpeculations concerning the nature and the extent of divine mercy. They profefs, that, for their part, they think it fufficient to receive the promifes of redemption in a general acceptance, without bufying themfelves with curious enquiries into particulars : that they difcern not the neceffity of regarding and of believing that minutely detailed account of the nature and office of Chrift, which others appear fo defirous of obtruding upon them :  
that



that they look not to niceties of faith, but to regularity of conduct : that, as to holiness, man is frail and God is merciful : that, without pretending to that unattainable righteousness which is pronounced from pulpits and in books of divinity to be essential to salvation, righteousness which would put a stop to all the necessary dealings of life and all the transactions and intercourse of the world, they doubt not but that they shall on the whole lead such respectable lives as will entitle them, through the help of Christ making up their deficiencies, to the kingdom of heaven : and that for such persons as by gross wickedness shall altogether fall short of heaven, the goodness of God will certainly provide some punishment more moderate and more reasonable than that which the unrelenting severity of learned enquirers imagines itself, and is glad to imagine itself, to have discovered in the New Testament. Such are the scornful and daring murmurs, the *great swelling words*, of many, who, while they call themselves followers of Christ, nourish the temper and spirit of unbelievers. Others, less bold in their aversion to the truth as it is in Jesus, are in their hearts little less removed than the icoffers already mentioned from an humble submission to the doctrines and com-

mandments, and an humble belief of the threatenings, recorded in the word of God. How does this fact appear? By the best evidence: by the life and actions. The tree is known by its fruit. Look at the fruits of these men. When you see persons paying no practical regard to the declarations of the Almighty: what is this but to treat his declarations as an idle tale? When you see a man trusting for salvation principally to supposed merits of his own: is it not plain that he treats as an idle tale the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, that salvation is purchased entirely by the atonement of Christ; that it is to be sought only through faith in His blood; and that good works, though indispensably required of every Christian, are valuable only as fruits and proofs of faith, not as being themselves pure in the sight of God, and still less as possessing any power of buying off the punishment due to transgression? When you see a man confidently depending on his own strength for ability to serve God acceptably: does he not prove that he treats as an idle tale the unequivocal assertions both of the Old and of the New Testament, that of ourselves we can do nothing which is good; that by nature we are corrupt, and enemies to God; that it is God

who worketh in us both to will and to do that which is right; that we cannot be preserved for a single moment in faith and holiness but by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost? When you see a person, though abstaining from some sins, wilfully persisting in others: is it not evident that he treats as an idle tale those many warnings in the Scriptures, that any one criminal habit, whether it be drunkenness, or uncleanness, or theft, or covetousness, or envy, or lying, or malice, or any other sin, wilfully and obstinately indulged, will plunge him into hell? When you see a person as it were defying the anger of God by careless disobedience: is it not manifest that in practice he treats as an idle tale the sentence of everlasting damnation, everlasting fire, the worm that never dies, the flame that never shall be quenched? Surely to such men the Lord God Omnipotent, the Creator, the King, and the Judge of the universe, seemeth as one that mocketh!

III. Consider, in the third place, the consequences of treating as an idle tale, as the words of one that mocketh, the declarations of Almighty God.

*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Thy word, O God, is true from the beginning. Hath He spoken; and shall He not do it? Brethren, we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men (d).*

Enquire now of the days which are gone what has been the end of all those, who in past ages have disregarded the denunciations of God. Let God be the Judge between you, and those who admonish you in His name. Let God by His past dispensations be the interpreter of His own word. When our first parents listened in paradise to the ensnaring question of the Tempter, *Yea; hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden: when, giving ear to his confident assertion, ye shall not surely die,* they ventured to consider the sentence of death as a judgement not designed to be carried into execution: what was the consequence? They brought ruin upon themselves and upon their

(d) Gal. vi. 7. Rom. iii. 4. Ps. cxix. 160. Numb. xxiii. 19. 2 Pet. i. 16. 2 Cor. v. 11.

posterity. When Noah admonished the world that the Spirit of God would still strive with sinful man only during the period of an hundred and twenty years vouchsafed for trial and repentance: when that Preacher of Righteousness seemed unto them as one that mocked: what was the end of the unbelievers? The deluge came at its appointed hour, and swept them to destruction. When the sons-in-law of Lot made light of the threatenings of God: what was the event? They were overwhelmed at sun-rise by the tempest of fire and brimstone. When Pharaoh cried, *Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?* When he hardened his heart, and gave no credit to the warnings of Moses: did God forbear to fulfil his word? Plague after plague overtook the king of Egypt: till having seen his country laid waste by miracles of divine vengeance, and his own first-born, together with the first-born of all his people, cut off in a single night, he perished with his mighty host in the Red Sea. When the Jews in the days of Jeremiah shut their ears against his message from Jehovah, that the city of Jerufalem should be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar: did the words of the prophet prove an idle tale? The Chaldean army took the city, and burned it to the

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ground.

ground. When Nebuchadnezzar himself in the pride of his heart despised the impending judgements revealed to him by Daniel; did they fail of coming to pass? At the end of twelve months, a voice from heaven was heard proclaiming that the hour was come; and the thing was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom was taken from him, and he was driven from men, and did eat grafs as oxen, and his dwelling was with the beasts of the field. When the Jews in later times heard from the mouth of Jesus Christ that of their beloved city not one stone should be left upon another: when the Son of God seemed as one that mocked to the people whom he came to save: what was the result? The Roman armies advanced, and miserably destroyed those sinners, and took away their place and nation. With all these examples before you, do you treat the words of God as idle tales, and hope to escape? In the fate of these despisers do you not read your own? Has the Omnipotent poured out upon all others the vengeance, which He has threatened against the impenitent and unbelieving; and shall He not pour it forth upon you? For your sake alone will He abrogate His word? For your sake alone will He annul His laws established from eternity  
unto

unto eternity? Deal plainly with yourselves. Search out and sift your imaginations. Ascertain what is that twig of hope to which you are clinging. Bring forth to the test of scriptural examination the secret support, be it what it may, which buoys you up with expectations that there shall at least be a partial remission of the doom denounced against guilt. *Yea and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right (e)?* Bring it forth to a test which you behold with more complacent eyes, the test of reason. Is it ignorance that you ascribe to the Omniscient? Do you presume that He, to whom the future is naked as the past, perceives not as yet His own purposes? From such a delusion folly itself turns aside. It is not on such a plank that you trust to survive shipwreck. Do you then flatter yourself that He *with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning*, He who is *the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever*, will suddenly exchange steadfastness for inconstancy, and abolish His fixed and promulgated decree? You abjure this madness. "If the destruction," you exclaim, "of the sinner be indisputable until fickleness can be imputed to the Most High; there remaineth no refuge from despair." And

(e) Luke, xii. 57.

what refuge from despair remaineth to the persevering sinner? Produce your hidden consolation. Disclose the bottom of your heart. Tardy and reluctant as is the confession, it is at length extracted. You conceive that the Deity has decreed from the beginning to relax from His threatened judgements: that while, for the purpose of aweing men into righteousness, vengeance arrayed in fiery terrors assumes her seat in the clouds; mercy is at hand to avert the most formidable of her bolts, and to shield the offender from all but that lighter chastisement, the fear of which would have been inadequate to the prevention of transgressions. Compare then thy theory, thou who adventurest to theorise concerning the counsels of thy God; compare thy theory with facts. If in the denunciations of future vengeance a part only be intended for accomplishment, while the residue is empty air: whence is it that past menaces have been fulfilled to the uttermost? Why was the old world destroyed by the flood? Why were Sodom and Gomorrah, and the incredulous sons-in-law of Lot overwhelmed? Why was Pharaoh cut off? Why did the Egyptian host perish to a man? Why was Jerusalem delivered unto Nebuchadnezzar to be uprooted from the foundations? Why was the

the



the king of Babylon driven out to dwell and eat grass with oxen? Why were the Jews extirpated by the Romans from their native land? Proceed a step farther. Compare thy theory with the attributes of the Godhead. Is not thy God a God of truth and holiness? Yet thou chargest Him with premeditated falsehood. Dost thou expect His promises to be punctually fulfilled? Why? Because He is faithful and righteous. And do not faithfulness and righteousness equally require the punctual fulfilment of His threatenings? Do not promises and threatenings stand equally on the word of God? Is not the truth of God equally pledged in both? Is it not equally falsehood to depart from either? Be not deceived. *If we believe not, yet God abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself. The wicked shall be turned into hell; and all the people that forget God. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels; and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. These sayings are faithful and true. These are the true sayings of God (f).* Consider these things; lest judgement and justice

(f) 2 Tim. ii. 13. Ps. ix. 17. Matth. xiii. 41, 42. Rev. xix. 9. xxii. 6,

take hold on you, and there be none to deliver. Close not your eyes against the warnings of the gospel. Be convinced that God will bring upon the wicked all the punishment which He has denounced against them as surely as He will bestow upon the righteous the glories, which Christ has purchased for them with His blood. Remember the sons-in-law of Lot. Fly from the contagion of guilt; fly from sin, the certain forerunner of destruction. Life is set before you. Why will ye die?

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## S E R M O N    X V I I .

On the Guilt of establishing unscriptural Principles of Conduct.

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ISAIAH, V. 20.

*Woe unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darknefs for Light, and Light for Darknefs; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter!*

**T**HE steps by which error gains possession of the human mind are various. Sometimes it pushes its operations in secrecy and silence. Sometimes it advances with a bolder aspect; and scarcely disguises its assaults on the bulwarks of truth. At one period it resorts to measures promising immediate success. At another, it depends on the slow result of persevering artifice. Now it aspires not beyond a temporary triumph.

Now

Now it extends its aim to permanent delusion. Now it misleads in a special instance by suggesting unsound conclusions from just and recognised principles of conduct. Now it attains its purpose by exalting a false principle into the place and sovereignty of the true. Of all the machinations of error the last, though among the most difficult to carry into effect, portends, when its victory is assured, the most durable and the most extensive mischief. The disease of a single branch infects but the fruit of that branch. The rill drawn aside from the main current is alone polluted by the impurities of the channel into which it is diverted. Is the whole produce to be corrupted? Canker the root. Is the whole stream to be tainted? Poison the fountain.

Such is the nature of the offence, against which in the passage of Scripture before us a woe is denounced by the prophet. In other parts of the chapter, speaking, as here also, by the command and in the person of the Almighty, he proclaims vengeance from God against various descriptions of sinners: against the covetous, *who join house to house and lay field to field*: against sensualists, *who follow strong drink, and cheer their feasts with the harp and the viol, but regard not the work of the*  
*the*

*the Lord*: against the self-righteous, who *are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight*: against scoffers, who deride the long-suffering of God, and call upon him to *make speed and hasten his counsels*: against iniquitous judges, who for a bribe *justify the wicked, and take away the righteousness of the righteous*: against those who, professing to be *His people*, through their own wilfulness *have no knowledge* of the real nature of religion, and are groaning under the appointed retribution of calamity: and, by parity of reasoning, against all, who, like the finners selected as examples to illustrate the general denunciation, *have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel*. In this catalogue of crimes and consequent woes the text has its station. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* Woe unto them, who in any one of the ramifications of the two component branches of religion, piety and morality; in any subdivision of human duties, whether it has God or man for its immediate object; establish a wicked principle in the place of the righteous opposite: either openly uphold the false rule of conduct, and openly vilify the true; or confine

fine themselves to the tacit impeachment and subversion of the latter by a studied exaltation of the former.

I propose, under the divine blessing, to elucidate by some instances derived from modern life the guilt here stigmatised by the mouth of God; and the present and future woes here denounced by the same authority against every offender. The discussion lies at the root of all religion. Give me your diligent attention. And may the Spirit of God bless the good seed, which I may be made the instrument of sowing in your hearts!

I. Among the most prominent illustrations of the present subject we may produce those persons, who represent enthusiasm as religion.

By enthusiasm, as applied with a reference to religion, I understand the subjection of the judgement, in points of religious faith or practice, to the influence of the imagination. The forms under which this influence manifests its predominance may be divers. The power which it exercises over one mind may in degree be greater or less than that which it possesses over another. But wherever, and in whatever shape and measure, it operates: there, and in that shape and measure, exists enthusiasm.

In many instances enthusiasm suggests unauthorized ideas of personal communication between the individual and the Deity; of personal inspiration sensibly vouchsafed by the Holy Ghost in mode or measure different from that divine influence on the heart and understanding, which is promised to every Christian. Sometimes it deludes the mind with ideas equally unauthorized of the visible agency of the Spirit of God on others. On some occasions it pronounces with no less decision, and equally without the sanction of the Scriptures, that the miraculous interposition of the finger of God is clearly discernible in a recent and perhaps customary event. And not seldom, it impels pious men to carry their views of a particular doctrine beyond the sober tenor of the Scriptural declarations concerning that doctrine. In this instance, as the opinions of different persons concerning the extent and importance of an individual doctrine may be various, enthusiasm is less easily ascertained than when it appears under one of the preceding forms: and in consequence, is frequently imputed by the careless, the ignorant, and the prejudiced, when it does not exist. It is sufficient however for my present purpose, that under this shape also it is occasionally manifested.

*Woe unto the world, said our Lord, because of offences. For it must needs be that offences come: but woe unto that man, by whom the offence cometh. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones (a).* Enthusiasm entails a woe on the person whom it infects. It darkens his understanding: it enslaves him more and more to the dreams of a heated fancy: it teaches him to judge whether he is in a state of salvation rather by internal impulses and reveries than by a comparison of his own dispositions and conduct with the characteristic marks, by which the Scriptures discriminate the true Christian: and thus contributes in various ways to ensnare him into errors dangerous to his soul, and to encrease the difficulties in the way of his return to *the form of sound doctrine, the words of truth and soberness*. But its pernicious effects on others, the mischiefs scattered far and wide by this *evil when called good*, are incalculable. Enthusiasm disparages genuine piety, and causes it to be despised as lukewarm formality. It degrades many doctrines for the immoderate exaltation of one. It disgusts the sober and discourages the timid Christian. It exposes

(a) Matth. xviii. 7. Luke, xvii. 2.



Christianity to the scoffs and taunts of its enemies ; and furnishes a specious plea to the *children of this world*, who labour to represent earnestness in religion as hypocrisy, folly, or fanaticism.

It is said, and truly said, that sincere piety is often an inmate in the breast which is the habitation of enthusiasm. It is to be deplored that sincere piety should ever be linked with an associate, by the continued operation of whose deluding influence it has frequently been at last extirpated from the bosom. Let sincere piety however be honoured, wherever it may be found. But let not the chaff be valued because of its conjunction with the wheat. Let not the base alloy be counted as a portion of the precious metal. It is also stated, and occasionally in the shape of an apology, that enthusiasm originates from ignorance unaccompanied by evil design. The general statement may be grounded in truth. But let every man who urges it in the first place weigh the language of St. Paul, when that apostle describes himself as *the chief of sinners*: and observe, secondly, that he attributes his sin to *ignorance* (b). I draw no parallel, no comparison, between enthusiasm and persecution.

(b) 1 Tim. i. 12—16.

But I would fervently exhort you to deduce from the expressions of St. Paul the legitimate and universally applicable conclusion: that ignorance, when you are surrounded with means and opportunities of knowledge, is wilful; that wilful ignorance is a sin; and that there is no offence for which wilful ignorance can be pleaded in justification.

II. Let us now turn our eyes to the opposite quarter: to men who denominate religion enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is on principle busy and loquacious. Lukewarmness, though capable of being roused to a turbulent defence of forms and of its own conduct, is by nature silent and supine. Hence enthusiasm, in proportion to the relative number of its adherents, raises a much louder stir, and attracts far more speedy and extensive notice, than lukewarmness. But let the torpid conviction of the lukewarm be contrasted with the illusion of the enthusiast: and the former will prove itself not less dangerous, and generally, I fear, more deliberately criminal, than the latter.

The lukewarm Christian, if according to popular language he is to be called by the name of Christian, reduces religion to a ceremonial service, devoid of warmth, animation,

and spirituality. Punctilious perhaps in *the form of godliness*, he *denies the power thereof*. *His lips draw nigh unto God : his heart is far from him* (c). Outward observances he substitutes for ardent piety ; and moral decorum for *the fruits of the spirit*. *To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ; to live not unto ourselves, but unto Christ who died for us ;* these are precepts which in the hands of the lukewarm religionist evaporate into prohibitions of the grosser vices : and scarcely seem inconsistent with the toleration of some one of the grosser vices on condition of a decent abstinence from the rest. That we are justified by faith alone, implies in his creed no more than that in order to supply the deficiency of his own righteousness as the price of salvation, some accession must be borrowed from the righteousness of Christ. *To be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to be created anew in Christ Jesus, to be born again of the Spirit ;* these are phrases which in his estimation import that his heart, by nature substantially good, is yet to receive some improvement from divine grace : that, although the original foundation be in the main sufficiently solid, some alterations are needful in the superstructure : that the apartments, neces-

(c) 2 Tim. iii. 5. Matt. xv. 8.

family contracting from daily use a little dust and defilement, require occasional purification. All religious warmth, all active zeal for the glory of God, he decries as enthusiasm; and vindicates his coldness by declaiming against fanatics. Every degree of exertion for the salvation of men which surpasses the scantiness of his own standard, he eyes with suspicion, as the symptom of a heated brain: and eagerly seizes every pretence for censuring the strenuous and faithful Christian, in whose affectionate diligence he reads a reproach of his own inactivity and deadness. In lukewarmness every thing tends to deterioration. The heart grows inert, the conscience dull of feeling. Penitence becomes shallow, prayer languid, religious meditation uninteresting, faith feeble and indistinct and unproductive. Sin loses its heinousness. Every thing is stagnant, and verges towards corruption. The vivifying principle seems extinguished.

Against such a frame of mind do you wonder that a woe is denounced? Are you astonished that Jesus Christ speaks of the *lukewarm* with abhorrence: declares his wish that they were either *cold or hot*: and while they boastfully proclaim themselves *rich and increased with goods and having need of nothing*, affirms them to be *naked, and miserable,*

*and poor, and blind, and naked; counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire that they may be rich, and white raiment that they may be clothed; and forewarns them that, unless they repent and become zealous, they shall be utterly cast out for ever? He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the lukewarm in the churches (d)! Against you, if you are lukewarm, has the Spirit denounced this woe by the mouth of St. John. Against you, if you are a patron of lukewarmness in others, if you vilify religion and discourage the true servants of the Lord Jesus by attaching to fervent and active piety, to sound and enlightened faith, the denomination of enthusiasm; if you thus call evil good and good evil, thus put darkness for light and light for darkness; against you has the Spirit denounced an additional woe by the lips of Isaiah. Look up to the impending judgment. Be zealous, and repent!*

III. Another illustration of the text is furnished by persons, who represent a partial conformity to the commandments of God as meriting the appellation of religion: and thus also by implication stigmatise the true Christian as *righteous over-much.*

(d) Rev. iii. 15—19. 22.

It is not on the dedication of the heart to God that men of this description rest their confidence. In their religion the devotion of the heart, and the consequent surrender of the affections to holiness, have no share. It is on the practical observance of one or more of the moral virtues, and on a practical abstinence from some particular sins, that they ground their pretensions to the kingdom of heaven. “ We do not profess to be eminent  
“ saints: nor will we aver that we have been  
“ as religious as we ought to have been. But  
“ neither are we gross offenders. We defy  
“ the tongue of calumny to fix on us any  
“ scandalous vice. Or if we have been be-  
“ trayed into gross transgression, it has been  
“ accidentally and by surprise. We are con-  
“ cerned for the instance: and we doubt not  
“ that God, who knows that man is frail, will  
“ make reasonable allowances. Nay, though  
“ we may have fallen into an evil habit; we  
“ trust that in the eyes of our equitable judge  
“ it will have been compensated by the exer-  
“ cise of many virtues. We are unwilling  
“ to commend ourselves. But the superci-  
“ liousness of rigid moralisers requires us to  
“ do justice to our characters. Our integrity  
“ has been through life unimpeachable. We  
“ have injured no man. We forgive every  
“ man

“ man who has injured us; and are at peace  
“ with all the world.” Such is the language  
which the fullness of the self-sufficient causes  
to echo throughout the dwellings of health  
and prosperity. Such are the sentiments, ex-  
pressed perhaps in a moderated tone, which  
the minister of the gospel too frequently hears  
when sitting by the side of the bed of death.  
Is this religion? Is this to live unto Christ?  
Is this to serve God, through a Redeemer, by  
sanctification of the Spirit, with gratitude and  
love and holy fear? Is he religious, who de-  
liberately perseveres in the habitual gratifica-  
tion of any unhallowed temper or desire?  
“ Not so religious,” you reply, “ as he ought  
“ to be.” Not so religious as he ought to  
be! In the sight of his Judge he has no true  
religion. As surely as the Scriptures proclaim  
the decisions of eternal wisdom, he is with-  
out the first elements of religion: he is with-  
out that which constitutes the basis of religion,  
the unqualified surrender of the heart to God.  
As surely as the Scriptures reveal the decrees  
of Omnipotence; the portion reserved for  
him is everlasting woe (*e*). Is he religious  
who rests on the observance of the rules of  
integrity, or of temperance, or of liberality,

(*e*) 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19—21. James, ii. 10, 11.

or of some other favourite preceptress selected from the band of moral virtues: an observance too which proves itself by standing thus insulated to have originated from worldly motives, not from that genuine solicitude to please God, which draws around it the whole assemblage of Christian graces? Is he religious, who, proudly sustaining himself on the staff of some imaginary merit, bows himself not down at the foot of the cross displayed before him; feels not his knees tremble under him; feels not the radical corruption of his heart; the enormity of every offence against his Heavenly Benefactor and King; “the inestimable love of God in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;” the riches of the mercy which exchanges his helpless depravity, his prospects of eternal death, “for the means of grace, and the hope of glory?” *Woe be unto them who thus call evil good*: who put a withered branch for a living tree: who trust to that which they have done, and look not to that which they have left undone: who regard that which they have done as though it were perfect, and wrought by strength of their own; and wilfully perceive not that every good work is the fruit of the Spirit of God,  
and



and that the best of human works are unholy in the eyes of Jehovah, and are rendered pure and acceptable before Him only through the righteousness of Christ.

IV. We may in the next place produce as illustrative of the general proposition before us those who represent the palliation of sin as charity; and brand with the character of censoriousness all opinions and descriptions of guilt conformable to the Scriptures.

The higher ranks of life may be those in which this offence appears the most glaring: but it pervades, and perhaps equally over-spreads, every class in society. From the mouth of these apologisers no sin receives its appropriate denomination. Some lighter phrase is ever on the lips to obscure or to cloke its enormity, perhaps to transform it into a virtue. Is profaneness noticed? It is an idle habit by which nothing is intended. Is extravagance named? It is a generous disregard of money. Is luxury mentioned? It is a hospitable desire to see our friends happy. What is worldly-mindedness? It is prudence. What is pride? It is proper spirit, a due attention to our own dignity. What is ambition? A laudable desire of distinction and pre-eminence; a just sense of our own excel-

excellence and desert. What is devotedness to fashion? It is a due regard to the customs of the polite world. What is over-reaching? It is understanding our business. What is servility? It is skill in making our way to advancement. What are intemperance and sins of impurity? They are indecorums, irregularities, human frailties, customary indiscretions, the natural and venial consequences of cheerfulness, company, and temptation; the unguarded ebullitions of youth, which in a little time will satiate and cure themselves. Now all this is *candour*: all this is *charity*. If a reference be made to religion, these men immediately enlarge on the *mercy* of God. If constrained to speak of His threatenings, they advert to them distantly, briefly, with affected tenderness, as to a sort of law in dead letter held forth to terrify guilt and to confine it within reasonable bounds; but a law which they intimate that the justice of the Deity will never permit him to enforce. To paint sin in its genuine colours: to denounce the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: to proclaim from the word of inspiration that obstinate perseverance against light and knowledge in any one unholy disposition or practice will exclude from the kingdom of Heaven:

to unfold the terrors of hell, of everlasting damnation, of the lake of inextinguishable fire, of the abodes of those whose smoke ascendeth for ever and ever: this is pharisaical punctiliousness, intolerable rigour, illiberal superstition, the frenzy of bigotry, the bitterness of misanthropy. The sons of *candour* and *charity* turn away with contempt. Nay, they profess to be roused with honest indignation against persons who thus misrepresent the counsels of a God, who would have all men to be saved: and stand forth in defence of his attributes injured and degraded by merciless preachers, who assume to themselves the character of His ambassadors, while they bar the gates of Heaven against the workmanship of His hands.

If those who thus abuse the name of Christian charity: who thus strip sin of its heinousness, and the Scriptures of their sanctions; belong not to the class of deceivers, who *put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter*: to whom shall the description of the prophet be applied? If the presumptuous ignorance, the secret love of sin, the busy and seducing sophistry, the obtrusive and pestilent example, displayed by these men, escape the penal denunciation: where shall the woe find its objects?

V. There

V. There yet remains to be specified an exemplification of the guilt menaced with vengeance by the prophet: a perversion of principle which, while the lower ranks are happily too little refined to be infected with it, taints with a greater or a less degree of its deceitful influence the bulk of the middle and higher classes of the community.

*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (f).*

What is the principle of conduct to which in the transactions of polished life the appeal is usually made? Attend a court of justice. Is an arbitrator recommended? It is because he is a man of *honour*. Is a plaintiff or a defendant noticed with complacency? It is because his proceedings have been *honourable*. Go to the senate. By what criterion are applause and censure apportioned there? By the rule of *honour*. Visit the circle of private society. The character of an individual is the theme of discussion. Animated eyes and eager voices speak his praise. Why? Because he is *a man of perfect honour*. Another person is named. Disapprobation contracts every brow, and sharpens every tongue. For what reason? "In such a transaction the behaviour of that man was *dishonourable* :

(f) Luke, vi. 45.

" yes

“ yes, in another *his honour was impeached.*” Of the preceding picture I mean not indiscriminately to affirm that there are not exceptions to the likeness. But let any person, who has assigned even a slight measure of attention to the subject, pronounce whether, in each of the cases described, the representation be not accurately conformable to the general features of the original. Has the pulpit escaped the contagion? Comparatively it has preserved itself pure. Would to Heaven that in some of its most applauded compositions the public eye had not discerned traces and mixtures, which preclude me from ascribing to it unfulfilled purity! *The lips of the priest should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts (g).* Never may the pastor feed his flock with an intermixture of poisonous herbage! Never may he lead them to drink of streams, which flow from an unhallowed fountain!

Whence is this jargon? Has it founded its dominion on the application by St. Paul of the term *honourable* to marriage (*b*); on the testimony of approbation borne by the same apostle to *things of good report (i)*; and on those pas-

(g) Malachi, ii. 7.

(b) Heb. xiii. 4.

(i) Philip. iv. 8.

fages of the Scriptures in which holiness is described as entitled to respect and praise? Very different are the foundations of its sway. It reigns, because multitudes *love the praise of men more than the praise of God*. It reigns, because *they receive honour one of another ; and seek not that honour which cometh from God only* (k).

What is this idol, which men worship in the place of the living God? What is this principle, which they enthrone in degradation of his sovereign word? Honour implies the favourable estimation entertained of an individual by others of his own line and place in society. The votary of honour may delude himself with the idea that, whatever be the ordinary expressions of his lips, his heart is dedicated to religion. But his heart is fixed on his idol, human applause. In the place of the love and the fear of God he substitutes the love of praise and the fear of shame. In the place of conscience he substitutes pride. For the dread of guilt he substitutes the apprehension of disgrace.

*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God* (l). Woe unto you

(k) John, v. 44. xii. 43. (l) Isaiah, lv. 8. Luke, xvi. 15.

who thus *put darkness for light*, and proportionally thrust aside into darkness the light of the world, the oracles of the Most High. *Ye are they*, like the Pharisees of old, *who justify yourselves before men.* *Ye are they*, who *teach for doctrines the commandments of men.* *Ye are they*, who *make the commandments of God of none effect by your traditions* (m). *Ye are they* who uphold the duellist. *Ye are they* who wrest the sword out of the hands of the law; and commit to every man the vindication of his real or imaginary wrongs. *Ye are they* who prefer the discharge of a gaming debt to the payment of the just demand of the famished tradesman. *Ye are they* who establish a principle of morality, baseless because not founded upon religion; scanty in its comprehension, because tolerant of many crimes and indifferent to numerous virtues; and however highly esteemed among men, *abominable* in the sight of God, because exalted in neglect or in contempt of his word, regardless of his service and his glory.

My brethren! The professed object of this discourse is now fulfilled. You have distinctly surveyed a sufficient variety of examples selected to display the sin, which in the passage

(m) Luke, xvi. 15. Matth. xv. 6. 9.

of Scripture before us the prophet had in contemplation. And your consciences attest the justice of the woe denounced against every instance of that sin by the Spirit of God. What is the warning voice which, while we ponder on these examples singly or collectively, resounds in our ears? *To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Thus saith the Lord: stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls (n).* Let not the fumes of a heated imagination bewilder you into enthusiasm. Let not the natural aversion of the heart from religion chill you into lukewarmness. Conceive not that it is religion to obey some of the commandments of God, and knowingly to persevere in disobeying one. Conceive not that it is charity to explain away the heinousness of sin; or censoriousness to pronounce that to be guilt which God has pronounced to be guilt, that to be the subject of punishment which God has averred that He will punish. Let not *your minds be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ* into a habit of referring to that unauthorized and miserable arbiter of

(n) Isaiah, viii. 20. Jerem. vi. 16.



morals, that ideal power before which the world bows down in senseless adoration, the principle of honour. *My son! Give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God. Woe unto you, if in any of the instances which have been specified, or in any analogous example, you are deluded to call evil good and good evil, to put darkness for light and light for darkness, to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto you if you wilfully become the instrument of seducing others into similar delusions! Stand fast on the sure rock, the sacred Word. Let ignorance misunderstand the gospel: let indifference strip it of its energy: let pride, let sensuality, let worldly mindedness frame to themselves schemes of religion conformable to the corrupt principle in accomodation to which they are severally framed. Let the language of ignorance, of indifference, of pride, of sensuality, of worldly mindedness, on topics of piety and morality, be unrighteousness, be folly, be madness. In God, in His counsels, in His recorded law, there is *neither variableness nor shadow of turning.* *Jesus Christ, the Judge of all, is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* Measure thou all things by that standard, by which thou shalt thyself be measured. Weigh all things*

in those scales, by which thou shalt thyself be tried. Make thy reference in all things to that tribunal, from which there shall be no appeal. Judge all things by the word of God: for by that word shalt thou and all things be judged.

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## S E R M O N XVIII.

An Exposition of the first Part of the Lesson  
appointed for the Burial Service.

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I COR. XV. 20.

*Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the first Fruits of them that slept.*

*ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God: and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (a). Such is the divine authority, such is the comprehensive nature, such are the manifold and supremely important uses, of the Bible. Hence it becomes the duty and the wisdom of the ministers of the gospel, in their en-*

(a) 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

deavours to train up the flocks committed to their charge in the knowledge and obedience of the faith of Christ, from time to time to vary the methods, in which they deduce instruction from the word of God: to vary them however within such limits only as the Scriptures themselves completely authorise; and to vary them, if in some measure for the purpose of exciting a more lively attention among their hearers, yet principally for the sake of successively impressing on their congregations the different helps and encouragements to holiness, and the different dissuatives from sin, which the sacred writings supply. Thus at one time the preacher will dwell chiefly, though by no means without a decided reference to practice, on doctrines. At another time, regarding the truth and import of the doctrines as established, he will enter into a fuller detail concerning the conduct, which a firm belief in them is designed and adapted to produce. Sometimes he will unfold the nature and evince the efficacy of faith. Sometimes he will enlarge on holy tempers and good works; those *fruits of the Spirit*, by which genuine faith is manifested and adorned. Sometimes he will build his admonitions on the preceptive parts of the Old or of the New Testament. Sometimes

he will derive them from the memorable histories which those records contain of righteous men protected, delivered, and rewarded by that God whom they served and glorified ; or of rebellious despisers of the divine law condemned to shame, anguish, and destruction. Sometimes he will fix his thoughts on a single verse ; and will explain with minuteness of investigation, and enforce with copiousness of reasoning, the religious truth which it involves. Sometimes he will select a passage of greater length ; point out the bearing and connexion of the arguments employed by the inspired prophet, evangelist, or apostle ; and apply them, so far as they may be lawfully applied, to the edification, the support, and the comfort of Christians of the present day.

The last of these various methods of obtaining instruction from the word of God is that which I propose now to pursue. In the present and in a subsequent discourse, (for the subject is too extensive to be compressed with advantage into the compass of a single sermon), it will be my object to direct your minds to that portion of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, which opens with the verse selected for the text and extends to the conclusion of the chapter. It is a portion of Scripture in the highest degree

interesting on account of the momentous truths which it discloses. And it is rendered peculiarly impressive by the solemn and affecting nature of the occasions on which it is publicly employed. It is a portion of Scripture which we have frequently heard pronounced over the lifeless bodies of our friends. It is one which others within no distant period shall hear pronounced over our own. The Church to which we belong has wisely and piously endeavoured to render the interment of the dead a source of edification to the living. When pride is humbled and the heart softened by affliction; when the coffin slowly borne to the house of God, pausing there awhile on its way towards the grave, or placed within its narrow mansion and receiving the last looks of surviving anguish, proclaims with a voice which cannot be misunderstood, the speedy and inevitable end of all earthly possessions and enjoyments: the mourner is taught to look to Christ the Redeemer, the Resurrection and the Life, in whom whosoever believeth, though he were dead, yet shall he live. He is taught that, if the Lord has taken away; He has taken only what He gave. He is taught that, though man walketh in a vain shadow; yet his hope is truly in the Lord. He is taught that, if  
God

God turneth man to destruction; again He saith, "Come again, ye children of men." He is taught so to number his days, that he may apply his heart unto wisdom. He is taught that a voice from Heaven hath proclaimed, "*Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord: even so, saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours.*" He is taught not to sorrow as men without hope, for them who sleep in Christ. He is taught that the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are with Christ in joy and felicity. He is taught that though earth be committed to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: it is in sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the just to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be like unto His glorious body, according the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself; and shall then pronounce that benediction to all that love and fear God, *Come ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* In the passage from the first Epistle to the Corinthians appointed to form a part of the funeral service, this fundamental doctrine of our faith, this glorious and inestimable hope, this unfailing support to the

righteous under all the labours and afflictions of mortality, is established by irresistible arguments; guarded against cavils and misconceptions; displayed under the most animating representations; and practically applied to purposes the most noble.

Let us proceed, in reliance on the blessing of Him under the guidance of whose Spirit all Scripture has been recorded, to the full consideration of this portion of holy writ.

In the earlier part of the chapter the apostle discloses the circumstance, which had convinced him of the necessity of the lesson which he was about to inculcate. *If Christ, saith he, be preached that he rose from the dead: how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* Though the Old Testament contains, especially in the writings of the prophets, many forcible intimations of a future existence; the Sadducees, a powerful and numerous sect among the Jews, denied that there remained a life beyond the grave. Among the heathens, all was obscurity and doubt, or darkness and unbelief. *When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some listened with prejudice, contempt, and reluctance: others openly scoffed and mocked at the novelty and strangeness of the doctrine.*

Hence



Hence among the early Christians, whether of Jewish or of Gentile race, there was found a favourable opening for false teachers, who were adventurous enough to undermine and oppose the hope of a future life. Two heretical declaimers of this description, Hymeneus and Philetus, are specified by St. Paul in his second Epistle to Timothy as having *erred concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is past already* : affirming the promised resurrection to be of a figurative nature ; a resurrection to be accomplished in the present world ; a resurrection, as they probably explained themselves, from a state of vice to a state of virtue. Though Hymeneus, according to the positive declaration of the same apostle, had, in this fundamental point *made shipwreck concerning faith*, because he had first *put away a good conscience* : though both these corrupters of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, having emancipated themselves from the dread of a judgement to come, would naturally plunge with little restraint into flagitiousness, and might thus have been expected to bring general discredit on their opinions even in the eyes of common observers: yet *their word did eat as doth a canker, and overthrew the faith of some*. Teachers infected with the same senseless and pernicious principles

ciples had insinuated themselves and acquired influence among the Christians of Corinth. Well aware that the admission of such principles in any degree tended in an equal degree to uproot Christianity from its foundations, the apostle strenuously advances forward to contend for the genuine faith, *the faith originally delivered to the saints*. He recalls to the remembrance of his converts that gospel which he had preached to them at the beginning; that gospel which they had embraced; that gospel by which they were to be saved: a gospel, built on the ground-work of Christ's resurrection from the dead; and establishing by infallible proofs his repeated appearances after his return from the grave, separately to St. Peter, afterwards to St. James, more than once to all the apostles collected together, then to an assembly of above five hundred disciples, most of whom were still alive, and, last of all, to St. Paul himself. He warns them that the reality of the resurrection of Christ was inseparably connected with the assurance of their own future resurrection: that if the dead were not to rise, Christ was not risen; that if Christ were not risen, the apostles who had promulgated a gospel proclaiming His resurrection had testified falsely concerning

God ; that their preaching had in that case been in vain, an imposture and a delusion ; that the Corinthians had believed in vain, and were yet in their sins, had placed reliance on a falsehood, and were destitute of pardon and without a possibility of salvation ; and that all who had fallen asleep in Christ, all who for His sake had encountered persecution and misery, all who had died in His faith and in full assurance of life eternal through Him, had perished. Having thus fully set before them the consequences which would necessarily ensue, if the pestilent doctrine with which they were assailed were founded in truth : a doctrine which would prove that Christ had not risen from the dead ; that He had wrought no atonement for sin ; that He was unable to perform his promises ; that no hope remained for the righteous ; that the whole fabric of the Christian religion was a human contrivance, the production of deliberate fraud and unexampled hypocrisy : he cheers them in the words of the text with a solemn statement of the real fact as to the resurrection of their Lord, and the blessed result of His resurrection with regard to all those who trusted in Him. *But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.* “ Be not shaken in mind,”

for

for thus we may conceive the apostle addressing his beloved followers ; “ Be not shaken  
 “ in mind, nor carried about with every wind  
 “ of doctrine. Hold fast without wavering  
 “ the profession of your faith, and especially  
 “ of that most important article, on which  
 “ the truth of the gospel and every promise  
 “ which you cherish of pardon and future  
 “ happiness depend, the resurrection of your  
 “ Saviour from the dead. Regard not these  
 “ unrighteous deceivers, who are come among  
 “ you, subverting your souls, ministers of  
 “ the prince of darkness transforming them-  
 “ selves into apostles of Christ : the chief  
 “ of whom, Hymeneus, I am constrained  
 “ to deliver unto Satan, I am compelled to  
 “ subject to the penal infliction of a mira-  
 “ culous and severe disease, that he may  
 “ learn not to blaspheme ; and that, being  
 “ thus driven by the punishment of the flesh  
 “ to a conviction of his guilt, his soul may per-  
 “ chance be saved in the day of the Lord (b).  
 “ *Christ is risen from the dead.* He rose on  
 “ the third day, according to the Scriptures.  
 “ God did not leave his soul in hell, in the  
 “ abode of separate spirits ; neither did He  
 “ suffer His Holy One to see corruption. And  
 “ *He is become the first fruits of them that slept.*

(b) 1 Cor. v. 5. 1 Tim. i. 20.

“ He is the first-born from the dead, that in  
“ all things He might have the pre-eminence.  
“ For it pleased the Father that in Him  
“ should all fulness dwell. As by the obla-  
“ tion of the first fruits, the divine blessing  
“ was drawn down upon the whole harvest ;  
“ so has Christ sanctified all the people of  
“ God, for whose sins He died, for whose  
“ justification He arose. If you believe that  
“ Jesus died and rose again ; believe that them  
“ also which sleep in Jesus will God bring  
“ with Him.”

By establishing the fact of the resurrection of Christ, the apostle had provided a conclusive answer to every objection which could be urged against the future resurrection of the dead, on whatever principle the objection might be founded. Was the resurrection of the dead pronounced impossible ? The reply was at hand. “ *Christ is risen.* The same  
“ power which raised Him is able to raise  
“ all men.” Was the resurrection described, in the language of profane despisers among the heathen, as an unworthy and undesirable hope ? The reply was ready. “ *Christ is*  
“ *risen.* Can that hope be unworthy ; can  
“ that hope be undesirable to men ; which,  
“ when the Son of God became man, was  
“ perfected in Him ?” Was the resurrection  
repre-

represented as an uncertain event? The Christian was prepared to answer, “ *Christ is risen; and is become the first fruits of them that slept.* He, who hath proved Himself to be the Son of God by rising from the dead, hath declared that all who are in the grave shall hear his voice and shall come forth.” So deeply however was St. Paul impressed with the importance of the subject, that he labours with extreme earnestness in the remainder of the chapter to confirm and illustrate the truth of the doctrine that all men shall be raised from the dead; and to explain the blessedness of the change, which shall then be experienced by the righteous.

*For since by man came death; by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die; even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Death came by man: in Adam all die. Adam, transgressing the divine command, by obedience to which he was to hold his happy state, was expelled from Paradise, lest by continuing to eat of the tree of life he should live for ever. Barred by the flaming sword of the cherubim from all access to its vivifying fruit, he was abandoned to his natural mortality. His mortal nature descended to his children: from them it has descended to us: from us it shall descend to the latest generation

neration of mankind. So death passed upon all men. By Adam's transgression every man has been subjected to the sentence, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* But God is a God of mercy. Where sin abounded, he decreed that grace should much more abound. He decreed that the ruin brought on the human race by the prince of evil spirits who animated the serpent, by Satan, the *father of lies*, who was thus a murderer from the beginning, should not be without hope and without end. He decreed that by a being of that very nature which the Devil had degraded and subdued; by a descendent, according to the flesh, from those miserable sinners, whom he now triumphantly led captive at his will; the loss of man should be regained, the great Enemy should in his turn be vanquished and hurled into perdition. He decreed, that the *seed of the woman* should *bruise the serpent's head.* He decreed, that, as by man came death, by man should also come the resurrection of the dead: that *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Christ undertook the office of mercy and reconciliation. He undertook, though without sin, to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh; to lay down his life on the cross, there to accomplish by his meritorious sufferings

an atonement sufficient for the sins of the whole world; there openly to triumph over the principalities and powers of darkness; there to destroy the empire of Satan, and to set free the prisoners of the tomb. *I will ransom them, he cried, from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death. O death! I will be thy plague. O grave! I will be thy destruction* (c). Was the dominion acquired through Adam by death universal? So also is the redemption from death purchased by Jesus Christ. *There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. The dead, small and great, shall stand before God. All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation* (d).

*But every man in his own order. Christ, the first fruits: afterwards, they that are Christ's, at his coming.*

The apostle, having evinced, in the preceding verses, the universality of the resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, is solicitous to win the hearts no less than the understandings of the Corinthians to a wil-

(c) Hof. xiii. 14.  
John, v. 25, 28, 29.

(d) Acts, xxiv. 15. Rev. xx. 12.



ling acceptance of the doctrine of a future life. Hence, throughout the subsequent part of the chapter he directs their attention almost exclusively to circumstances, which pertain to the resurrection of the just. Christ had already fulfilled the prophecies, which had declared that He should be the first who should rise from the dead. He had ascended into Heaven, and had entered into His glory. He had already presented himself before the throne of God as the intercessor, the forerunner, and the representative, of his saints. In their due time, and in their appointed order, he will receive them from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, into the kingdom prepared for them, through his covenanted atonement, from the foundation of the world. When the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; the dead in Christ shall rise first. And then shall the righteous who remain alive at that awful hour be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall they all be for ever with the Lord (e).

*Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Fa-*

(e) 1 Theff. iv. 15-17.

*ther: when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death: for He hath put all things under his feet. But when He saith, all things are put under Him; it is manifest that he is accepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him; then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

Because He, who was the Son of God, vouchsafed to become the Son of man; because He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He who in the beginning was with God and was God, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: therefore God hath highly exalted Him. As a partaker of the everlasting Godhead, our Saviour could not be exalted. But in His assumed nature as man, in His character as Mediator, He was capable of being exalted and glorified. *Thy throne, O God, saith the Father unto the Son, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God,*

*hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (f).* “ O Thou who art a partaker of the sovereign and eternal God-head ; Thou who, when Thou shalt become incarnate in human nature, shalt completely fulfil my righteous law by the Spirit which shall be poured upon Thee without measure : as Man shalt Thou be raised unto glory foreign and unknown to the nature which Thou shalt have assumed, unto a throne of everlasting righteousness.” To Christ, as man, hath His Almighty Father given a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He hath set Christ, as man, at His own right hand in Heaven, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come : and hath put all things, Himself excepted, under His feet. All power is given unto Christ in Heaven and in earth. And He must reign, His separate and mediatorial kingdom must continue, until He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power,

(f) Hebr. i. 5. 8, 9.

until He shall have subdued all things unto Himself: until after having extended the dominion of His church over the whole earth, after having crushed with the rod of his vengeance all His adversaries, whether rebellious men or revolted angels, He shall complete the glories and evince the everlasting durability of His triumph by the perpetual destruction of death. That last enemy of man, that latest antagonist of our Redeemer, shall assuredly be destroyed for ever: for God hath put all things, even death himself, under the feet of His Son. *For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. For Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham, He also Himself took part of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (g).* Christ shall enthrone His righteous servants in an inheritance of everlasting happiness, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; where death cometh no more, for they shall die no more, but are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Then, when He shall thus have accomplished His warfare, thus effectually

(g) Hebr. ii. 8. 14. 16.

ally attained and established for ever the purposes of mercy for which He took human nature upon Him; He shall deliver up the kingdom to His Father. He shall resign His mediatorial kingdom, that separate and delegated sovereignty of the universe which He had held in a character now no longer necessary, to the Father from whom He had received it: that the eternal Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may thenceforth be all in all.

Such are the sublime and stupendous views which the word of God displays of the universal empire of the Son of God, who died for us upon the cross. Head over all things to His church, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him: He is indeed able to save to the uttermost all that come by Him unto God. He who is Lord of earth and Heaven vouchsafes to call His people by the endearing name of brethren. He knoweth whereof we are made; He remembereth that we are but dust: for in every thing, except sin, He was made like unto His brethren. We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities: for He was in all points tempted like as we are; and having Himself suffered, being tempted, He is able

to succour them that are tempted. In the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save, and He was heard: and His ears are ever open to the prayers of His servants, His arm is ever stretched forth in defence of the heirs of salvation. Look up then to Christ, ye who, though deeply conscious of your sins, are humbly labouring through the sanctification of His Spirit to serve Him in faith and holiness; look up to your glorified King with confidence and joy. From His throne in the heaven of heavens He is beholding you for good. By night and by day He watches over you; shields you from evil, supports you under trials, delivers you from temptation. Fly to Him for continual protection: plead with Him for never-failing grace. Depend with unshaken reliance on His promise, on His power, on His wisdom, on His love. He who spared not His own life for you, shall He not give you all things? *All things are yours: whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all things are yours: all things are ordained and controuled and directed for your happiness, because ye are Christ's (b).* But tremble, ye unrepenting

(b) 1 Cor. iii. 21. 23.

sinners,

sinners, ye who despise and disobey the gospel: tremble to behold that Saviour whom ye reject exalted to the dominion of the universe. By your perseverance in transgression you constrain Him to be your enemy. You range yourselves in battle array against your Judge: you turn a deaf ear to His offers of forgiveness: you pluck down death and misery everlasting with your own hands upon yourselves. What is your confidence? Do you provoke the Almighty to anger? Are you stronger than He? Those whom His love cannot reclaim His indignation shall overwhelm. Jesus, the Lamb of God, sacrificed for your sins, you despise. Behold Jesus the Son of God, Himself one with the Father, seated on His Father's throne. Behold the dawning of the great day. *Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him! Behold the day when the sun shall become black as sack-cloth, and the moon as blood: when the stars shall fall from heaven, and the heaven shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places: when all the enemies of Christ, kings of the earth, and great men and rich men, and chief captains, and mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman, shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of*

*the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand (i)?* Listen even yet to the voice of mercy. Bend the stubborn knee, bow down the hardened heart. He still waits to be gracious. But the season of trial will have an end. His Spirit will not always strive with man. Your time of trial may be expiring. Humble yourself before Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth: trust in His atoning blood: pray without ceasing for His grace: and save yourselves, while yet you may, from *the resurrection of damnation.*

(i) Rev. i. 7. vi. 12—17.



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## S E R M O N    X I X .

An Exposition of the second Part of the Lesson appointed for the Burial Service.

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I C O R . X V . 2 0 .

*Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

**I**N the preceding discourse I laid before you the substance of St. Paul's arguments in the earlier part of the chapter under our consideration ; together with such reflections tending to your edification and your comfort as appeared naturally to flow from the subject. The apostle had earnestly insisted on the truth of the resurrection of Christ as the groundwork of Christian faith, and the pledge of the future resurrection of all men at their appointed time and in their proper order. He had reminded the Corinthians of the leading feature

feature in the divine plan of redemption ; that the great Deliverer who should provide the means of restoration for fallen man should himself be man : that the victorious enemy of the human race should be despoiled of his sovereignty, should be cast into everlasting perdition, by a Being who should manifest Himself in the flesh, who should be clothed in that nature, which the tempter by his triumph over our first parents had corrupted and enslaved. He had enlarged on the import, the extent, and the duration, of the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord : and had marked with particular energy that complete demonstration of the Redeemer's universal power, that source of inexpressible consolation and inextinguishable happiness to His servants, the total destruction of death. He proceeds unto the conclusion of the chapter still to press these awakening truths on the Christians to whom he addressed his epistle ; and by that epistle, *being dead, he yet speaketh* to us, and shall continue to speak the words of salvation to the extremities of the earth, until his Lord shall return in the clouds to call the living and the dead to judgement. He confirms the doctrine of the resurrection by additional reasonings ; and vindicates it from the cavils of objectors by perspi-

perspicuous and familiar illustrations. He enters at considerable length into the nature of the change, which shall be experienced by the glorified bodies of just men made perfect: suddenly breaks forth into a triumphant strain of gratitude to God, who giveth us through our Lord Jesus Christ the victory over our last enemy armed with the mortal dart of sin and strong in the penal sanctions of the violated law: and closes the subject with a short but impressive and animated exhortation to that stedfastness, that joyful patience in faith and holiness, to which, by the promise and through the blood of Christ, the reward of everlasting happiness is ensured.

These, my brethren, are the lessons which I would attempt to unfold for your encouragement in your pilgrimage through an evil world, in your passage through the valley of the shadow of death.

*Else what shall they do, which are baptised for the dead; if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus: what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die!*

In the nineteenth verse St. Paul had already affirmed concerning himself, and the other apostles and preachers of the gospel: *If in this life only we have hope in Christ; we are of all men most miserable.* Most truly might he make this declaration. What was their situation as you find it represented in the Acts of the Apostles, and incidentally described in the Epistles of St. Paul and of the other sacred writers? One continued scene of toil, sorrow, anxiety, danger, and persecution. Chased from region to region, odious alike to the Jews and to the Romans, *in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness (a),* and under perpetual hazard of a violent and torturing death; if they were not justified in looking forward through Christ to a future recompence, they were indeed the most miserable of mankind. If then they knowingly and willingly exposed themselves to uninterrupted dangers and sufferings by preaching the resurrection of their crucified Master; by preaching a gospel depending on the truth of His re-

(a) 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. xi. 26; 27.

urrection,

urrection, and announcing the future resurrection of all men: what was the necessary conclusion? That they knew whom they had believed; that they knew that Jesus Christ had arisen, that all men should rise, that the gospel was true. To this argument St. Paul now recurs. What consideration, he enquires, except a firm conviction that there remaineth beyond the grave a hope for the righteous, could induce men to encounter a certain prospect of wretchedness in the present life, and to be baptised for the dead: to be baptised into a religion established on the doctrine of the resurrection; or, as this difficult expression is not unfrequently interpreted, to be baptised in the place of those who are dead; to take upon themselves the Christian profession which had proved before their eyes the cause of destruction to numbers, and eagerly to offer themselves to fill up those vacancies which martyrdom had occasioned in the ranks of the soldiers of Christ? What other consideration, he demands, could persuade us, the apostles, to stand in jeopardy, cheerfully to expose our lives to extreme danger every hour? To strengthen his reasoning, St. Paul appeals to his own sufferings, to his own perils. On another occasion we find him applying to himself and his associates the prophetical expressions

sions of the Psalmist : *For thy sake are we killed all the day long ; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter* (b). And now he solemnly records his protestation, that he was in daily hazard of death for preaching the gospel. And he refers to a special instance of persecution, well known to the Corinthians, which had overtaken him in Asia, and is detailed in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts ; and is again mentioned by St. Paul in his second Epistle to the Corinthians (c), as a danger in which he was pressed out of measure, above his strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life, regarded the sentence of death as about to be executed upon him, and had no hope remaining except the sure and never-failing confidence that God would raise the dead. *If, saith he, after the manner of men, to adopt a proverbial form of expression in ordinary use among you, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus : if I have dared the ungovernable fury of a frantic multitude, outrageous and cruel as savage beasts : What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not ? What possible benefit could I derive from all the labours and afflictions, which I bring upon myself by preaching Christianity ; by what possible inducement could I be impelled to incur them ;*

(b) Rom. viii. 36.

(c) 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

if there were no resurrection? If after this short scene of existence, there were no future life; we, the apostles of Christ, should employ our personal exertions, we should recommend it as the only rational object of the exertions of others, to make the most of the present state of being. We should not exhort you to set your affections on things above, to be crucified unto the world, to be dead unto its pleasures. Our language would be the language prevalent in the mouths of your unbelieving and sensual philosophers. *Let us eat and drink, we should say; for to-morrow we die.* Life is short; life is uncertain. Seize every gratification of the passing hour. Lose not present enjoyment in the hope of future bliss: for beyond the tomb no futurity remains.

But *be not deceived*, the apostle continues: *evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.* He admonishes the Corinthians to rouse themselves from their spiritual lethargy, to be ever upon their guard against the deceitful influence, the ensnaring society, and the corrupting conversation of their false teachers, who maintained that there was no judgement nor life to come. He excites them to a vigilant self-examination, to an unshaken ad-

herence

herence unto sound doctrine, to an abhorrence of unscriptural principles, and of sin, to which unscriptural principles necessarily conduct. He reproveth them for that want of *the knowledge of God*, that shameful deficiency in religious information and attainments, to which alone could be ascribed their endurance for a moment of a doctrine subversive of the very foundations of Christianity. The reproof, as St. Paul well remarked to the Corinthians, was to their *shame*. My brethren, if we remain ignorant of any of the great doctrines of our religion; it is to our shame. The Scriptures and the house of God are open to every one of us. Whatever is requisite to salvation is placed before the humble enquirer distinctly, and within his reach. The nature of God; the corruption of man; the office of our Redeemer; the unceasing necessity of divine grace; the imperfection and the attendant sinfulness of all human works; the consequent impossibility of pardon and salvation except through faith in the atoning blood of Christ; the indispensable obligation to steadfast holiness and good works as the sure fruits and only evidences of justifying faith; the certainty of a future judgement, of a resurrection of life or of damnation: these are truths so plainly, so energetically stated



stated in that volume which, if we sincerely love God through Christ, will be our constant study, that, if we continue ignorant of them, we shall deservedly be covered with confusion, we shall awake from the dust of the earth to shame and everlasting contempt.

The apostle, in the next place, exposes the absurdity of those cavils against the possibility of the resurrection of the body from its dust, which by the unconverted heathen were frequently brought forward. *But some man will say; How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?* The folly of this objection St. Paul manifests by directing the thoughts of the person represented as urging it to a similar example of the power of God displayed before the eyes of all men every day: an example which our Saviour had already applied to illustrate a parallel truth (d). *Thou fool! That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.* O blind and proud self-deceiver! Why should it be thought a thing impossible with thee that God should raise the dead? In every seed which thou sowest a change is wrought of the same nature with that transformation, which shall take place in the resurrection of the human body. The corruption and decay of the original seed are necessary to

(d) John, xii. 24.

the developement of the future plant. In *that which thou sowest*, in every seed which thou committest to the earth, *thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him; and to every seed its own body.* Thou sowest a naked lifeless seed wholly different in outward appearance, in organization, in sensible qualities, from the living herb, which by experience thou knowest shall spring from its dissolution. But God bestoweth on it a new body, provided for it by Him conformably to its kind: He raiseth it up into a beautiful plant furnished with powers and endowed with properties suited to the new and more noble state of existence, which He appoints it to fill. The hand which, from a buried and perishing grain of wheat can raise up the blade and the ear; can call forth from the dust into which man's mortal body is dissolved a frame fit to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. Do you require additional arguments and illustrations? God has abundantly supplied them. He has already written them in His works. He has already manifested Himself able to create bodies of flesh severally differing according to their generic distinctions; and bodies of other natures, varying each from the other in glory.

*All*

*All flesh is not the same flesh : for there is one kind of flesh of men ; another flesh of beasts ; another of fishes ; and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial. But the glory of the celestial is one ; and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun ; and another glory of the moon ; and another glory of the stars : for one star differeth from another star in glory. He who has moulded the dust of the earth into bodies of flesh diversified in their natures according to the wide diversity which subsists between the different families of the animal world : He who has bestowed on the inanimate workmanship of his hands, on the orbs which roll through unbounded space, degrees of radiance so various as those by which the earth, the moon, the sun, and the innumerable stars of heaven are respectively distinguished : He is able to revive under another form the decayed flesh of man, and for ever to crown it with glory, which it was incapable of sustaining before. Is not this representation true ? Is it not pertinent ? Even so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body. Such*

shall be the majesty of the righteous, when they shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father: such the glorious change experienced by their natural bodies, when they are transformed by the Lord Jesus into bodies spiritual like His own. For as *there is now a natural body*; so *there is also a spiritual body*, in reserve for the children of God. *And so it is written: the first man, Adam*, when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (e), *was a made a living soul*. But *the last Adam* not only became, like the first man, a living soul: but by his own proper power He possessed life in himself; and He was able also to bestow life on others according to His pleasure. He *was a quickening Spirit*. For as *the Father hath life in himself*; so *hath He given to the Son to have life in himself*. As *the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them*; even so *the Son quickeneth whom He will*. And *all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth* (f). As every descendent of Adam has by inheritance received a natural body similar to that of his first parent; so shall every true believer in Christ Jesus receive at the last day by the quickening power of His Redeemer a body spiritualised and glorified like to that of the human nature glorified in

(e) Gen. ii. 7.

(f) John, v. 1. 26. 28, 29.

the person of the Son of God. *Howbeit* for this his heavenly transfiguration he must wait in patient hope, until his earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved. *That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural: and afterward, that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.* Adam, our first parent, was formed from the dust of the ground; mortal in his nature, and even in paradise preserved from decay only by the fruit of the tree of life. But the second man Christ Jesus was *God manifested in the flesh*: the Son of God, by nature a partaker of the Godhead: but for our sakes and for our salvation veiled for a season in a human body, a body first to be subjected to death, then exalted into heaven, incorruptible and immortal. *As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy; we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* For his appointed season the child of corruption must bear the body of corruption. Earth must return to earth before it can be clothed with life eternal. But if, while thou art in this tabernacle, thou art renewed in the Spirit of thy mind after the image of the Lord from heaven;

when Christ, who is thy Lord and thy life, shall appear, then shalt thou also appear with Him in glory. *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* Our bodies, if continued in a state of impure and perishable flesh and blood, would be unfit for the habitations of the blessed, unqualified for the glories of eternity. *Behold! I shew you a mystery.* I would explain to you through the inspiration of the Spirit of truth the secrets of the world to come, which God alone can reveal. *We shall not all sleep in the grave; but we shall all be changed:* all the generations of men who shall have been deposited in the tomb; and every individual of that concluding generation which Christ, when he cometh to judgement shall find alive; all shall be changed *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.* *For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; and we shall be changed.* *For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality.* *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality;* when purified for ever from all pollution, disentangled and refined from the seeds of weakness and decay, the glorified frame shall be re-united to the  
immortal

immortal Spirit : then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory* ; then shall be fully accomplished in its noblest import the prophetic declaration of Isaiah : *The Lord God shall swallow up death in victory ; and shall wipe away tears from off all faces : for the Lord hath spoken it* (g). Then shall the redeemed of the Lord exclaim in the triumphant rapture of the apostle ; *O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ?* In that day shall they take up, and apply to themselves, the song of exultation prepared for them by the prophet in the words immediately following that promise, which is now fulfilled in their resurrection to everlasting life : *Lo ! this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us ! This is the Lord : we have waited for Him ; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation !* From the contemplation of the glories of the world to come, St. Paul as it were for a moment returns to earth, that he may impress on our hearts a deep conviction of the situation with respect to futurity, in which every man, as an inheritor of the mortal and corrupt nature of Adam, and as a sinner against God by wilful transgression, is placed ; of the situation in which all men would have

(g) Isaiah, xxv. 8.

remained without hope of deliverance, had not Christ redeemed them by His blood. *The sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law.* It is sin which caused death: it is sin which maketh death terrible. By sin death entered into the world: by sin the bed of the dying man is shaken with agony, with pangs of body and horrors of conscience: by sin the dungeons of never-ending punishment were founded; by sin the bottomless pit was unsealed for the perdition of the guilty and unregenerate soul. And the strength of sin is the law. *Sin is the transgression of the law: and the wages of sin is death (b).* The perfect holiness of that law of God which sin persuades men to transgress is the very weapon from which he derives his strength, his power of working destruction. The law of God demands perfect obedience. The penalty for every instance of disobedience is eternal death. Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them (i). Sin prevails on every man to break the law: and then with triumphant malignity inflicts the penalty upon him, and plunges him into death eternal. *O wretched man that I am!* cried St. Paul, pouring forth on another occasion the

(b) 1 John, iii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. (i) Gal. iii. 10.



convictions of his soul; *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (k).* Here is deliverance: here is conquest and life and blessedness for ever and ever. *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!* Thanks be to God that the seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head! Christ hath rescued us from the power of the grave: Christ hath delivered us from the wrath to come. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Christ hath tasted death for all men; and hath made His soul an offering for sin; a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Christ hath destroyed the last enemy. Christ hath prepared from the creation of the world a kingdom for His saints, a kingdom of righteousness where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: where they shall see their Lord face to face, and be like unto Him, and reign with Him in bliss unchangeable for ever and ever.

Was it then to indulge curiosity, was it to gratify the mind with sublime description, that the apostle had thus unfolded the everlasting triumph of the Son of God, and the

(k) Rom. vii. 24, 25.

everlasting triumph of the righteous through Him? St. Paul had a nobler purpose; that purpose which was the object of his heart in all his writings, in all his labours; to promote the glory of God by guiding and animating man to holiness and salvation through faith in the blood of Christ. Hear the concluding lesson, the great practical exhortation, which, as the consequence and the sum of his instructions in this chapter, he addressed to the Corinthians and now addresseth to ourselves. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* If then, my beloved brethren, whose eternal welfare ought to be my fervent desire, my unceasing prayer, my persevering and earnest pursuit; if these things be sure, be ye stedfast, unmoveable. Shew yourselves the true servants and soldiers of your Lord. Continue unshaken in His faith. Hold fast the words of sound doctrine. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit. Avoid profane and vain babblings; and oppositions of science falsely so called* (1), presumptuous disputes raised on the groundwork of senseless speculation and conjecture, against truths which rest on the promise, and are secured

(1) Col. ii. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 20.

by the omnipotence, of God. Continue steadfast under temptations to sin. *Resist the Devil; and he will flee from you.* Call for succour to your Redeemer, whom Satan tempted in vain; your Redeemer, who has openly triumphed on the cross over all the powers and principalities of darkness; your Redeemer, who has promised that His grace shall be sufficient for you, that He will save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. Continue patient and undismayed under sufferings. Look unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of your salvation; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Be ye always abounding in the work of the Lord. The work of the Lord is faith unfeigned. *This is the work of God: that ye believe on Him, whom He hath sent (m).* The work of the Lord is to do the will of God; to be holy, as He is holy. The work of the Lord is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; to labour for the salvation of your own soul, and that of the souls of others. In every branch of this blessed work abound more and more. Strive, through the Holy Spirit, to *grow in grace*, to be a

(m) John, vi. 29.

progressive example of piety. Shew yourself Christian in thought, in word, and in deed. Labour with increasing earnestness to win others to the love of Christ and the care of their eternal interests by prudent instruction and exhortation, where you may be allowed to instruct and exhort: and at all times, and in all places, by adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, by giving unaffected proof that your heart is steadily governed by Christian motives, and filled with Christian tempers. You know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. You know that there is a reward for the righteous: that your ascended Lord will return to receive His saints unto Himself: that while the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God, all who do not make it their leading object faithfully to love and serve their God and Redeemer; the just shall be exalted to the presence of Father of mercies, where there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore. Press forward then towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; that you may be admitted to the Resurrection of eternal Life.

Would you feel the awful import of that resurrection? Realise things unseen. Suppose yourself an unconverted sinner, recently separated

parated from the body, just arrived on the confines of the invisible world. Suppose yourself addressed by one of its glorified inhabitants. “ Behold these abodes of bliss : “ these ineffable manifestations of divine “ power and wisdom and love : these worlds “ beyond worlds diversified with countless “ modes of existence, filling infinity and eter- “ nity. Behold these innumerable hosts of “ angels. Behold these thy brethren ac- “ cording to the flesh, the justified children “ of thy father Adam, patriarchs, prophets, “ and apostles, saints of every tongue and “ people, and nation ! Lo ! There is Christ, “ the Redeemer of all, King in thy nature of “ the universe ! Lo ! There is the throne of “ God ! These, hadst thou accepted the offer- “ ed mercy, these had been thy glories ! To “ search out these wonders, to share this bleff- “ edness, that had been thy employment, “ that thy bliss, for ever ! This is the Re- “ surrection of life which thou hast lost. “ Thou standest”—for let penal torture be for a moment supposed not to impend—“ Thou “ standest on the brink of annihilation. Snatch “ thy last glance. The blackness of eternal “ night is about to close thee in everlasting “ oblivion.” What would be thy sensations ? How truly wouldst thou estimate life and all

its events ! With what longing regret wouldst thou look back upon the very miseries of mankind ! With what fervency wouldst thou implore for a renewal, were it possible, of probation ! “ Return me,” thou wouldst exclaim, “ to earth ! Weigh me down with  
 “ sickness ! Fetter me in dungeons ! Encom-  
 “ pass me with sorrow from the cradle to the  
 “ grave ! I shrink from no evil ! I decline  
 “ no suffering ! Return me to earth, what-  
 “ ever anguish may await me there, that  
 “ through the riches of grace I may possess even  
 “ but a possibility of attaining to the humblest  
 “ of these glories ; of beholding though from  
 “ the remotest distance the countenance of  
 “ my Redeemer ; of contemplating from the  
 “ farthest corner and verge of the universe  
 “ the presence and majesty of my God !”  
 The dream of annihilation is dissipated. Thy existence is irrevocably prolonged to eternity. What then are thy groanings, what thine agonies, when thou beholdest the throne of judgement, the book of condemnation, the ministers of vengeance, the gulf of everlasting perdition, the prison of unregenerate men and apostate spirits, the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth of the assembled enemies of Jehovah !

But

But fear not thou who art stedfast and immoveable, abounding in the work of thy Lord. Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. In thine appointed hour thou shalt rise also. He died to atone for thee : He arose to justify thee : He ascended into Heaven to prepare a place for thee : He sat down on the throne of majesty on high to be Head over all things for thy salvation. Look up to Him and persevere. Thy labour shall not be in vain. Well done, good and faithful servant ! Thou shalt enter into the joy of thy Lord !

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## SERMON XX.

On the Happiness attendant on the Paths of  
Religion.

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PROV. iii. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness; and all  
her Paths are Peace.*

AMONG the internal demonstrations of the truth of Christianity, the excellence of the appropriate lessons respectively addressed in the sacred writings to different descriptions of men holds a distinguished place. To the wicked the Scripture speaks the language of indignation, tempered with offers of mercy. To the penitent it promises forgiveness. To the righteous it animates with triumphant hope. To the ignorant, it holds forth instruction; to the unwary, caution; to



to the presumptuous, humility ; to the feeble-minded, support ; to the wavering, perseverance ; to the dispirited, encouragement ; to the afflicted, consolation. Who but that Power, who discerns every variety of the human disposition, every winding of the human heart ; could have been the author of a religion thus provided with a remedy for every corruption, a defence under every weakness ? Who but that Power, whose love to fallen man was so immeasurably great, that He gave His own Son to die for all mankind upon the cross ; to die that all who believe on Him might be redeemed from the penalty of guilt, and might attain everlasting life : who but that Father of mercies and God of all comfort would have so graciously directed by the superintendence of His Spirit the sacred writers of the Bible, that no individual of the human race, to whom His revealed word shall be faithfully made known, can perish for want of knowledge ; nor can fail of discovering as the reward of humble and diligent and devout enquiry the doctrine, the admonition, the reproof, the exhortation, the promise, or the counsel, precisely adapted to the situation in which he stands ?

The passage of Scripture, which we now have before us, breathes the voice of the most

cheering encouragement. In several of the preceding verses Solomon had drawn a description of religion under the appellation of wisdom. Religion is the only true wisdom: and sin is the most flagrant kind of folly. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding.* To the cultivation of that true wisdom the wise king invites his son by the assurance that all things which can be desired are not to be compared unto her; that she is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. The invitation, and the motives on which it is grounded, belong to us, even to all men. To the paths of religion every man is called. And the solemn declaration, that they are ways of pleasantness and peace, is at once an exhortation to the wicked, to fly to those tracks in which blessedness resides; and to the righteous, to persevere in those courses, in which they have already found rest to their souls.

I propose in the first place to evince the truth of this declaration; and afterwards to apply it for the instruction and improvement of those, who have not yet chosen the ways of religion, and of those who are walking in her paths.

I. The religious man is delivered, and delivered by religion, from those causes of solicitude, terror, and affliction; which are the principal sources of the miseries of mankind. And he experiences helps and consolations, to which, in proportion as men are not religious, they are strangers:

These important truths will appear manifest, if unfolded by a consideration in detail of some of the anxieties and fears, which religion, and religion only, removes: and of the corresponding assistances and comforts, which religion, and religion only, bestows.

1. The most grievous of all the distresses which weigh down the heart of man, is the sense of unpardoned guilt. The most terrible of all the apprehensions which shake the soul, is the dread of the vengeance of an offended God. From this distress, from this apprehension, the religious man is set free. He looks up to God, through Christ, as to a reconciled Father. *Being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus* (a). He no longer feels the intolerable recollection of former sins depressing him into anguish and despair: but in the very moments when he looks back upon them with the profoundest

(a) Rom. v. 1.

self-abasement, he beholds them washed away by the blood of *the Lamb of God*, who was sacrificed for the transgressions of the whole world. In that sacrifice he has learned that he has himself an interest: in that sacrifice he finds pardon and peace. He is no longer *alienated from God*, at enmity with the almighty Sovereign of earth and heaven. He contemplates his Creator with filial affection; delights in his holiness; loves his commandments. He hears as addressed to himself the voice of God speaking in His revealed word: *Thy sins and thine iniquities I remember no more. I will be to thee a Father; and thou shalt be to me a Son. Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee a crown of life* (b). The burthen is removed from his soul; and he goeth on his way rejoicing. He feels springing up within his breast the genuine consolations of the gospel. He feels that *the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace*. He is *filled with all joy and peace in believing* (c). Every token of grateful obedience which he is enabled to render to his Redeemer, overspreads his heart with gladness. Every devout aspiration which he directs to the throne of grace, diffuses holy peace over his soul. He is a subject of *the*

(b) Hebr. viii. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 18. Rev. ii. 10.

(c) Gal. v. 22. Rom. xv. 13.

*Prince of peace*, an heir of God through Christ, reconciled unto the Father by the blood of the Son. As he advances in religion, he advances in happiness. He turns his eye backward on the days, when he was comparatively unacquainted with religion; and exclaims in the language of holy writ; *I had heard of her by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth her (d). Her ways are ways of pleasantness: and all her paths are peace.*

2. The religious man is delivered from immoderate fear of falling away from God under future temptations. He knows that even unto the bed of death his faith and his obedience will be exercised by temptation. He knows his own weakness, his own corruption. He knows that, if he holds not fast that which he hath, another shall take his crown. He knows that, if he abandons his Saviour, his name shall be blotted out of the book of life (e). He knows, for his God hath pronounced the warning, that he is to *pass the time of his sojourning here in fear; that happy is the man that feareth always (f)*. He fears for himself. But his fear is not an overwhelming terror. It is a fear which excludes

(d) Job, xlii. 5.

(e) Rev. iii. 5. 11.

(f) 1 Pet i. 17.

PROV. xxviii. 14.

all dependence on his own strength. It is a fear which produces humility, caution, vigilance, meditation, and prayer. But it is not a fear which brings anguish: it is not a fear which urges to despondence. Why? Because he looks up to Him who is mighty to save; to Him who has promised to save all who fly to Him for succour. He looks to the Lord his Sanctifier; to the covenanted assistance of the Spirit of God. That he may obtain support from above; he neglects not the exertions, which the Scripture, his unerring rule, pronounces to be necessary on his part. While he prays that God would not lead him into temptation; he abstains from needlessly plunging himself into scenes of trial. While he solicits from the bounty of God the *true riches*; he neglects not the *talent* with which he is entrusted. He is circumspect, watchful, sober-minded. He considers his ways, that he may turn aside his foot from evil. He is zealous to employ to the uttermost the strength which he has received in promoting the glory of the Giver. Hence he applies with devout confidence to Him, who has engaged to bestow His Holy Spirit on all that ask Him. He lifts up his heart to God in the inspired language of the Psalmist: *Lord! I am thy servant: forsake*

not the work of thine own hand. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation! Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation: and uphold me with Thy free Spirit (g). In the words of inspiration he reads the answer of his God. My grace is sufficient for thee. I am with thee always. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Because thou fearest me, I have hearkened and heard it: and thou shalt be mine; and I will spare thee as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Thou therefore, My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (h).

3. The religious man is delivered from corroding anxieties as to the events which may befall him during the residue of his life. He has set his affections on things above, not on things on the earth. His treasure is in heaven: and there also is his heart. Having food and raiment, he is therewith content. On earth he is but a sojourner and a pilgrim: and he perceives that it needs not to be an object of serious concern whether the road along which he travels be somewhat more or less smooth, whether he meets with somewhat more or fewer accommodations on his

(g) Psalm xxvii. 9 li. 11, 12. cxxxviii. 8.

(h) 2 Cor. xii. 9. Matth. xxviii. 20. Hebr. xiii. 5. Mal. iii. 16, 17. 2 Tim. ii. 1.

journey. He shall soon reach the end, his everlasting home, his everlasting rest. To that home, to that rest, he steadily looks forward: and repines not at the difficulties of the way. And why should he repine? What if he be overtaken by calamity? What if he be laid on the bed of sickness? Cannot Omnipotence remove calamity? Cannot Omnipotence restore health? *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to shew himself strong in behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards Him (i)*. But what if his affliction be continued? Knoweth he not that all things shall work together for good in the end to them who love God? He feels that he can humbly say with Peter; *Lord! Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee*. He feels that he loves God, and is comforted. But what if he should experience, the severest, the least retrievable, of worldly deprivations; the loss of dear and pious friends? Has God provided no balm for that wound? Cannot God provide for him other friends, who, in some measure, if not entirely, may fill the void in his heart which death has made? And the pious friends whom he has lost, has he lost them for ever? He has lost them but for a moment. They are but gone a little before him.

(i) 2 Chron. xvi. 9.



They are waiting to welcome his arrival in the kingdom of their Redeemer, where they shall meet in bliss unspeakable, never to part again. In the most trying hour, under dispensations the most afflictive, he remembers, and he experiences, the consoling influence of the Spirit of God. He finds Him to be, what He was announced to be, the true *Comforter*. From that Spirit he receives unfailing supplies of supporting and strengthening grace. The fruits of that Spirit he still finds to be *joy and peace*. He hears the words of his Saviour; *Let not your heart be troubled*: and reposes with unclouded serenity on His love. His patient endurance becomes thankful acquiescence: and his holy calmness is at times exalted to *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*.

4. The religious man is delivered from the fear of the last enemy, Death. *Through fear of Death* ungodly men are all their lifetime *subject to bondage* (j). From this thralldom, thralldom which renders life itself a burthen, the servant of God has been rescued. His fetters are broken. Before him Death stands disarmed of his terrors. What though the approach of Death excites tender solicitude for those whom the dying man leaves behind? He knows that the Power, who has protected

(j) Heb. ii. 15.

him, is able also to protect them. He listens to the promise of the Lord : *Leave thy fatherless children ; I will preserve them alive : and let thy widow trust in Me* (k). He listens ; and anxiety is at an end. What though the approach of Death be accompanied with temporary alarms at the prospect of standing before his Maker ? The heart of the Christian is soon re-established. He remembers that he is to stand before his Maker, not in his own righteousness, but justified through the righteousness of his Redeemer. He knows that he shall be *complete in Christ* ; that he shall thus be *without fault before the throne of God* (l). Sin, the sting of Death, is taken away. The gloom which overhangs the valley of the shadow of Death becomes the twilight of an eternal morning. The grave is the gate of heaven. The moment which extinguishes mortal existence is the commencement of everlasting life. He longs to bid adieu to pain and sorrow : he longs to be united to the glorified spirits of the just whom he loved on earth, to join the innumerable company of saints and angels ; to behold his Redeemer face to face ; to be blessed in the presence of his God. It is thus that the righteous fall asleep.

(l) Jer. xlix. 11.

(k) Col. ii. 10. Rev. xiv. 5.

5. There yet remain various circumstances, which attend the religious man in the ordinary course of his life, and contribute no small accessions to the daily amount of his happiness. By the integrity and the kindness of his conduct, for integrity and kindness are among the genuine fruits of true religion; he is on many occasions placed beyond the reach of those who may be desirous of injuring him. *Who is he that will harm you; who is he that under common events will be able to bring you into trouble; if ye be followers of that which is good?* In domestic life has not the religious man, and he alone, grounds for expecting permanent harmony and affection? Will not his friends, selected from among those who love their God, be found tender and faithful? Will not his intercourse with them be equally a source of improvement and of delight? Will not the general temper of his mind be cheerful serenity? Free from the dominion of ambition, of avarice, of anger, and of other disorderly passions, he descends quietly and contentedly along the stream of life; little molested by many of the usual causes of uneasiness, and at a distance from many of the ordinary occasions of danger. From the common bounties of Providence he derives higher satisfaction

tion than other men. And he has continual experience of blessings, which the wicked neither relish nor perceive. The interchange of day and night, the vicissitudes of revolving seasons, return to him with renovated joy. They present to his view the Author of all things, the Supreme Object of his gratitude and love. The contemplation of the works of God, meditation on the wonders of redemption, recollection of past mercies, devout anticipations of future glory : these are subjects which occupy and expand his heart, and cause it to overflow with that peace of God, which passeth human understanding. *Great peace have they who love Thy law, O Lord. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee ; because he trusteth in Thee. Godliness has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come (m). The ways of religion are ways of pleasantness ; and all her paths are peace.*

II. I proceed to apply the instruction, which may be drawn from the text, to persons of three different descriptions.

I. I would first address those who are decidedly wicked.

(m) Psalm cxix. 165. Isaiah, xxvi. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

If the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness and peace; the opposite paths of ungodliness must be paths of misery. What saith the Scripture? *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked* (n). Do you doubt the truth of this declaration of the Omniscient? Consider the unrighteous. Do such men appear to you to be happy? Are the tempers of their minds, are their views, their plans, their secret reflections, such as are likely to give birth to inward tranquillity and comfort? If they seem to enjoy peace, is it not the tranquillity of folly, the security of ignorance, the stupor of unconcern, the deadness of a conscience past feeling, the judicial infatuation of a reprobate mind? Is it not the peace of a mariner who knows not that a plank has started in the bottom of his vessel? Is it not the peace of a traveller who thinks not that the bridge on which he crosses the gulf is about to sink from beneath his feet? Is it not the peace of a criminal, who foresees not that the hand of justice waits but for the close of day to arrest him in his bed, to hurry him to trial and execution? Is the conduct of the wicked such as is adapted to

(n) Isaiah, lvii. 20, 21.

produce happiness to themselves? Does their wickedness render their families happy? Does it recommend them to you as confidential associates, as desirable friends? If you wish for additional information, appeal to the wicked man himself. But appeal to him at a moment, when he will speak the truth. Appeal to him on his death-bed. Enquire of him, whether his life has been a happy life. Enquire whether from his own experience he would counsel thee to choose the path of guilt as the road to peace. And what if he professes that he has been happy? Examine and judge, whether he can have been a happy man. Stand thou on the one hand, while his conscience beholds the King of terrors on the other. Ask thyself whether the possession of the whole world would bribe thee to take to thyself his past life with all its pleasures coupled with his present situation and all its horrors. Whoever thou art who hast hitherto walked in the ways of sin and misery; hear that voice, which still invites thee to repentance, pardon, holiness, and happiness. Hear the voice of thy Saviour, who still waiteth to be gracious. *Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace (o).*

(o) Job, xxii. 21.

2. In the next place let me request the attention of those persons, who are wavering between the paths of religion and the paths of guilt.

What is the result of your experience? Do you find peace in your present courses? The supposition is impossible. You are travelling by turns two contrary roads. In both of them you cannot be happy. If you find peace in one of them; you must necessarily find disquiet in the other. What is the fact? You find peace in neither. You have rather too strong a sense of religion to be comfortable in the practice of iniquity. And you have by far too weak a sense of religion, to enjoy the comforts which belong to the righteous. You are too much afraid of God to be able without anxiety to provoke Him. And you love Him too little to enjoy unmixed delight in obeying Him. *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him* (p). If you would find peace; it is evident that you must relinquish one of those paths, between which you have hitherto been hesitating. You must choose and abide by, the one, or the other. What is your choice? In which of the two paths have you hitherto

(p) 1 Kings, xviii. 21.

found the nearest approach to peace of mind? To judge by past transactions, do you conclude that you shall attain the fairer prospect of happiness by forsaking sin, and devoting yourself wholly to God; or by renouncing religion, and abandoning yourself altogether unto wickedness? If you would act consistently, if you would pursue peace with any reasonable chance of success; you must adopt one of those methods. Determine therefore whether you deem it more desirable to have God for your friend, or for your enemy: to apply to yourself the promises, or the threatenings, of His word: to behold in Christ Jesus the Saviour of the penitent or the avenger of unrighteousness: to enjoy, or to reject, the consoling influence of the Spirit of grace: to look forward to the day of judgement with triumphant hope, or with despairing terror. Through the long-suffering of your merciful Father the choice is yet in your power. Choose with an humble and a stedfast heart the service of God in Christ; *and the God of peace shall sanctify you wholly. You shall be filled with all joy and peace in believing. You shall confess that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace* (q).

(q) 1 Theff. v. 23. Rom. xv. 13. viii. 6.



3. Let me now speak to those, who are truly religious.

Perhaps you have been ready to exclaim, that you have been, more or less, disappointed in your expectations: that you have not found in the course of your endeavours after faith and holiness the uniform and full satisfaction, for which the declarations of the Scriptures had encouraged you to hope: and that, since the promises of God can never fail, you are in consequence depressed with alarming apprehensions that you have been deceiving your own hearts, and are not in the number of the righteous. Now God forbid that his ministers should affirm, that all persons who have not experienced in religion the complete consolation, which it holds forth to his servants, are therefore not religious. The promises of God never fail. But there may exist some circumstance, which has hitherto prevented you, which may even now prevent you, from reaping due benefit from them. Sometimes bodily maladies prey upon the spirits; and create a melancholy, which is a disease. In this situation, and possibly it may have been, or may now be, the situation of some whom I address, the accomplishment of the promises of God is suspended. For wise purposes known unto Himself comfort

and peace are at present withheld. But to those who persevere in devout and patient obedience they are, in the ordinary course of Providence, extended at last. Sometimes also, persons, who are earnest in their desires and efforts to be religious, adopt erroneous opinions on some branches of religion. Perhaps, unable, in common with the rest of mankind, metaphysically to delineate the *mode*, in which the foreknowledge of God may be consistent with the contingent salvation of man, they virtually pronounce them irreconcilable: and having thus adventured to limit the power of Omnipotence, they conceive that their lot has been absolutely and irrevocably pre-ordained from everlasting; that by the sovereign and unconditional decree of the Almighty they have been created purposely to be placed, according to his fiat, in the realms of eternal bliss, or to be consigned to never-ending woe; and that until death shall remove the veil which conceals their appointed mansion, it must ever remain a doubt, a doubt loaded with torture and dismay, whether to them heaven be not inaccessible, and hell inevitable. Perhaps they no less erroneously conclude that the attainment of justifying faith, and the conversion of the heart by the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit, are events distinctly manifested  
to

to the believer by inward and supernatural impressions: and not having experienced in their own bosoms the sensible tokens of acceptance, they infer that they are unredeemed from the penal consequences of guilt, un-sanctified by the purifying influence of divine grace, aliens from God, children of damnation. Sometimes men of piety restrict themselves to partial views of religion. Perhaps they nearly confine their meditation to their own guilt; without sufficiently raising their thoughts to the atonement and the intercession of Christ. Perhaps they dwell almost exclusively on their own weakness and corruption: and thus think too little of the sanctifying, the universal, and the all-subduing aid of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps they fix their minds so intently on doctrines, as to pay too little regard to the regulation of their hearts: or, while they are anxious in the performance of good works, are too little careful to render them as fruits of faith. Now so far as you misapprehend the nature of religion, you will necessarily fall short of its genuine comforts. But it is well if the failure of complete consolation in the ways of religion, of which you complain, be not owing to another and a more general cause. It is well if it be not owing to this circumstance, that

you are not *entirely* religious. You can possess the comforts of religion only *in proportion* as you are religious. If evil inclinations still resume at intervals their original dominion over your heart: if the remains of unsubdued passions agitate your breast: they will entail their natural consequences, solicitude and anguish. Charge not then your want of inward peace on religion: charge it on your own deficiency in religion. In proportion as you are sinful you must expect the wages of sin. Be *thoroughly* religious; that you may have *perfect* peace.

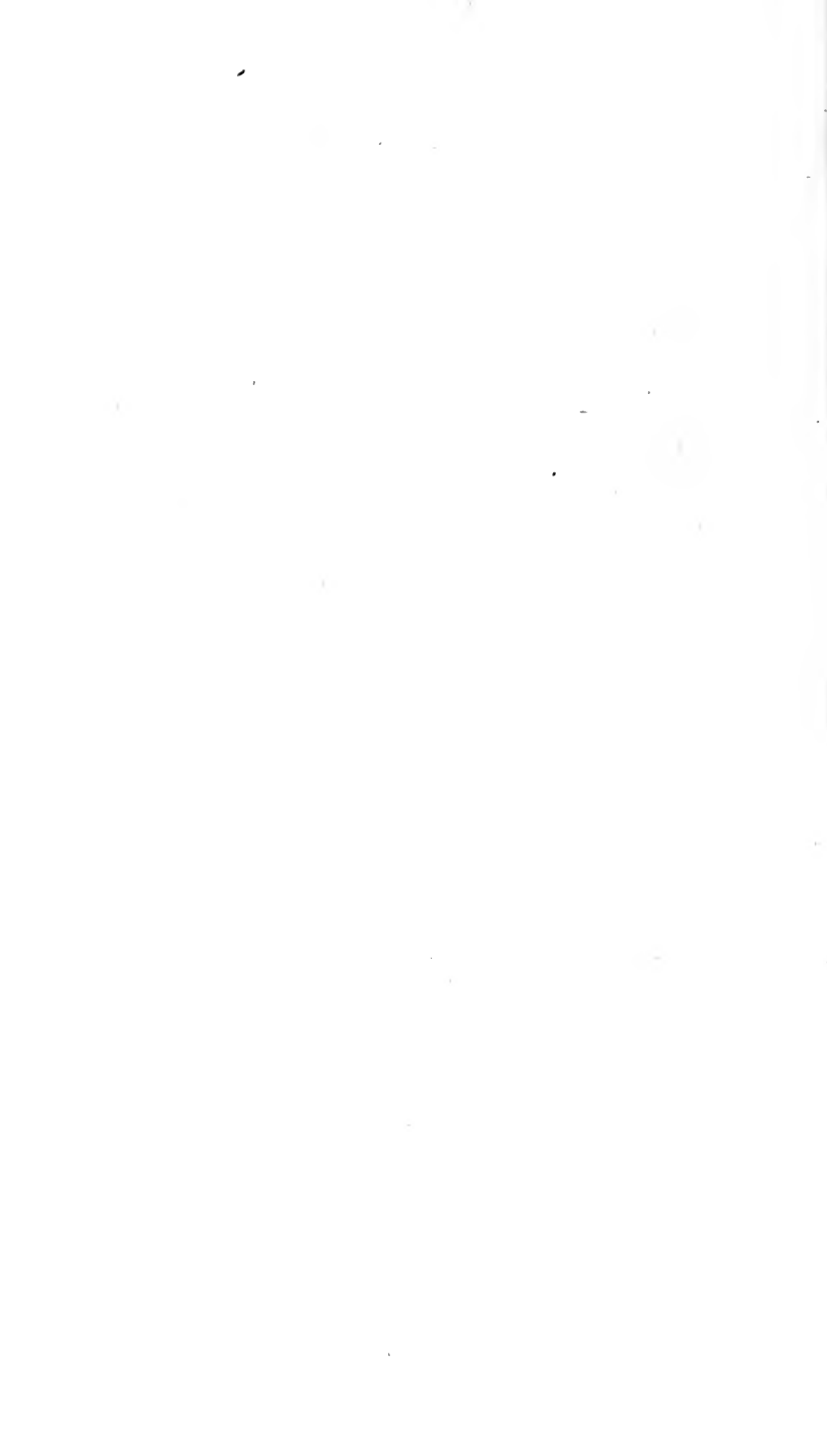
*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God (r).* Shall not those in every congregation, who are indeed the people of God, be exhorted humbly to take unto themselves, while they continue stedfast in faith and holiness, the consolations which their God has provided for them? *Fear not ye*, who have set your hearts on salvation through Christ. *Fear not ye: for ye seek Jesus which was crucified.* Fear not ye: for your Redeemer liveth. Fear not ye: for ye have an Almighty Protector. Fear not ye; for he hath promised to strengthen you with might adequate to your trials. Fear not ye: for ye

(r) Isaiah, xl. 1.

are under the guidance of infinite wisdom, goodness, and love. Fight the good fight of faith. You shall have serenity during the conflict, and victory at the close. *Cast all your care on Him, who careth for you.* Rejoice in the word of God; *comfort yourselves in the word of the Lord.* Verily ye shall know, that *the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever* (s).

(s) Isaiah, xxxii. 17.

THE END.



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